



# Parent Handbook

**2022 - 2023**

(updated formatting in April 2022)

*"We discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being."*

*-Maria Montessori*

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## Our Mission

*At Oak Grove Montessori our mission is to nurture and guide the whole child to become an independent, responsible learner.*

We strive to provide each child with a loving and supportive environment that is thoughtfully prepared each day with real objects, materials, lessons, and experiments offering all of the key experiences needed to engage the child's intelligence and body. Each child is treated with kindness and respect while given uninterrupted time to freely explore with the hands and mind working together. While absorbing an intense amount of knowledge of our world, both past and present, students develop a strong sense of responsibility realizing they contribute to the success of a diverse school community. Our emphasis is on the development of the child as a whole: socially, emotionally, spiritually, physically, and intellectually.

### **Our Purpose**

Oak Grove Montessori School was established to provide quality educational experiences for children. Our philosophy is to preserve and nurture the innate intellectual curiosity and tremendous joy of learning with which children begin life. We are interested in fostering a framework in which intellectual and social development go hand in hand to help each child learn the basic ideas, attitudes, and skills essential for success in school as well as life.

Our ability to reach these goals is facilitated by the implementation of Dr. Maria Montessori's methods and philosophies. The uniquely designed Montessori materials, the prepared environment, and the Montessori-trained guides (teachers) invite children to learn at their own pace in relation to their interest and readiness. Our commitment to the Montessori philosophy is reinforced by research; children benefit in a myriad of ways from the learning cycle present in a Montessori environment. The Montessori environment enables children to fully develop the potential for creativity, initiative, independence, and order, in addition to the habits of concentration, persistence, and inner discipline. Our children become self-confident learners who are respectful of others and of themselves. Children with these developmental skills are better able to make the most of any future learning environment. Oak Grove is dedicated to an educational experience that will help children develop not only a foundation for a lifetime of learning but also a love for life and mankind. We ask not what is in our best interest but for what is in the best interest of the child.



## How Our House is Built

### **OUR STRUCTURE**

Oak Grove is a 501c3 non-profit organization.

The Administration consists of: the Head of School–Courtney Hyde, the Director of Curriculum–Carrie Fitts, and the Office Administrator–Jess Enderle. The Board of Directors and Administration collaborate closely in all decision making. Information about our current Board of Directors can be found on the school website.

# Blueprint

## VISION

Our vision is to increase the number of creative, confident individuals who, with the ability to collaborate and problem solve, will continue to grow into decisive leaders, capable of influencing positive change regardless of conditions or circumstances.

## MISSION

Our mission is to nurture and guide the whole child to become an independent, responsible learner.

## CORE VALUES

At Oak Grove Montessori School, our core values apply to the community as a whole, the children we serve, their families, as well as the administration and staff.

- We embrace all learning styles and believe that with the right conditions, all children can be successful learners.
- We believe in fostering independence, responsibility, motivation, and collaboration in all members of our community: students, families, and co-workers.
- We believe emotional wellness, which includes respect of self and others, honesty, tolerance, compassion, kindness, and empathy is the foundation for academic achievement.
- We believe in being good stewards of all our assets: from natural and financial resources, to gifts of time and talent.
- We believe in providing an authentic Montessori program.



# What We Have Built for Our Children

## **Montessori Education at Oak Grove Montessori**

The “Whole Child” approach: The primary goal of a Montessori program is to help each child reach their full potential in all areas of life. Activities promote the development of social skills, emotional wellness, physical growth, and cognitive preparation. The holistic curriculum allows the child to experience the joy of learning and to develop both self-esteem and independence.

Prior to age six, children learn more easily and efficiently than at any other period in life. Research has established the critical importance of the first six years of life for a child’s physical, cognitive, emotional, and social development. The Montessori Method is designed to promote the understanding of children and their needs. Children develop and discover in their own, individual way and in their own time. One of the most important contributions that Montessori makes is in our children’s approaches to learning. The four major elements of the method are:

### **Individualized Education:**

Dr. Montessori realized that children are all different and should not be held to the pace or interests of others. The Lead Teacher prepares an environment suited to the needs of the child and prepares the child for the environment by presenting individual lessons on the use of the materials. The child is then free to explore and use the materials according to their unique interests and abilities.

### **Prepared environment conducive to self-discovery:**

Children are free to move about the classroom at will, to talk to other children, to work with any equipment whose purpose they understand, or to ask the teacher to introduce new material to him. Children are not free to disturb other children at work or to abuse the equipment that is so important to their development. Children of differing ages work in a quiet, yet busy atmosphere. There is a sense of order with everything having a permanent place while being accessible to all.

### **Self-teaching/self-correcting materials:**

Montessori materials introduce abstract concepts in a concrete, “hands-on” way. There are six main areas of the Montessori classroom: practical life, sensorial, language, math, science, and geography. Each area is equipped with uniquely designed materials that contain built-in “control of error” which enables the child to see and, eventually, to understand and correct errors. The Lead Teacher presents the materials in concise, simple lessons, so that each child can learn at their own pace.

## **An Adult trained in Montessori philosophy & methods:**

The Lead Teacher prepares the environment, perceives the child's needs, and facilitates the child's growth in learning. They work with individual children by presenting materials and giving guidance where needed. The method of teaching is indirect in that the child is neither imposed upon nor abandoned, allowing for exploration of the material. The adults are considered to be the child's advocates and have respect for the child's total being.

## **How is the Montessori Philosophy Applied?**

A Montessori environment differs from a traditional classroom in more ways than just structure. The materials are arranged on low shelves, and children are free to choose the activities that interest them. The emphasis is on manipulative activities; young children really enjoy getting their hands on concrete learning materials. Bookwork and "lectures" tend to generate minimal interest in young children. Dr. Maria Montessori felt it was developmentally necessary for children to have activities in which they could become actively involved since they have an abundance of energy and learn through movement.

The learning materials in the carefully prepared environment are referred to as "works," not toys, and the children 'work' with the materials rather than 'play' with them. Using this terminology gives the activities added dignity and purpose. The children enjoy calling it "work" as they can identify with the work their parents perform. In addition, the children see and internalize that purposeful work can be enjoyable. The trained Lead Teacher presents materials to children based on their readiness and interests, and the child is free to choose among those works with which they have received a lesson. Through their choices of activity, children reveal themselves. With regular observation, the teacher determines a child's changing interests and specific abilities.

Montessori philosophy also impacts the ways in which children's capabilities are assessed. Typically, children receive no grades, gold stars, disproportionate praise, immediate correction, or punishment upon completion of a lesson. The joy for children is often naturally in the *doing*. Moreover, most Montessori lessons tend to be *process-based* rather than *product-based*, and many lessons do not produce tangible end-products.

Built into most of the Montessori materials is a control of error. Controls of error help the child to independently identify when a mistake has been made. For example, if a child fails to return all of the cylinders to the correct holes in the cylinder block, they will have at least one cylinder remaining that does not fit. The child can then figure out how to overcome this difficulty without unnecessary intervention on the part of the teacher.

Self-discipline is closely aligned with constructive work in the Montessori environment. When children are deeply immersed in an activity, they are not interested in causing a disturbance. This aids the child's development of positive self-concept and self-discipline. By providing children with freedom of choice in activity, this simultaneously fosters a harmonious environment and reduces the need to rebel.

## **What Can I Expect Oak Grove to do for My Child?**

- You can expect your child to grow in confidence, as they develop a positive attitude toward learning, foster deep friendships, and increase their cognitive abilities.
- You can expect your child not to be pressured, but to be encouraged. Oak Grove accepts each child as a unique person who develops at their own rate. We strive to enhance each child's development.
- You can expect your child to be introduced to a well-rounded curriculum, full of interesting facts, cultures, experiments, and projects that will interest them, stimulate their curiosity, and awaken their love for learning.

It is truly best that you not think of your child as an extension of yourself. Your child is a unique individual. Your needs as a parent and the needs of your child very likely do not always coincide exactly. For example, many parents are concerned about their child learning to read at an early age. However, their child may not be interested in, or ready to accomplish, this task at the precise age the parent desires. We have found that when a child learns to read in a natural fashion without pressure, it is the child's motivation, rather than an attempt to please others, that produces this skill. Children whom are not ready to read are presented with many opportunities to develop visual discrimination, phonetic skills, and other pre-reading lessons. Children who are pushed into an activity before they are ready, or interested, often develop feelings of inadequacy and reluctance to perform that activity.

Not all work results in a tangible product; instead, many lessons focus on the development of internal cognitive skills. "Take-homes" (projects produced in class and, subsequently, taken home) often give parents the idea that a child has not had a successful day unless the child has something concrete to give them. Consequently, work is sent home once per week to help avoid this difficulty. It is equally true that many group art projects where each child brings home the same project have great "parent appeal," but have very little value in encouraging and developing a child's creative skills. Your child will have many opportunities to participate in art and other creative activities. Emphasis, however, is placed on those projects that aid the child's development rather than on providing a project just for the sake of taking it home.

## **What we expect from parents & Guardians**

We expect each parent to develop a basic understanding of the Montessori Methodology and incorporate the following practices into their parenting and home life:

- Participate in parent education opportunities.
- Encourage independence in your child.
- Communicate closely with your child's Lead Teacher.
- Foster your child's sense of responsibility for daily and/or weekly chores, clothing decisions, extracurricular equipment, and participation in appropriate family decisions.
- Facilitate peaceful, non-violent resolutions to conflict within the family or in social situations.
- Incorporate natural and logical consequences to guide your child's behavior.
- Be engaged in your child's education through active participation in class and school-related activities throughout the school year.
- Communicate respectfully and honestly about any concerns that may arise. Please address the concerns with your child's Lead Teacher. If this does not resolve the issue, then we ask you to go to our Head of School. This often leads to scheduling a meeting to discuss and resolve the concerns with the Director of Curriculum and the Lead Teacher.
- Consider committing to a full three-year cycle when enrolling in the Primary program, so that your child has the opportunity to experience and synthesize the cohesiveness of the broad three-year curriculum.
- Limit exposure to electronic gaming devices and other media, such as television. Instead, consider providing your child with books, blocks, puzzles, and other options for open-ended play. Outdoor play time is also great for growing minds.

# ADMISSIONS PROCEDURES

## NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

Oak Grove Montessori School is committed to promoting a diverse learning community where independence, critical thinking, positive self-esteem, personal responsibility for oneself and towards others, and a peaceful, appreciative stewardship of the Earth are fostered in each and every child. We welcome diversity and teach our students to deepen their perspective of the world through respect for others, mutual understanding, and intentional exposure to a variety of cultures. Each applicant, regardless of race, sex, gender, sexual orientation, family structure, socioeconomic status, national origin, ancestry, religion, or disability, is considered according to their individual talents and needs, and is admitted according to the school's ability to help them best develop their potential.

It is Oak Grove Montessori School's policy to accept children in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act, its regulations, and any other local, state, or federal laws pertaining to the provision of services with those disabilities. We review each child's situation on a case-by-case basis. Please discuss your child's individual needs with the Administration prior to enrollment.

## ENROLLMENT PROCESS

Oak Grove offers rolling enrollment when available; we consider each application in the order of its submission. Once we have filled a class, your child's name will be put on a waiting list, and openings will be filled as space becomes available.

Below, you will find the steps necessary to enroll your child(ren) at Oak Grove Montessori. Please note that all forms must be *completed* and submitted prior to your child's first day.

- Take a tour of the school
- New Student Application and registration fee of \$250
- Observe in a class
- Student Background Form
- Immunization Form 3231 – We are required, by law, to have up to date immunization records for every child that attends Oak Grove Montessori. If you are not following the Health Department's prescribed immunization schedule, you will need to provide one of the two options listed below prior to your child's first day:
  - A notarized Affidavit of Religious Objection to Immunization
  - An approved Medical Exemption form completed by your child's physician
- Form 3300 - Eye, Ear, and Dental for **children 4 years and up**
- Notification of Early Stay / Late Stay Enrollment
- External Preparations form & Allergy Forms
- Authorized Pick-Up List and Emergency Contact Information
- Parent Agreement
- Complete a Welcome Interview (this is adults-only), with the Director of Curriculum
- Complete a Meet & Greet (along with the enrolling child), with the child's teacher(s)
- Schedule Phase-In

## **FEES & TUITION**

We offer 3 payment plans:

1. Single Payment: 100% of tuition (and Early/Late Stay fees, if applicable) due on the child's first day of school in August.
2. Two Payments: Tuition (and Early/Late Stay fees, if applicable) spread over two equal installments (in August and January).
3. Monthly Payment Plan: Tuition (and Early/Late Stay fees, if applicable) spread over 10 equal installments, due on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month (August-May).

We accept payments in the form of cash, check, ACH (online only) or credit card (online only). Online payments are subject to ACH and credit card processing fees. Past due invoices will be charged a \$25 late fee if payment is received after the 8th of the month. After the 22<sup>nd</sup> of the month, children may not continue to attend OGMS until past due tuition and fees are paid in full.

Please note that OGMS does not split tuition invoices for divorced or separated parents/guardians. We thank our parents for working out any internal payment arrangements independent of OGMS.

A healthy, balanced lunch is included in the annual tuition for children. Vegetarian diets can be accommodated by the kitchen--all other allergies, diets, and/or sensitivities will be handled on a case-by-case basis. If your child has a specific food sensitivity and/or allergy, this should be discussed prior to enrollment to determine if the chef can accommodate it (typically, this will require families to provide a short list of items to the kitchen each month). For lactose-intolerant children, parents/guardians are responsible for providing alternative milk product(s), if desired.

At Oak Grove, we encourage regular attendance for consistency, but please note that tuition fees are applied even when your child is not in regular attendance. Tuition is not adjusted for vacations, absences, force majeure events, or inclement weather closings. Additionally, families securing drop-in spaces for Early/Late Stay are responsible for those fees (due to the administrative, staffing, and invoicing needs required to facilitate drop ins) regardless if the child drops in on that day.

Children are registered for the entirety of the school year, through May, and families are responsible for remitting tuition for the entirety of the school year. Requests to be released from this obligation may be made in writing to the Head of School and/or the Board of Directors. The Board of Directors handles these requests on a case-by-case basis, and families desiring to make such a request are encouraged to do so with as much advance notice as possible.

## **Force Majeure Events**

Families are not entitled to a refund, in whole or in part, if a force majeure event prevents Oak Grove Montessori from operating at its usual hours and/or providing programs or activities that: were previously available, are described on the school's website, Parent Handbook, past social media, or in other marketing materials. An example of a force majeure event is the COVID-19 pandemic; other examples include acts of nature (floods, hurricanes, tornadoes, fires, etc.); public health emergencies; government restrictions; wars, civil disturbances or insurrections; acts of terrorism; strikes or labor disputes; or any other events that are beyond the school's control. Oak Grove Montessori School, may, at any time and in its sole discretion: (i) elect to change or eliminate parts of the curriculum, programs, or activities that it offers to its families, and/or (ii) may elect to change the way that those curriculum, programs or activities are delivered (including the transition to temporary remote learning). Any such changes shall not constitute a basis for families to avoid their obligation to pay the full amount of tuition. Oak Grove Montessori is a non-profit organization, and without tuition, its continued existence in our community is tenuous.

## **Tuition Discounts & Referral Bonuses**

We offer a 10% tuition discount for siblings (excluding families with enrolled infants); this discount is applied to the lowest tuition rate.

A 4% discount is available for families paying tuition in one lump payment (in August). A 3% discount is available for families paying in two payments (in August and January).

Families can receive up to a \$500 referral bonus (applied as a tuition credit once the referred family has paid their first month's tuition). To qualify for this referral bonus, the referred family must list your name on their enrollment forms. If a new family lists more than one family as the referral family, the \$500 is split equally among the families.

## **ENROLLMENT**

Enrollment is for the full academic school year (consisting of about 180 school days). Enrollment mid-year will be considered as spaces become available, and tuition will be prorated accordingly. Updates to the Parent Handbook, Tuition/Fee Schedule, and a calendar for the upcoming school year are shared when Re-Enrollment begins.

Preference is first given to families currently enrolled during the Re-Enrollment period (typically in January or February) of each year. Once Open Enrollment begins, families wishing to join OGMS are offered enrollment on a first-come, first-served basis, without regard to sex, color, creed, or national origin (within the limitations imposed by class size and the need to maintain a developmentally diverse classroom). The Administration will make the final determination of all Re-Enrollment applicants and may retract enrollment at any time, at their discretion of what is best for the child, family, and school.

## **Parent/Guardian Volunteer Opportunities**

One way in which we aspire to foster community is through our requirement that each family volunteer 15 hours during each school year. We all know that there are some things that even money cannot buy. It is impossible to place a monetary value on Oak Grove's appreciation to the volunteers who help throughout the year to make our many annual events and improvement committees a success. It is the combined efforts of the staff and parents that help generate the mutual feelings of commitment and excitement that have enabled Oak Grove's community to continue to grow stronger and expand over the years. Oak Grove volunteers provide direct support to our programs. Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talents create special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond OGMS. Many of Oak Grove's requests can be fulfilled in as little as one or two hours per task (and many do not require on-site presence).

We do recognize that the demands of raising a family today often leave very little extra time. However, with everyone's support and commitment, Oak Grove, and your children, will have another successful school year with a minimum of time from each individual.

### **Gifts of Time and Talents:**

- Support our fund-raising activities
- Assist in gardening or landscaping projects
- Volunteer for school committees or to help with school events
- Share your special skills on projects in the classroom or around campus (sewing and construction/handyman skills are always appreciated!)
- Volunteer to prepare and create educational materials

### **TAX SSO MONEY**

The [SSO program](#) is not a donation, but a designation of tax dollars that you already pay to the government. Instead of the state deciding how your tax dollars will be spent, you can allocate a portion of your tax dollars directly to Oak Grove. The best part is the dollar-for-dollar CREDIT when you file your taxes. Anyone with Georgia tax liability can participate, so this is a great way for friends and family members to help Oak Grove!

### **THE GIFT OF MONEY**

Your tax-deductible gifts to Oak Grove, whether \$5 or \$5,000, are an important source of revenue for the school. Your support helps OGMS accomplish both present and future goals and shows your commitment to providing our children with a place to grow. Why do we ask parents to contribute money above and beyond the tuition paid? To put it simply, revenue from tuition cannot cover all the costs of operating a school. While some schools must rely on gift income to pay for the day-to-day operating expenses, Oak Grove Montessori uses gift income to provide resources to enhance the quality of educational opportunities for its students. These resources support the purchase of additional resources, extracurricular activities, as well as instruction and materials for foreign language, music, and art programs. To this end, Oak Grove conducts various fund-raising activities throughout the year and asks for support from its alumni, parents, and friends.

## **PARENT EDUCATION OPPORTUNITIES**

At Oak Grove Montessori, parent education is regarded as the single most important way in which parents can influence the success of their individual child(ren) in our Montessori programs. In order to meet the needs of our parent body, and to ensure parent and school expectations are communicated clearly, we provide a variety of educational formats scheduled at different times of the day throughout the year.

**Journey and Discovery** provides a detailed look at the relationship between each of our Montessori programs, from Infant through Primary. A hands-on program, Journey and Discovery gives participants ample time to explore materials and ask questions about each program. We require each parent to participate in Journey and Discovery at least once, and recommend you do so whenever your child transitions to a new program (Infant to Toddler, Toddler to Primary). Journey and Discovery takes place on a Saturday morning and lasts approximately three hours.

**Parent Education Programs** (better known as PEPs) are developed and presented by the Administration. These are scheduled throughout the school year. PEP meetings cover topics relevant to each particular program and are typically held in the afternoon or evening hours. Parent participation in these informative meetings is highly encouraged. Participation in PEPs is counted toward parents' required annual 15 hours.

**Parent/GRANDPARENT Visits** are program-specific, and vary some based on the age of the child. The two regularly scheduled Showcases (in December and March) provide opportunities for family members to visit and receive lessons from their child(ren).

### **Why should my child attend school before age six?**

Montessori education in early childhood lays the educational foundation that will last a child throughout their life. A Montessori school is neither a babysitting service, nor a regimented place where children are forced to achieve. We offer children the opportunity to develop individually within a carefully defined structure that fosters their unique strengths, creativity, and abilities. In Montessori environments, school is a natural and enjoyable experience. Furthermore, the Montessori philosophy regards the years from birth to six as a crucial time in a child's development. It is during this time that children have sensitive periods.

A sensitive period is easily defined as a window of opportunity in which a child has a natural, heightened desire to advance a particular trait or skill. Children in sensitive periods will occupy themselves with particular activities with a level of interest and concentration they likely will never again display (for that particular activity). Various sensitive periods exist. The length of sensitive periods varies from child to child, and sensitive periods are transitory in nature. Children may learn to master that same task at a later time, but not with the same fervor, zeal, and ease they could during their sensitive period. One example of a sensitive period occurs when children are typically between the ages of two and three years old--during this time, children often have a sensitive period for order. A parent or teacher cannot create a sensitive period in a child; however, the adult can follow and help the child to fully develop and explore their interests. Montessori environments honor these sensitive periods and aid the child by providing opportunities for them to accomplish the tasks that are important to them at any given time.

Traditional schools, with strict time blocks for subjects, and a specific, age-based curriculum, are not always able to accommodate the child's interests and sensitive periods; this also limits children from progressing beyond, or taking additional time, with a lesson to suit their individual needs.

### **Why Do We Have Mixed Age Groupings of Children?**

Traditional school settings often group children chronologically. However, Dr. Montessori felt the classroom should reflect the real world; thus she developed the concept of the "family group." For example, in Primary the "family group" is a balance of children ages three to six years old and the adults who guide them. Groupings of mixed ages work well as younger children learn from older children, and the older children grow in confidence as they help the younger children. Such assistance is a spontaneous occurrence; the older children are not required to help the younger children and have many activities of their own on which to work. However, because they are free to help the younger children, the older children usually discover they enjoy sharing their talents.

### **How Will My Child Adjust to Traditional Education?**

Montessori children entering a traditional class have no greater difficulty than other children in making the adjustment. The children have learned to follow ground rules and will only need to learn the expectations of the new school. Parents can help their child prepare for a change by making sure their child is involved in extracurricular activities that involve students in a variety of environments and learning contexts. Studies show that children with a Montessori background are independent learners and, thus, more confident, resilient, and task-oriented.

# How We Make it Work

## **The Day**

When Maria Montessori opened the first Casa dei Bambini (“Children’s House”), the children were there from morning to evening. Dr. Montessori created an environment where a child could say, “Here, I can be myself.” Oak Grove offers this same nurturing atmosphere to all children, especially for those who stay all day. We provide a home-like atmosphere in a Montessori setting from as early as 7:00am to as late as 6:00pm, allowing time for meals, rest, work, and play while following the children’s own natural rhythms — individually and as a group. We provide opportunities for outdoor time, cooking, games, walks and rambles, and time for your child to just “be.” Early Stay is available from 7:00am to 7:45am. Late Stay is separated by age group, and is available from 3:15pm to 6:00pm.

## **A Rose by Any Other Name**

Children may call their teachers by their first names with Ms. or Mr. preceding the teacher’s first name. This practice results in a mutual respect for each other and helps develop a feeling of closeness between the teachers and the children.

## **SEPARATION**

Growth in a child takes place as the child moves out of her family unit towards other people and into an absorption in play, work, learning, and creative activities. When a young child goes to school, particularly for the first time, it is normal for both the child and the parent to experience mixed feelings about the separation. We need to make sure that the child moves gently from the family into the school with graduated expectations, emotional support, and a gentle transition from being the center of the parents’ attention to sharing the adults’ attention in the classroom with other children. A child who feels safe, relaxed and comfortable will be open to what school has to offer. Lead Teachers and parents who understand the distinction between dependency and attachment are better prepared to be effective partners in the child’s growth.

### **Here are some separation tips:**

- Be confident, and know that your feelings are normal. You made a decision that your child is ready for this step. You took care to choose a school you can trust. Relax! Rely on your good judgment to carry you through this period.
- When it is time to leave your child at school, emphasize that you will come back for them. Then, give a kiss, a hug, and leave confidently.
- Honor your child's feelings. Let them freely express those feelings. Let them know it is okay to feel sad, scared, or mad — and STILL go to school.
- Give them support with positive expectations.
- Remember that children are sensitive to non-verbal cues. If you tell your child that it is "OK," but your facial expressions or gestures *demonstrate/depict* apprehension, then they will worry.
- If arriving at school continues to present problems for you and your child, try a change in routine. Ask your spouse, a relative, or a neighbor to take your child to school for a few days, or park and walk up instead of going through Car Line. A change in pace may break the cycle of behavior between you and your child.

### **Program Descriptions**

Each Montessori class, Infant through Primary, operates on the principle of freedom within limits. Every class has its own ground rules (these differ based on age) but is always based on core Montessori beliefs: respect for ourselves, each other, and the environment. Children are free to work at their own pace with materials they have chosen, either alone or with others. The teacher relies on their observations of the children to determine which new activities and materials they may introduce to individual children or to a small or large group. The aim is to encourage active, self-directed learning and to strike a balance of individual mastery with small group collaboration within the whole group community.

The multi-age grouping in each class provides a family-like environment where early learning can take place naturally. More experienced children share what they have learned while reinforcing their own learning. Because peer group learning is intrinsic to Montessori, there are often more conversation-language experiences in the Montessori classroom than in conventional early education settings.

## **Infant Program (6 Weeks - about 18 months)**

In our Infant Program, children begin their lifelong journey of education. This space is set up to encourage balance between an infant's developing independence and varied nurturing interactions between the adults and the children. Balanced interactions like these promote appropriate engagement and relational bonding. Beyond this primary goal, are continuous opportunities to exercise motor, language, and free choice. By creating a serene, uncluttered space that replicates the home, infants develop trust to observe and explore at their natural rate.

Older infants in this class work towards following a similar schedule as the Toddler environments, while allowing the flexibility for bottle feedings, morning naps, and more. Older infants have freedom to choose among carefully prepared, developmentally-appropriate works available on low shelves accessible by crawling and toddling children. Often, these works consist of put-ins, sensory works or activities, and baskets full of exploration-based items.

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit and/or feed their child throughout the day as long as these visits remain positive experiences for the child.

## **Infant Schedule**

Our Infant communities serve infants from as young as 6 weeks through about 18 months. Individualized sleeping and feeding plans created by each family are utilized, and the Lead Teacher in the space works with parents/caregivers to create plans that follow their child's needs, creating flexibility needed by infants as they approach toddlerhood. They do maintain a loose schedule, in an effort to create a stable routine for the child.

**7:45-8:10am:** Arrival

**8:10-10:00am:** Morning Work Cycle [Breakfast, Snacks, and/or Bottles are given (as individual schedules request). Morning naps are taken, if needed. Storytime and tummy time take place, as well as independent work choice and small group activities.]

**10:00-11:15am:** Outdoor Work [if awake, and weather permitting]

**11:15-12:00pm:** Handwashing & Lunch

**12:00-12:30pm:** Lunch Clean-up & Preparation for Nap

**12:30-2:30pm:** Nap

**2:30-3:00pm:** Waking up

**3:00-3:15pm:** Dismissal

## **Toddler Program (18 months - 3 years)**

A Montessori toddler environment can be considered as an adapting continuum between two basic needs in the developing child from about 18 months to about three years or age. Children transition to our Toddler environments at around 18 months--once they are able to: confidently, stably walk, go up/down a single stair, and no longer need bottles, pacifiers, or a morning nap. In this classroom, carefully prepared, developmentally-appropriate works are presented on low shelves similar to those in Infant, but in this room there are more works available, and they are available on trays (in addition to baskets). Walking with a work on a tray provides an additional challenge that helps to improve balance and hand-eye coordination. Children are free to work anywhere in the classroom, including at the shelves. Children in this space will build natural stamina for deep concentration.

Our Toddler communities support both the bonded relationship between adult and child and the support for a growing sense of self and independence through observation and a prepared environment. The adult assists each child's unique pattern of development through keen observation of the child's sensitive periods for language, movement, and order. The adult follows the child's need to become independent. Emphasis is placed on building a trusting, collaborative relationship between the Montessori staff and the parent in the care-giving process. The environment reflects these characteristics:

Child-sized - Resources for Independence  
Organized - Large and Small Motor Activities  
Language-Enriched - Varied Spaces

## **Toddler Schedule**

**7:45-8:10am:** Arrival

**8:10-10:00am:** Morning Work Cycle [Children make independent work choices and participate in small group activities. Snack is available all morning.]

**10:00-10:30am:** Group Time [children participate in music, movement, storytime, finger plays, and calendar time]

**10:30-11:15am:** Outdoor Work & Free Play

**11:15-12:00pm:** Clean-up and Lunch

**12:00-12:30pm:** Lunch Clean-up & Preparation for Nap

**12:30-2:30pm:** Nap/Rest Time

**2:30-3:00pm:** Waking up, Diapering/Toileting

**3:00-3:15pm:** Dismissal

## **Toddler Phase-In for any new toddler**

The toddler child is introduced gradually to the routines and adults of the toddler classroom. This gradual exposure allows your child to gain a sense of trust, security, and confidence before being left on his own in the new environment. Since children adapt differently to new situations, not all children will phase-in as quickly as others. Therefore, the length of the phase-in period will depend upon the needs of each individual child.

Typical Scenario for the phase-in process:

- **Day 1** - The child arrives in Car Line, and stays until about 10:30am.
- **Day 2** - The child arrives in Car Line, and stays until about 11:30am.
- **Day 3** - The child arrives in Car Line, and stays until 3:00pm.
- **Day 4** - The child begins to stay for Late Stay (if enrolled).
- **Day 5** - The child is fully phased in.

*We ask that one parent/guardian/caregiver be available for at least a week to help ensure a smooth and happy adjustment for your child. During Phase-In, the Lead Teacher will be in frequent communication to inform you of your child's progress phasing in. Lead Teachers may either request earlier pick-up, or suggest children stay the full day earlier than the projected schedule above—it all depends on the child. Parents will be contacted for early pick-up if their child becomes inconsolable (after we have tried to distract with things in the classroom, offered additional snack, offered water, offered cuddles/hugs). It usually takes new children several weeks to understand and feel comfortable with a new environment. We are happy to give your child all the time he needs for a smooth, successful transition to their new environment.*

Phase-in for children younger than the Toddler age will be left up to the determination of the child's teacher in close communication with the parents or guardians.

## **After Toddler Phase-In**

After your child has phased-in, please plan to drive through the drop-off line and walk your child to the “greeter” at the gate each day. Be prepared that your child may cry briefly when making this transition from parent to school. While they are gaining trust in the school environment, and new caregivers, it is critical that you demonstrate through verbal and non-verbal cues that you are confident in the situation. Being punctual and consistent will help your Toddler learn what to expect from his new routine. Consistency will aid in separation and the development of trust in his new environment. Refer to the previous section (on SEPARATION) for more tips. Children in Infant arriving in carriers can be walked in by their parent; but once an infant begins walking in, the expectation is that the parent allows the child to walk alone or with a teacher. If you arrive late, your child will separate from you in the office. Arriving late is discouraged as it often causes a more challenging separation for the child (as well as for the children who have begun their day).

## **Readiness for Primary**

When the toddler child is able to express wants and needs, relate emotions, and handle basic social interactions with peers and adults, they are readying themselves for a more challenging peer group. Social and emotional readiness is seen through initiative, confidence, expressive language skills, and peer relations. The child who is ready to move from toddler is independent in toileting and dressing. Being independent in toileting doesn't mean that they must be accident free but have confidence in toileting and the ability to change their own clothes, without assistance, should an accident occur. An increase in water related activities is present in the Primary environment, which also leads to clothes changing. All of the areas listed above are considered in a child before recommendation for transition occurs.

## **Transitioning to Primary**

Once a toddler is recommended for Primary, they begin a transition process. Initially, they will carry a morning memo or note to the Primary teacher under the guidance of a teacher and, often, another classmate. Once they are comfortable with this contact, they are invited to stay in the Primary classroom for a visit, which may last anywhere from 15 minutes to an hour. After a week or more of these visits, the child is encouraged to stay for lunch. If all goes well, they will be asked to join the class for the full day and bring their belongings with them for the next day. Before and after the transitional process occurs, parents are notified so any questions or concerns can be shared. Parents will be asked to observe in a Primary Classroom and participate in a “Primary Interview” with a teacher and administrator before the transition is complete.

## Primary Program (3 - 6 Years)

The Montessori Early Childhood environments consist of a mixed age group of children between the ages of three and six. Unlike the Toddler program, the Primary program is designed as a three-year cycle. Each year, the child takes on a different role in the classroom community as he develops concentration, perceptual awareness, order, sequence, coordination, self-expression, listening, and observational skills, as well as pre-academics. Ideally, each child participates in all three years of the Primary cycle. In a Montessori Primary program, you will discover:

- Classrooms are divided into five logical groupings: Practical life, Sensorial, Language, Math, and Cultural studies (Biology/Geography/History)
- Materials in these areas are arranged in a sequential order and lessons are presented
- Furnishings are sized appropriately to foster independence
- Each activity, or work, is structured to provide purpose, procedure, closure, and opportunity for success
- Activity spaces and processes are organized to avoid conflicts of interest.

## Primary Schedule

**7:45-8:10am:** Arrival

**8:10-11:15am:** Morning Work Cycle [Children receive lessons, make independent work choices, and participate in small group lessons. Snack is available all morning.]

**11:15-11:30am:** Group Time [children participate in music, movement, storytime, finger plays, and calendar time]

**11:30-12:15pm:** Lunch & Clean-up

**12:15-1:00pm:** Outdoor Work & Free Play

**1:00-2:45pm:** Nap/Rest Time [Afternoon Children have their second work cycle, working independently and receiving advanced lessons]

**2:45-3:00pm:** Afternoon jobs

**3:00-3:15pm:** Dismissal

## Primary Orientation

Prepare your child for their new school by discussing the new routines they will experience. One week before starting, begin setting an alarm clock and practicing the morning routine (brushing teeth, dressing, etc.) your family will have. Some children respond well to a picture chart of the activities that will take place before leaving home each morning. You can make this with your child by cutting pictures from magazines, drawing pictures together, or using photos of your child performing each task.

One of the most important goals we have for your child is independence, which begins with physical independence. Please provide your child with clothes and shoes that he can fasten or remove with ease. Changing one's own clothing helps build his independence and self-confidence.

# Auxiliary School Programs

## Extra - Curriculars

After school activities are determined on an annual basis and may consist of dance, sports, foreign language, music, and/or other special skills/programs. These activities are charged on a monthly basis and require separate registration.

## Summer Camp

Each year we offer Summer Camp. Experienced teaching assistants staff our summer camps for which an exciting day is planned around a thematic unit. Both the indoor and outdoor Montessori classrooms are utilized during Summer Camp, with time dedicated to gardening, outdoor activities, cooking, and art. We ask that parents provide appropriate sun protection during summer camp such as sunscreen, hats, and sunglasses. Students remain indoors during excessively hot portions of the day. Misting stations are located in the program's backyard or playground area for maintaining safe body temperatures, and children are frequently offered water.

## Parents' Library

The school has a small parents' library stocked with books and articles about Montessori education, child development, and other topics of interest to parents. You are welcome to check out books at your convenience. You may keep the books out for two weeks. Below are some books we recommend to get the most out of your child's Montessori education:

[The Montessori Toddler](#) and [The Montessori Baby](#), by Simone Davies

[Montessori: A Modern Approach](#), Paula Polk Lillard

[The Absorbent Mind](#), Maria Montessori

[The Science Behind the Genius](#), Angeline Lillard

[Drive](#), Daniel Pink

[Montessori Madness](#), Trevor Eissler

[The Secret of Childhood](#), Maria Montessori

[The Child in the Family](#), Maria Montessori

[The Discovery of the Child](#), Maria Montessori

[How to Raise An Amazing Child the Montessori Way](#), Tim Seldin

[Children of the Universe](#), Michael & D'Neil Duffey

Our Amazon store, found on our website under Montessori Resources, provides recommended reading with on-the-spot purchasing options. The school benefits from every purchase made from our online store.

## Holidays

Holidays are recognized, but more often find their place in cultural studies rather than class parties. Please refrain from sending items in to school to be dispersed such as Valentines, goody bags, or invitations.

## Special Events

Each year special events are planned around the OGMS curriculum. On occasion, these events include family members. As an event nears, specific details and times are announced to our parent body via website calendar updates and ads, Montessori Mail, school signage, and teacher emails. For many of these Special Events, parent volunteers are needed; these are great opportunities to knock out those annual volunteer hours!

**Back to School BBQ** (August) - Families join one another for this fun, community-building event on the school grounds. No formal programming, just good food and fellowship. No alcoholic beverages please.

**Harvest Day** (October) - Harvest Day takes place 8:30-11:20am, on a half-day of school. Families and friends are invited to participate in carnival-type games and crafts. All children must be picked up at half day at 11:30am.

**Grandparents' Day** (November) - An opportunity for grandparents (or other family representative) to visit. This is typically scheduled for a day before Thanksgiving Break. Your child's representative will spend the morning work cycle with them in the classroom receiving lessons and enjoying a special snack.

**WINTER Showcase** (December) - Families are invited to join us to receive lessons from their children and participate in a special snack.

**National Montessori Week** (February) - A week-long celebration of Maria Montessori's life and the method of education she developed. Activities include an Italian-style lunch for students and educational displays in our library.

**Spring Showcase** (March) - Families are welcome to visit children and receive lessons from them, similar to the Winter Showcase.

**Earth Day** (April) - Earth Day is typically a half-day celebration where families and friends are welcome to participate in outdoor gardening (weather gardening) and crafts. All children must be picked up at half day at 11:30am.

**International Festival** (May) - The International Festival is celebrated by each classroom sponsoring a different culture/country through food, crafts, and games on the first Friday in May.

**Closing Ceremony** (May) - A whole school event is organized to bring closure to the regular school year and recognize the accomplishments of the students who are moving up to new programs. Typically Toddlers have a modified ceremony prior to the Primary ceremony.

# Operational Policies

## Attendance

Daily, punctual attendance is beneficial for your child's development. Please notify the front office if your child stays home sick, or if your child will miss school due to a planned absence/vacation.

## Start and End Times

Early Stay	7:00am-7:45am	Children enrolled in Early Stay should be walked in, and signed in.
Car Line Arrival	7:45am-8:10am	Tardy at 8:10-check in at the front office.
Children arriving after 8:10am are Tardy and will need to be checked in at the front office. <b>Children may not arrive after 8:30am without a doctor's note.</b> Late Arrival cut-off time (with a doctor's note) is 11:00am.		
Car Line Departure	3:00pm-3:15pm	Pick-up in Car Line under the portico.
Late Stay	3:15pm-6:00pm	Children enrolled in Late Stay may be picked up after signing them out in the front office, and then walking down to their Late Stay classroom.

## Tardy Policy

Punctual attendance is very important for your child's day. Late arrival impacts children in a number of negative ways: it is disruptive both to the tardy child and the other children in the classroom, and disturbs the work cycle for the community. Late arrival and irregular attendance affect the child's social, academic, and personal success. Children who arrive on time are able to peacefully acclimate to the environment, prepare for their morning, and reap the benefits of being present for the full Montessori work cycle. Children who are tardy often have a difficult time establishing a routine in the classroom.

In an effort to protect the Montessori work cycle, OGMS' Tardy Policy has a late arrival cut-off time of 8:30am. Children may arrive after 8:30am with a doctor's note (late arrival with a doctor's note is permitted until 11:00am). Children may not be checked out and return back to school mid-day. Please work to schedule any appointments for the beginning or end of your child's school day.

A meeting with an Administrator and/or Lead Teacher may be scheduled with families with persistent tardiness and/or absences to work towards a solution. Persistent tardiness may lead to dismissal from OGMS.

## **Car Line Procedure**

Please see the below policies for Car Line. These policies are upheld to promote the safety of our families.

- Please pull into campus following the painted arrows on the asphalt (these are 'backwards' from typical road rules).
- We only use the 'right hand' lane.
- If you're the first car, please pull all the way up to the stop sign.
- About five cars can unload/load at a time; please do not load/unload until you reach the portico.
- Please escort child(ren) all the way to the gate.
- Sign your child(ren) in/out of the Attendance binder.
- Vehicles may not drive around others/pass others in Car Line.
- If you arrive late and the stop sign has been moved to block entry into Car Line, please park and walk your child to the front door.
- If you have a hesitant child (or adult), please park in the gravel lot and walk your child to the gate to separate.

## **Departure**

If your child is not ready when they are called to Car Line, please return to your vehicle and circle around the Car Line again, or pull through and park in the gravel area. Often a child is changing clothes, a diaper, or finishing a job. Please be considerate of other families by pulling off to the parking lot allowing the line to continue moving.

Please note that any communication needs you have for your child's Lead Teacher should be made by a note or phone call to the Front Office, or through Transparent Classroom. Arrival and Departure are busy times, and not well-suited for addressing any concerns or questions you may have about your child.

## **Early Pick-up**

If you need to pick your child up early, please notify the Lead Teacher or Front Office by sending in a note or emailing. For recurring early pick-up, please meet with an Administrator to discuss arrangements.

## **Late Pick-up**

The Late Pick Up Fee for children picked up after Car Line ends at 3:15 (but before 3:30pm) is \$20. Children picked up later than 3:30pm will be considered dropping in for Late Stay.

There will be a charge for children who are picked up after 6:00pm. We will charge \$20 per child for every 15-minute interval that a parent arrives after 6:00pm. If you are more than one hour late, and the school has been unable to contact anyone listed on your child's emergency release form, the law requires that we contact Social Services, who will then pick your child up for safe-keeping.

## **Clothing and Belongings**

Children should come to school in “work” clothes. A child should be unconscious of the clothing rather than distracted by a falling strap, a too tight waistband, missing buttons, large hair bows, or stubborn zippers. To encourage mastery and independence, children should wear clothing that they can manage by themselves. If they cannot manage shoelaces, overalls, belts, suspenders, tights, or small buttons at home, they will have the same problems at school. Beyond Infant, children should not wear onesies/rompers at school--these prevent the child from being independent in the early stages of undressing/dressing relating to toileting needs. Along these lines, children should not wear laced shoes to school (double knots discourage children from learning to tie and keep them dependent on an adult when needing to change shoes). Help foster self-confidence in your child, and help them develop independence, order, and a sense of style, by empowering them to choose among clothing options they can operate themselves. We don't mind that outfits don't always match.

Excessive jewelry/accessories (headbands, sunglasses, purses, etc.) and some clothing can cause a distraction in the classroom. If clothing or accessories are not suitable for school, they will be sent back home with a note letting the parent know these should not be worn to school again.

Toilet-learned Toddlers and Primary-aged children should wear underwear/panties and bottoms while at school. For comfort on the playground (particularly for sandbox use, and when sitting in mulched areas), we ask that girls wearing dresses/skirts also wear shorts/leggings underneath.

Safety is also a factor to consider when providing clothes for your child. Closed-toe shoes are required. In cold weather, we will continue to go outside, therefore, each child should have appropriate outerwear, including: warm mittens, scarves, and hats.

Extra clothing: Please leave an entire set (Toddlers—at least two extra sets) of clothes including underwear and socks in your child's clothes bag. Please put your child's name on everything. Proper labeling ensures that your child will come home with his own clothes. We do have a lost and found box, which we suggest you check periodically.

Outside shoes: Toddler and Primary students need a pair of outside shoes to change into when they work in the gardens and play on the playground. This process helps maintain a higher degree of cleanliness in the classroom. We prefer your child to have rubber-soled, non-slip shoes for ease in running and climbing equipment.

**\*Labeling all items your child brings to school is a requirement**

## **Birthday: Celebration of Life**

Birthdays are important celebrations for children. Teachers ask parents to send in a timeline of their child's life, featuring a picture or two from each year. This is shown to the class, and the child and teacher can talk about the progression from year to year. Parents (along with their child, if possible) should write a sentence describing an event for each year of life. During the traditional Montessori celebration that follows, the child walks around a candle, which represents the Sun. Each trip around the "Sun" represents one year of life. As the child circles the "Sun", the teachers and children sing the song *The Earth Goes Around the Sun*.

### **Example:**

*First year: John was born in Denver, Colorado, on December 15, 2018. He was a happy healthy baby. During the summer, he went to visit his grandmother in Austin, Texas. He took along his favorite toy, a brown bear named Paddington.*

*Second year: When John was one year old, he stood up and walked to his dad. For his birthday, his cousins came to share his birthday cake. He made friends with the next door neighbor's dog, Spot.*

And, so it continues for each year, a few sentences about the year are adequate.

If you would like to bring in a special treat, please consult your teacher with your suggestion. *Please understand that only a healthy, store-bought snack should be sent in for a child's birthday celebration: no iced cupcakes, cookies, ice cream, or homemade treats will be served.* Birthdays at school are not intended as the child's primary celebration, so please no party favors, balloons, hats, etc. Birthday invitations should be mailed to the family home not delivered at the school.

A tradition at Oak Grove Montessori is to have your child bring in a gift to the classroom in honor of your child's birthday. This can be an educational book, cd, or wish list material for the classroom. Under the Montessori Resources tab, in the school's Amazon store, we have provided a list of desired book titles for our Library. You can purchase a book in honor of your child's birthday to be placed in the school library with a custom bookplate designating which child donated it.

## **Nutrition & Meals**

At Oak Grove, we believe good nutritional habits are essential to a healthy, developing child. We go to great lengths to provide nutritious, unprocessed foods during your child's school day and hope you will support these efforts by encouraging healthy eating habits outside of school. We believe young children should drink large amounts of water and some natural juices, rather than heavy quantities of milk, sugary drinks, or caffeinated sodas.

In our infant communities, nutrition is handled on a case-by-case basis, with parents completing individual feeding plans (and providing food/milk/etc. from home as needed) as their infant's needs change. Older infants begin transitioning to an age-appropriate school lunch as soon as parents are open to it.

### **Breakfast**

Parents should provide breakfast before arriving at school. Morning snack is provided in each classroom. Please do not send your child in with unfinished food or drink, *unless your child arrives for Early Stay before 7:30am* (so they have time to finish eating before walking to class). Outside food and drink from home pose a danger to children with allergies in our community, so we try to limit having outside food brought into Toddler and Primary communities.

### **Lunch**

At Oak Grove, Lunch is a calm, social time when children can work towards developing good manners and polite conversation in a family-style setting. In each classroom, students participate in setting tables with linens and breakable dishes. Students practice grace and courtesy through opportunities to serve themselves and others. Discussions of nutrition, portion, and waste are modeled by each adult during lunch. Once lunch is over, children practice additional practical life skills as they clean up after themselves. Children are encouraged (not required) to try everything that is prepared for lunch each day. State regulations require us to serve milk to all preschool-aged children. However, they do not have to drink it. Your child may choose to drink water, if they don't drink milk. Dairy milk and water are the only choices provided with lunch (lactose-intolerant children may bring in their own dairy-free milk alternative, or drink water).

Oak Grove's monthly lunch menu is posted on its website.

### **Snack**

Food/snack preparation is a very important activity in the Montessori classroom and is available daily in every classroom. In Toddler and Primary communities, the snack list is created by the teacher each week. Each family is asked to provide community snack on a rotating schedule (this amounts to bringing in snack a few times a year). This is an exciting responsibility for your child, and they take great pride in bringing in snack for their friends. You are encouraged to allow your child to participate in the purchase of these items.

## **Nap & Siesta**

Since our preschool program is licensed by the state, we are required to provide, depending on age, a set nap period for preschoolers that usually ranges from 1½ to 2 hours. We provide sheets and napping mats or cots for Toddlers and Primary students and ask that the child bring a blanket from home. Blankets will be sent home each week for laundering. If a child has an accident during naptime, all of the bedding is sent home to launder, including the school sheet. Children under 5 years old are required to rest on a mat/cot according to state regulations. Once a child is 5 years old, and has the maturity and attention span to maintain focus during the afternoon work cycle, they will be considered an “afternoon child”. Your child’s Directress can discuss this process when your child is ready.

## **Safe Sleep Practices**

- 1) Infants will be placed on their backs in a crib to sleep unless a physician’s written statement authorizing another sleep position for that infant is provided. The written statement must include how the infant shall be placed to sleep and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed.
- 2) Cribs shall be in compliance with CPCS and ASTM safety standards. They will be maintained in good repair and free from hazards.
- 3) No objects will be placed in or on the crib with an infant. This includes, but is not limited to: covers, blankets, toys, pillows, quilts, comforters, bumper pads, sheepskins, stuffed toys, or other soft items.
- 4) No objects will be attached to a crib with a sleeping infant, such as, but not limited to, crib gyms, toys, mirrors, and mobiles.
- 5) Only sleepers, sleep sacks, and wearable blankets provided by the parent/guardian and that fit according to the commercial manufacturer’s guidelines (and will not slip up around the infant’s face) may be worn for the comfort of the sleeping infant.
- 6) Individual crib bedding will be changed daily, or more often as needed, according to the rules. Bedding for cots/mats are marked for individual use. Sheets/blankets are laundered weekly (or more frequently if needed).
- 7) Infants who arrive asleep, and infants who fall asleep in other equipment or on the floor or elsewhere will be moved to a safety-approved crib for sleep.
- 8) Swaddling will not be permitted, unless a physician’s written statement authorizing it for a particular infant is provided. The written statement must include instructions and a time frame for swaddling the infant.
- 9) Wedges, other infant positioning devices and monitors will not be permitted unless a physician’s written statement authorizing its use for a particular infant is provided. The written statement must include instructions on how to use the device and a time frame for using it

## Diapering Procedure

Diaper checks and changes will take place at specific intervals throughout the day and as needed. Diapering will take place in a changing area that meets all state standards, following the state guidelines below:

1: **Prepare for Diapering:** Lay down table paper (paper towels) to cover the table from the child's shoulders to feet (in case it becomes soiled and must be folded over to create a clean surface during the change). Obtain enough wipes for the diaper change (including cleaning the child's bottom and the child's and teacher's hands after taking the soiled diaper away from the child's skin). Get a clean diaper, plastic bag for soiled clothes and clean clothes (if soiled clothing is anticipated). Gather your non-porous gloves (if they will be used), and a dab of diaper cream on a disposable paper towel, if cream is being used. Supplies should be removed from their containers and placed near, but not directly on, the diapering surface before starting the diaper change. The adult will then wash their hands with liquid soap and warm running water before donning disposable gloves.

2: **Avoid Contact with Soiled Items and Always Keep a Hand on the Child:** Place the child on the diapering table. Remove clothing to access diaper. If soiled, place clothes into a plastic bag. Remove soiled diaper and place into a lined, hands-free trash container. (To limit odor, seal in a plastic bag before placing into trash container.)

3: **Clean the Child:** Use wipes to clean the child's bottom from front to back. Use a wipe to remove soil from the adult's hands. Use another wipe to remove any soil from the child's hands. Throw soiled wipes into lined, hands-free trash container

4: **Put on a Clean Diaper and Wash Child's Hands:** Fasten a clean diaper on the child and assist them in re-dressing. Place the child at the sink and wash their hands following the proper hand washing procedure (infants may have their hands washed using an individual washcloth).

5: **Clean and Disinfect the Diapering Area:** Clean any visible soil from the diapering table. Spray the diapering surface with a disinfecting solution and wait more than 10 seconds before wiping with disposable paper towels (or allow to air-dry). The recommended practice is to wait for 2 minutes to allow the solution to kill germs. However, if there is a delay of more than 10 seconds before the solution is wiped from the surface, this is considered adequate. The surface cannot be sprayed and immediately wiped.

6: **Wash Your Hands and Record in the Child's Montessori Compass:** The adult should then wash their hands using the proper hand washing procedure before touching any other surfaces.

Additional precautions: All surfaces must be able to be sanitized- e.g., no quilted pads or safety straps, no containers that are stored on the diapering surface. Toys that are played with or objects that are touched while children's diapers are changed must be put aside to be sanitized.

## **Toilet Learning**

Toilet learning can be considered a challenging phase in development. We strongly believe teamwork makes this a more successful process. We will make every effort to coordinate our program with the one you start at home. Most children are ready to start this process around two years of age. We ask that you communicate with your child's Lead Teacher when you decide to make this step in your child's development. We also ask you to supply us with a minimum of three complete changes of clothing (including socks and training pants and shoes) for each day your child is in attendance.

# Discipline in the Montessori Classroom

Children in the Montessori classroom learn self-discipline through the reinforcement of three simple guidelines:

- I will respect myself.
- I will respect others.
- I will respect my environment.

Learning self-control is just a normal part of childhood development. Oak Grove's discipline policy is never to embarrass or ridicule a child when he does not behave, nor do we allow the use of corporal or physical punishment. By treating children with fairness and respect, we believe that children will develop a positive self-image and respect of themselves, others, and the environment. Most situations can be handled by redirecting a child to another, more appropriate activity. This approach is called "positive redirection." Occasionally, when necessary, we use a procedure called "calming." It gives children time to calm their body, mind, and voice and think about their actions before coming back to the group activity. It is a positive form of discipline that teaches appropriate behavior. Once the child is willing to abide by the stated ground rules, the child may return to the group.

## Discipline Policy

Oak Grove's discipline policy is intended to cultivate a positive atmosphere where productive learning can take place. By being free to move with purpose in the classroom, choose materials for himself, and select work from the shelves, a child develops self-discipline, self-control, and self-respect. Our goal is to support each child as they exercise these skills throughout each day. When needed, children are given natural and logical consequences to encourage development of inner self-control. We ask that you, as parents, partner with the school by redirecting inappropriate behavior outside of school, applying natural and logical consequences when parenting your child, encouraging the development of self-control by giving your child responsibilities in the home, and by filtering your child's exposure to negative, disrespectful, and combative types of media.

- If a child is disruptive to other students or endangers him/herself or others, staff will immediately intervene in as positive of a way as possible based on the circumstance. In some cases, a child may need to be physically assisted to gain self-control.
- If a child has trouble maintaining an acceptable, developmentally appropriate level of self-control at any given time, the staff redirects the child to an appropriate activity or area of the classroom (calming pillow, bench, chair) or back porch and may present a natural or logical consequence.
- If the child is still unable to gain control, the teacher will implement adult proximity measures by having the child stay with them until the child has settled, or the child may be removed from the classroom to work elsewhere.
- When an incident occurs that requires efforts beyond those described above to encourage the child to settle into the routine of the environment, the parent will be contacted and the child will go home for the day.
- If behavior becomes extreme or repetitive, a meeting is scheduled between the parents and teacher, and if warranted, with the Head of School and Director of Curriculum. A plan to modify the behavior will be developed with the parents, staff, and child, when appropriate.

When a pattern of disruptive behaviors is noted the following steps will be implemented until a favorable outcome is reached:

- The teacher will closely observe, monitor and document behavior
- The teacher will inform the parents of the behaviors.
- The student will be referred to the Student Support Team.
- The student, teacher, parents, and directors will develop a plan to modify the undesired behavior and seek professional help if necessary.
- If a child persists in unprovoked, willful hurting of others after reasonable discussion and application of natural and logical consequences, parents may be contacted to pick up their child.
- Continued negative behavior by a child will result in the school requesting parents seek a professional behavioral evaluation and possible expulsion.

## **Bullying Policy**

We believe that every child has the right to a safe environment in which to learn. Because we are educating young children, we know that “bullying” can often be the result of frustration, impulsiveness, or thoughtlessness rather than cruelty. We ask parents to partner with the staff at Oak Grove Montessori to ensure that social interactions their children have, outside of the school environment, are monitored and redirected, if, and when, bullying behaviors are present.

We define bullying as a series of repeated intentionally cruel incidents, which involve the same children, in the same roles as victim and bully. This does not mean that in order for bullying to occur there must be repeat offenses. Bullying can consist of a single interaction. Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Types of bullying are included, but not limited to, the following:

**Verbal** - insulting, name calling, teasing

**Physical** - hitting, kicking, slapping, tripping

**Emotional** - exclusion, relational aggression

**Sexual** - making inappropriate physical contact

To minimize incidents of bullying, we take a proactive stance by educating our students through facilitated small and large group discussion, character building activities, including: modeling behavior, role playing, art, rights of the classroom, conflict resolution, and physical movement, amongst others.

If a student is observed engaging in bullying behavior, based on the variables associated with the situation, the following consequence will apply:

- The teacher will discuss the incident and its effect on the victim, with the offender. The offender will discuss options to express him/herself appropriately. The offender will choose and implement a peaceful way to seek forgiveness from the victim.
- If on the playground, the offender loses the privilege to play with classmates for a period of time to be determined by the teacher, based on the circumstances. This could range from the rest of playtime to several days of missed playtime. The parents of both children are notified of the incident.
- If in the classroom, the offender may lose the privilege of working with peers or need to be isolated to a different workspace, possibly in another room. The parents of both children are notified of the incident.
- If warranted, the offender will meet with the Head of School and teacher to create a plan of remediation. Parents are given a copy of the plan.
- In the case of repetitive behaviors, the teacher and offending student will meet with the parents and develop a measurable plan of remediation.
- If bullying behaviors continue, despite a plan of remediation in place, the parent of the offender will be asked to seek professional guidance for the student.
- If improvement is not noted, within a reasonable amount of time, once professional help is obtained, the offending student may be expelled from Oak Grove.

## **Inclement/Excessively Hot Weather**

Extreme heat, cold, rain, snow, or sleet may prevent outdoor play. Should the weather be excessively hot or cold, we will utilize our multi-purpose room in lieu of outdoor playtime. Most days, however, despite the weather, children can play outdoors for some length of time. Weather should only be a factor in determining the duration of outdoor play.

As deemed appropriate, the parent should apply sunscreen to their child before arriving at school. A second application may be applied upon request if the parent provides the sunscreen and has signed an External Applications Form. This additional application will take place after nap.

For the first outdoor play of the day, the parent should have applied sunscreen and bug spray prior to Arrival.

## **Playtime**

Please encourage your child to have the appropriate outdoor clothing for the weather. If your child is at school, they must be able to participate in outside playtime. We do not keep children inside with a staff member during recess, regardless of parent request. If your child is too sick to participate in playtime, they should remain at home.

## **Nature**

We are fortunate to have an abundance of nature at our fingertips here at Oak Grove. Exploration and hands-on experiences are priceless learning opportunities not available in most traditional school settings. However, with these opportunities come occasional contacts that are not always positive. Please be mindful that all reasonable precautions and educational opportunities will be taken when it comes to thorns, briars, poison ivy and oak, splinters, and insects. Due to our location, we are more prone to seasonal pests such as ticks. Tick season is usually short-termed and can be easily remedied by checking over your child frequently during the spring months.

## **Television & Video**

At Oak Grove Montessori, the use of television or videos is not permitted during the instructional school day. Television may be used during Parent Education Programs when children are not present.

## **Unusual Happenings or Changes at Home**

In order to meet the varying needs of your child, please advise your child's Directress of any changes as they occur. A change in the home environment may tend to alter your child's behavior in school. If you observe sudden changes in your child's behavior or attitude, please let us know so we can work together in assisting your child through the adjustment period. Moving homes, parents separating, a death in the family, a new baby, or other changes from normal routine will have a great impact on most children, and we would like to help.

## **Change of Address or Contact Information**

As soon as you change either your address or telephone number (work or home), please

edit your contact information on Transparent Classroom. After you have updated your information, please email the school so that we can print copies of the new information for emergency folders. Emergency contacts and other pertinent information must be kept current as regulated by the state of Georgia.

### **Documentation of Legal Status**

If applicable, documentation such as, but not limited to: restraining orders, guardianship, powers of attorney, court orders, custody issues, etc., must be filed with the school office.

### **Accidents**

We take every precaution to make sure your child is safe. That includes a comprehensive safety awareness program, required Health & Safety training, and required CPR/first aid/fire safety training for all of our staff. We schedule frequent inspections and maintenance of buildings, playgrounds, and equipment. If an accident occurs and medical attention is needed, we will notify you or your designated emergency contact after 911 is contacted. If transportation to an emergency facility is necessary, the student will be automatically taken to Tanner Medical Center in Carrollton.

### **Severe Weather & Drills**

For **School Closings** due to severe weather, parents will be notified via email if notice is given in advance, or by email and phone if same-day notice is given. If **Carroll County Schools** close for weather-related conditions, so will Oak Grove Montessori School.

The school is equipped with smoke detectors, a fire alarm system, and a severe weather radio. To prepare for fire, severe weather, or disaster evacuation, we hold regular drills and practices. These drills will assist in training your child to react in a safe and orderly manner. Each class will go to a designated area and take roll of the children assigned to their class. When everyone's safety has been established, the children will be allowed to return to the class. If an actual emergency requires evacuation of our school, we will notify you as soon as the children are safe.

### **Authorized Release**

We will release your child only to those persons listed on the authorization form you completed at registration. If you need someone besides those listed to pick up your child, please send in a note stating this, or call the Main Office. A photo ID will be required from this individual at time of pick-up. Any individual at any time when on campus may be asked to show their ID (even a parent that regularly picks up) by any staff member who sees them. Authorized Pick Up lists are required to be updated each school year.

### **CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT**

By law, childcare providers are mandated reporters. This means we are required to report any suspicion of child abuse/neglect. We will not tolerate child abuse/neglect in any form.

### **CLASSROOM OBSERVATION**

One of the best and most delightful ways to learn about the Montessori approach to education is to observe a class in session. We invite you to visit the school between October and May. Please call to schedule a time to observe the classroom and your child at work. Please schedule this appointment when you can make other arrangements for the care of siblings. We ask you to remain seated and unobtrusive so that the children will go about their work in a normal fashion. This is best achieved by having the children soon forget you are there. Please plan to spend at least 30 minutes in your child's classroom. This will give you some sense of the materials used, the children's work cycles, and general impressions of the school day. Toddler parents are free to observe, unnoticed through two-way windows. We encourage anyone so desiring to stay for the entire morning work cycle. Feel free to jot down any questions or observations you have. These will be answered by your child's Lead at a mutually convenient time. Your impressions of the class are important to us.

# How We Measure Progress

## **GRADING**

By design, a majority of the materials used in Primary classrooms are self-correcting. As a result, there is no need for a traditional grading system in authentic Montessori schools. When errors occur in work that is not self-correcting, the child might be asked to try it again, or to have an older child check their work. This is done discreetly, without use of red marks, or other methods that might cause feelings of failure or rejection. During the school-aged years, higher levels of editing and peer checking are implemented. As a result, children experience more positive interactions with the materials while building confidence in their abilities to choose challenging work and take risks. Without the presence of over-correction, Montessori students display higher self-esteem at a younger age.

## **PORTFOLIO**

The Montessori Method of education does not include a “grading” system. The children’s progress is evaluated through a variety of methods included in what is called a portfolio. Through daily observation, the educator watches each child for signs of interest, need, frustration, readiness, confusion, success, and joy. These observations are recorded and filed for each child. The educator prepares the environment continuously to address the observations they make. Through daily record keeping, checklists, note taking, work samples, and screening instruments, the educator is able to describe each child’s developmental progress at any given time throughout the school year.

## **CHILDREN’S WRITTEN SCHOOLWORK**

The product of the Montessori classroom is the child, not the written work that they produce. The growth within the child occurs during the process of an activity, and most activities produce no written work. There are results, which are less tangible and, yet, more important, such as your child’s growth in self-confidence, independence, concentration, and coordination. Your child may bring homework from time to time. Look at their work and let them tell you about it if they wish, but, please make no critical remarks about quantity or quality. It is important that children work spontaneously, following their own interests, rather than in response to outside pressure. You may notice errors in your older child’s work, such as letter/numeral reversals or misspelled words. This is a normal step in your child’s development, and we do not correct “errors” at the time they occur because we do not wish to discourage the child or lessen their joy of accomplishment. We simply represent at another time. We all learn through our mistakes.

## **Testing**

At Oak Grove, testing within our program is limited. Regardless of the situation, test interpretations are considered as one of many resources that aid in developing effective educational programs that meet the needs of each child. Standardized testing provides an opportunity for elementary age students to develop practice for later testing experiences and offers mutually accepted data for transitioning students when leaving the Montessori environment to enter a traditional school program.

A brief standardized achievement test, such as the Young Children's Achievement Test (YCAT), may be given to five year old students during their third year in the Primary program. An instrument such as the YCAT provides very basic developmental information helpful in identifying possible areas of need.

Participation in testing sessions provide valuable experiences Montessori students will likely encounter after leaving Oak Grove. Test results are made available to parents and other schools by request only. Parental consent for any individual testing, not given to a group or class, will be obtained prior to testing.

## Communication

It is important to us that we establish a healthy relationship with the parents of the children in attendance at Oak Grove Montessori. To assist in establishing this relationship, we will provide opportunities for you to learn and see firsthand the Montessori Method at work.

<b>Transparent Classroom</b>	Transparent Classroom is used by educators to keep attendance, to record observations, for class and individual communications, and to record progress. Parents receive regular updates on TC.
<b>Montessori Mail</b>	Published most Thursdays and sent by TC (available by hard-copy per request). Contains important dates and event details.
<b>Parent Conferences</b>	Mid-year parent/teacher conferences are scheduled once a year. If you are unable to attend during your scheduled time, please reach out to your child's Lead Teacher to reschedule. Parents may request additional meetings/conferences at any time during the school year.
<b>Observations</b>	Please plan to observe your child's class, at least once a year, between the months of October-May. You may schedule this with the Main Office.
<b>Six Week Contact</b>	Each family is contacted by their child's teacher with a brief update within the first six weeks of school. This may be done in person, by email, or phone call. Please make an effort to return your teacher's call, if a message is received.
<b>E-mail</b>	<p>You may contact the school office at any time at <a href="mailto:ogmoffice@gmail.com">ogmoffice@gmail.com</a>. Parents can email their child's classroom directly via the classroom email address:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Nest <a href="mailto:ogmsthenest@gmail.com">ogmsthenest@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Eyrie <a href="mailto:ogmstheeyrie@gmail.com">ogmstheeyrie@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Hollow <a href="mailto:ogmsthehollow@gmail.com">ogmsthehollow@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Hive <a href="mailto:ogmsthehive@gmail.com">ogmsthehive@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Burrow <a href="mailto:ogmstheburrow@gmail.com">ogmstheburrow@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Den <a href="mailto:ogmstheden@gmail.com">ogmstheden@gmail.com</a></li> <li>• The Warren <a href="mailto:ogmsthewarren@gmail.com">ogmsthewarren@gmail.com</a></li> </ul>
<b>PHONE</b>	During the school day, the Main Office may be reached at any time at 770.214.0112. Voicemails will be returned at the earliest opportunity.
<b>Website</b>	The school's website contains calendar changes, event details, and necessary forms for parent convenience: <a href="http://www.oakgrovemontessori.com">www.oakgrovemontessori.com</a>

## **Student Support Team**

The Student Support Team (SST) is made up of a committee of staff members who represent different relationships with a given student. The purpose of the team is to provide the teacher and family support through discussion and suggestions to increase the benefits of the classroom for said student. Through this process, a student may be referred to outside resources for additional assessment or evaluation. One example might include Speech and Language services.

## **Conferences**

Educators will schedule one formal conference during the school year; typically in January or February. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend the conference. A written progress report is provided at the conference. Your child's Lead Educator is always available to discuss your child's progress and any concerns you may have at any time. If you wish to speak with your child's Lead Teacher, please be mindful that arrival and dismissal times, especially in the car line, are often filled with caring for the children. Feel free to contact your child's teacher asking for a phone or in-person conference/meeting, or leave a note with the main office requesting a call from your child's teacher.

## **Grievance Policy**

Oak Grove Montessori is based on the Montessori philosophy that strives to create an atmosphere of mutual respect and support between all members of the community: staff, children, and parents. Differences and disagreements are a part of life, and the Oak Grove staff and administration recognize the need for positive, proactive communication in order to handle grievances. Final decisions regarding enrollment, or dismissal, of a student, is the sole responsibility of the Board of Directors.

## **Parent Grievance with a Staff Member**

- If parents have a complaint with a staff member, we ask that the parent:
  - Report their complaint directly to the school member concerned, discussing these concerns in a private meeting, within one to two days. The Directors will be made aware of the concern by the parent and the second party involved if they are not resolved.
  - If a meeting with the staff member, parent, and Head of School is required, the parent will fill out a Grievance form, located in the front office, and submit it to the board of directors before a meeting is scheduled. A board member may be present for this meeting. Minutes of the meeting, as well as possible resolutions, will be recorded with copies provided to each member. The school head will follow up with the parent and staff member within seven days for an update, and again at 14 days to determine if full resolution has been achieved.

# Health Policies

Please respect and adhere to the following health policies at Oak Grove Montessori:

- There is NO tobacco usage in the school buildings, or on school grounds.
- There is no consumption of alcohol on school grounds and/or during school events, when children are present.
- Notify the school as soon as possible if your child has been diagnosed with a contagious disease. We like to inform other parents to watch their children for symptoms, but we never release your child's name. Contagious diseases most commonly found are: measles, chicken pox, pink eye (conjunctivitis), impetigo, head lice (pediculosis), hand, foot, mouth, and strep throat (streptococcus).
- Should your child become ill at school, the Emergency Authorization contacts will be used. First, we try to reach the child's parents using either the home, work, or cell telephone numbers. If no one answers, we will try to reach the people who are authorized to pick up your child. If the illness or injury is of a serious nature, and we are unable to reach you, we will use the Authorization Form to obtain emergency medical treatment. Please be sure to list any special medical considerations or allergies at the bottom of the form and remember to update it when significant changes occur.
- It is your responsibility to keep the school informed of food allergies or sensitivities affecting your child and complete the required Allergy forms. Lists of students (including pictures of each child) with allergies is posted in the kitchen, main office, and all classrooms.
- In the case of an extended illness, please contact the school each day that your child is unable to attend or indicate the predicted day of return.
- Please plan the timing for medications to be administered at home. If it is necessary for your child to take medication while at school, we can only administer physician-prescribed medication if it is brought in a pharmaceutical container labeled with your child's name, the name of the medication, and all pertinent instructions. Both prescription and over-the-counter medications must be taken to the front office and require a medication form in order to be administered. Emergency inhalers and epinephrine auto-injectors (e.g. Epi-pens or Auvi-Qs) are kept in the child's classroom.
- **Your child must remain fever-free for 24 hours (without medication).** Please check with your doctor before bringing your child back to school. If your child has been given medication for a bacterial illness, he should be on such **medication for 48 hours before returning to school**, or upon the advice of your physician.
- Remember, a sick child will be much more comfortable at home than at school. If your child's illness makes him sleepy, weepy, or cranky at home, he will be more so at school. Please do not send a sick child to school. Rest and recuperation will help reduce the length of your child's illness and ensure a full recovery. Children who are not well enough to participate in school activities should remain home.
- We may request a doctor's note before your child's return to school.
- Additional precautions may be taken in the event of a pandemic, or localized outbreak. These may include: stricter illness policy relating to the infectious disease, reduced hours of operation, and/or adjusted class sizes, among other steps to

promote the safety of our community. Please see our Pandemic Policy, located in the Appendices at the end of this Handbook.

**The following criteria will be considered in determining when a child should be sent home from school:**

- Temperature (temporal or ear) exceeding 100.4 F.
- Persistent heavy wet cough with breathlessness, or noisy breathing.
- Severe headache, requiring the child to lie down for relief.
- Persistent or severe earache, upset stomach, or diarrhea (regardless of cause).
- Persistent emotional distress.
- Vomiting.
- Severe fall with significant swelling.
- Significant increase in urination with or without pain.
- Evidence of a contagious condition: e.g. head lice, impetigo.
- Persistent discomfort: severe itching from rash, runny nose, or anything that makes the child uncomfortable and unable to participate in school.

# Appendices

[What Can I Do at Home?](#)

[Instead of This, Say This](#)  
[\(excerpt from “The Montessori Toddler”\)](#)

[BITING Policy](#)

[PANDEMIC Policy](#) (Including our COVID-19 Policy)