

Tree of Life Charter School

– A Montessori Public Charter –

Family Handbook 2023-24



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Montessori Philosophy

Over a century ago, Dr. Maria Montessori began to demonstrate that the natural curiosity of very young children could be the center of an education that effectively explores, reveals, and develops their true capacities. The wonderfully flexible educational method she developed was based not on theories or dogmatic beliefs, but on actual observation of children's real nature and activities. She filled their educational environment with materials they could discover and work with to learn. And she supplied both the guidance needed to get a child started at the right time with the right activity and the direct personal supervision needed to help the child succeed. The Montessori Method was eventually expanded to include older children and adolescents. The careful, loving observation that is the key to her method has always focused on the individual child—not on age, or on peer group, or on preconceived standards of readiness, but on seeing and respecting each and every child.

- **Respect and dignity** for children and their amazing abilities provide the foundation of the Montessori Method. Our environment and our staff present children with many opportunities for developing their physical abilities, social skills, intellectual curiosity, emotional awareness, and spiritual connection.
- **Community interaction** is a daily occurrence at our school. Within the school itself, you will not find children segregated by age or gender but working in a multi-age minicommunity. Children spontaneously help each other and, in the process, develop a sense of empathy for others with different abilities. The school has on-going relationships with local and global organizations and businesses. We have several school community events each year. Parents and families are important to us.
- **Enthusiasm and curiosity** are the inner motivations for each child's exploration of the universe. Sparked by their own curiosity, a question about a lesson presentation, or the inner need to master a skill, children work with enthusiasm and interest that is self-motivated. You will not find grades, competitions, rewards, or punishments used to manipulate motivation in our program.
- **Freedom to choose** from a variety of meaningful activities, freedom to move about the environment, and freedom to work for extended periods of time help children to develop inner discipline and the ability to concentrate. Because the children are free to move and choose activities suited to their needs, they do not develop the fatigue that other schools need to relieve with "recess." Because they are not required to change activities frequently according to a schedule predetermined by a teacher, they can work for long periods without interruption, thus developing concentration and focused attention.
- **Activities suited to the child's development** at each stage help the child to develop the skills needed for the following stage. Children have sensitive periods when they are especially receptive to learning particular skills. Younger children are sensorial explorers of their immediate environment, while older children are capable of exploring the universe with their imaginations. The oldest children are explorers of society and relationships. Each child works at a pace and level uniquely suited to that child's capabilities and potential, making continual progress. There are no grade levels and no labels of "gifted" or "disabled."
- **Nurturing adult staff** are the catalyst between the child and the environment. These special people have a sincere respect and love for children, providing guidance and limits when necessary, and they are dearly loved by the children.
- **Peace through humane education** was one of Dr. Maria Montessori's hope for the world. In our program the development of cooperation, friendship, tolerance and appreciation of human differences, and peace are direct outcomes of this sensible educational method.

The Beginning Project

Tree of Life Charter School is a primary activity of The Beginning Project, a California non-profit organization. The purpose of The Beginning Project is to provide educational

services and programs. Its aim is to help children acquire the knowledge, skills, abilities, emotional maturity, and community awareness needed to function as productive and creative members of society. It provides information to parents and guardians to help them support their children's education and overall development. All donations to the organization and school are tax deductible, and our federal tax identification number is 68-0455188. The Beginning Project Board currently has four members and meets quarterly or more often in public meetings noticed and conducted according to California's Ralph M. Brown Act.

Vision Statement

Like parents everywhere, we care about our children, want what's best for them, and know that their experience in school can have a great impact on the quality of their life. We want them to have an education that is worthy of their beauty and potential. We want them in a place where they are known, not as part of a pack or as faces in a crowd, but individually and personally. We want them in a school where they receive direct, high-quality attention, where their actual needs are met, where their potential is being realized. We want them in a classroom where they are engaged, interested, and happy, a place where they have a say about what they learn and how they learn it, where their education means something to them and to us, and where they have a vote and voice in class decisions. We want them in an environment where they are respected and where they are expected to respect each other and are held accountable for it. We believe these simple but far-reaching desires can be the basis of an education that helps children grow into creative, truthful, compassionate, useful adults who go on learning, and who contribute meaningfully to the society that makes their education possible.

Our Mission

Utilizing the Montessori philosophy, we will work and learn with our children, with our school staff, with each other, and with the community to develop confident, creative, fruitful citizens of a world made better by their having the opportunity to fully develop.

School Governance

Tree of Life Charter School was chartered by the Ukiah Unified School District and received its charter from the California Department of Education in December 1999. The charter was renewed in 2005, 2010, 2015, and 2020. The school's business is run by an eight person Charter Board Cabinet consisting of two parent representatives, a representative of The Beginning Project, the school's Principal and another staff member, two representatives of the community at large (with no child in the school), and a student representative (who votes on all matters not legally requiring adult status). A non-voting representative of the Ukiah Unified School District may attend ex-officio. Meetings are noticed and conducted according to California's Ralph M. Brown Act, and they are open to the general public. During the 2023-24 school year, Tree of Life Charter School will serve students in four multi-age class groups spanning ages 4-12 in traditional grades TK-6 and one 7th grade classroom. Each class selects two representatives each semester for Student Council.

The school does not discriminate in enrollment or employment on the basis of race, color, creed, gender, national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation, medical condition, veteran status, marital status, or any criteria protected by state or federal law.

Attendance and Absence Policies

In person school attendance is the best way for children to learn academically, socially, and emotionally. It creates a sense of belonging and community. There is no substitute for in class, hands on learning. Absent students risk missing important lessons, demonstrations, field trips, and other learning experiences that cannot necessarily be repeated or duplicated. Additionally, the amount of revenue the school receives from the government for its operating expenses is dependent upon attendance of its students. The school receives less money when students are absent from school for any reason. To ensure both that students do not miss important educational opportunities and that the school receives enough funds to operate optimally, it is essential that students are not absent unless they are ill.

Independent Study Plans

When a student must be absent from school for any reason other than serious illness, including medical or dental appointment or reason, family emergency, or trip that could not be scheduled during regular school breaks, the student, student's family, and Guide are expected to set up a temporary Independent Study Plan which qualifies as school attendance. This ensures that the student does not miss out on learning time or skills practice, and that s/he stays current with any assignments that have due dates. Completion of the plan must be documented by the student and parents/guardians in the work log, journal, or by work samples. An Independent Study Plan form must be prepared and signed by student, parent/guardian, and Guide that states the work to be done and date due. This must be turned in to the office in a timely manner. The Guide and Principal will verify whether the student completed the plan successfully with the minimum number of hours of study to qualify for attendance. Long term independent study programs may be available for a limited number of home-schooling students. Parents should notify the office of their request for Independent Study for their child, and the office will contact the Guide to prepare a plan. The office will notify the parent/guardian when the plan is ready to sign and pick up. Please return all completed packets to the office by the due date.

Notifying the School of Absence or Tardiness

Parents/Guardians should call the school as soon as they know their child will be absent, tardy, or to request Independent Study. If staff members are unable to answer the phone, leave a message on the answering machine stating your name, your child's name, reason for absence or tardiness, and expected length of absence. **Please call each day, preferably before 9 AM, that your child is absent or tardy. Students arriving after 9 AM need to be signed in at the office by the adult transporting them. School begins at 8:30 AM.**

Excessive Absences Policy

The intent of the Excessive Absences Policy is to notify parents/guardians when their child has been excessively absent, and absence is affecting the child's learning. Through communication by letter and conference with parents/guardians, the family will be notified initially when the student's absence is over 5% or 10 days of the school year, and again when it is over 10% or 20 days. Independent Study will be encouraged for students who are not seriously ill in order to facilitate continuation of education during absences. Students who do Independent Study work are not considered absent. Parents/guardians must have a medical note faxed, mailed, or delivered to the school for students who are absent 5 or more days consecutively due to illness. This verifies serious illness, and it alerts the school to any action or notification it should take to prevent spread of disease. A maximum of 10 absences due to illness are excusable each year, unless a Chronic Illness Verification Form is filed with the school. In the case that a student is absent for more than 20 days of the school year and was not seriously ill, or had 3 or more unexcused absences or tardies constituting truancy, the staff may notify Child Protective Services of a possible child neglect issue. State law requires parents/guardians to have their children attend school full time every school day unless the child is ill, has a medical appointment, is attending the funeral of an immediate family member, or is participating in an authorized religious activity. Students with unexcused

absences of 3 days or more are truant, and a truancy notification letter will be mailed to the family along with an appointment date for a meeting with the Principal to discuss rectifying the matter. Tree of Life Charter School and its staff is here to support your child and your family. If your child has excessive absences, we would like to help problem solve with you to make sure your child gets the education that they deserve.

Preventing Tardiness

Students arriving at school late often interrupt on-going activities and other students who are already working, miss important parts of class meetings or lessons, or miss out on the long work period that helps develop concentration, so our school has a proactive tardiness policy. Tardiness can be prevented by preparing lunch and clothing the evening before, making sure that students get enough sleep, and having a family planning meeting to get suggestions from family members about what strategies will help them be on time.

When any student is tardy three (3) times, a meeting will be held with the student, the student's family, and the Guide to discuss measures to prevent further occurrences. As a way of learning about the natural and logical consequences of tardiness, students may be asked to make up the missed school time during break times or after school.

Appointments, Early Pick-up, Late Pick-up

Notify the school about appointments or changes in pick-up times at the beginning of the day by note or phone call to the office, so staff will be prepared and not puzzled! Students arriving or returning after 9 AM or being picked up before dismissal time need to be signed in/out in the office by the adult transporting them. Please do not enter the classroom before dismissal time to pick up your child early unless needed for an appointment or emergency. Tree of Life has a Before Care Program that begins at 7:30 and an After Care Program that end at 5:30. Parents of children in those programs will need to come onto campus and sign their child in/out.

What to Wear to School

1. Clothing worn to school should be clean, neat, and in good repair. Students should wear clothing in which they can move easily and that is easily washable in case of paint, glue, dirt, or food spills.
2. Think of the changeable weather and provide a sweater or a jacket, labeled with child's name. It is much easier to remove an unneeded item than to put on something you don't have. A sweater, jacket, or heavy long-sleeved shirt must be worn outside if the temperature is below 55 degrees F. Clothing must be appropriate for the weather.
3. Good-fitting, supportive, closed toe shoes must be worn by students to school for sports, walks, and play. If a student is not wearing these shoes to school, a phone call will be made to the parent/guardian to bring a pair of safe shoes to school. Students may bring an extra pair of hard-soled non-sports shoes to change into at school for wearing inside the classroom. No wheeled shoes are allowed.
4. Leave a compact but complete set of clothing, each piece labeled with child's name, in a labeled cloth or plastic bag that will fit easily in the child's cubby at school in case of accidents or spills. (This is needed for each child, no matter the child's age.) If these are used, bring a replacement set to school the next day.
5. A cap or hat with brim must be worn on walks and outdoor field trips longer than ½ hour to prevent sun damage and overheating. This labeled cap or hat should remain at school

- in the student's storage area. Sunscreen is recommended. Students will only be allowed to wear their own sunscreen to ensure that they are using the type their family prefers.
6. All clothing that can be removed should be marked with the child's name. Unmarked clothing that is not claimed from Lost and Found will be given to a charitable group at the end of each month.

Bringing Items from Home

In order to prevent distraction in the classroom and loss or damage to personal items, the school has developed policies for bringing items from home:

1. Toys, dolls, stuffed animals, balls, cards, games, cell phones, and electronic equipment other than computers or calculators may not be brought to school.
2. Exceptions may be made on Spirit Days when a particular type of item is allowed to be shared.
3. Books, recordings, or other items for curriculum enrichment may be brought to school after checking with the student's Guide to determine appropriateness. (Sometimes items children want to share at school do not fit well with the current curriculum and might be more appropriate for another time.)
4. Any item allowed to be brought to school must be labeled with the student's or family's name. **Please make sure that anything your child brings to use at school has name or initials on it**, including lunch containers, backpacks, removable clothing, and school supplies. The school cannot be held responsible for items that go missing or get lost. Bringing or wearing valuable items is not recommended.
5. If inappropriate items or excluded items are brought to school, staff will keep the items in a safe place until the parent/guardian and student meet with staff about it.
6. Due to health and safety or environmental reasons, animals may not be brought to school for sharing unless the Guide has determined that it is safe and has given permission.
7. State law prohibits a student from bringing a firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object to school unless the student has written permission from a teacher and the principal agrees to it. Please note that this includes pocketknives.

Telephone Use

1. Students must get permission from a staff member before using the telephone.
2. Students may use the telephone to plan for "going out" trips or to obtain information needed for research, but personal calls will not be allowed.
3. **Students may not use the telephone to call about forgotten items, including lunches, or to plan for after-school activities or pick-up.** (Please plan after-school get-togethers and driving arrangements before coming to school.)
4. **Students are not allowed to use cell phones while at school, so it is preferred that they not be brought to school.** If the parent/guardian needs the child to have a cell phone for after school safety reasons, the Guide must be notified and the cell phone must be given to office staff, a Guide, or After School staff for safekeeping until dismissal.
5. Staff will handle calls to parents/guardians about forgotten medication, illness, or afterschool pick-up glitches.

6. We ask parents/guardians not to call their children at school unless it is an emergency. Please leave any necessary messages for students with office staff or on our voice mail. Please do not make calls to students' cell phones since they will be turned off while at school.

Field Trips

The students go on several field trips throughout the school year linked to the curriculum for their class. Field trips provide immersion experiences and opportunities to access other resources not available on the school site. They are an essential part of learning, not an optional "extra." Many trips have admission or materials fees that families will be asked to pay. To defray the cost of these, we ask that families help with fundraising for these trips or make a tax-deductible donation to our field trip fund through The Beginning Project, our non-profit organization. No student will be prevented from attending a field trip due to the family's inability to pay a fee.

General field trip permission forms for all field trips for the school year will be the usual form of parental/guardian permission. Parents/guardians may optionally choose to sign a permission form for each individual trip, however students whose parents/guardians have forgotten to sign or turn in forms will not be allowed to attend trips. Field trips outside of Ukiah will be pre-notified by written notice or telephone call to parents/guardians. Spontaneous field trips within Ukiah during school hours do not need to be pre-notified to parents/ guardians unless they have requested it. These trips may include walks to the library, the museum, the courthouse, the environmental center, the park, etc.

We need adults who are licensed and insured to help drive and chaperone on some field trips. Chaperones must read and sign the "Field Trip Chaperone Guidelines" each semester to remind them of their responsibilities. Drivers need to complete and sign a "Private Vehicle Use" form and provide a copy of their current driver's license, insurance coverage, and MVR (Motor Vehicle/Driver Record). Vehicles used must have working seatbelts and be in good driving condition. By law, we are not allowed to pay volunteers for their gas or expenses, but these may be claimed as tax-deductible donations to our school.

All passengers and drivers will wear seatbelts, and children under age 8 or under 4'9" tall will need to use their car safety seats. Drivers should have a copy of medical release forms for each student in their car, in case of accident. Drivers may not use cell phones, including headsets or other hands-free phones, while driving during a field trip, but may check messages and make calls after parking if necessary. It's recommended that students do not eat or drink anything other than water in vehicles. This prevents both car messes, distractions while driving, and sometimes motion sickness.

Guests/Friends of students or visitors to the school are not allowed to participate in field trips. Drivers may bring their own children or children they are caring for if permission is given by the Guide, and the driver rather than the staff must supervise these.

Field trips involving any dangerous activities need special waiver forms for insurance purposes. These include swimming, other water sports, boating, climbing walls, amusement park rides, any trip to a body of water—ocean, lake, stream, etc.

Students who have shown responsibility and the skills necessary will be allowed to plan, arrange, and participate in "going out" trips (student-planned trips which they arrange for the purpose of research). They may walk, use public transportation, bicycles, or arrange for someone to drive them. Students using bicycles as a means of transportation must pass a road safety test, have their own helmets and bicycles in good condition with rear view mirrors and reflectors, and file a route plan with their Guide. All students who are "going out" must have parental/guardian permission for each trip and be accompanied by an adult.

“When the child goes out, it is the world itself that offers itself to him. Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them up in cupboards.”—Maria Montessori

Health and Safety

Your child’s health is a matter of major importance to all of us. Upon enrollment, a health form signed by a physician must be on file with the school. The Health Department also requires that students have certain standard immunizations and a tuberculin clearance. Please make sure that school staff is notified about any allergies or sensitivities that your child has. A daily health inspection and greeting is given upon each student’s arrival at school (inquiry and visual check). If a student shows symptoms of illness, the parent/guardian will be contacted to take the child home.

Keep your child home if he or she:

- Has a fever or has had one during the previous 24-hour period.
- Is taking an antibiotic for a contagious disease and has not yet received clearance from a medical practitioner to return to school.
- Has a heavy nasal discharge or constant cough not due to allergies.
- Has head lice and has not yet been treated (all nits 1/4” from scalp or closer must be removed from hair).
- Has a positive COVID-19 diagnosis and can return following the current CDC recommendation.

Please notify the school at once if your child becomes ill with a communicable disease or gets head lice. This allows us to do head checks, and to keep an eye out for children that may be starting to show symptoms of illness. Please do not give your child a fever reducer before bringing the child to school. Children with fevers need to stay home and rest!

Students may be sent home if any symptoms of illness or disease appear during the day, including any temperature above 99.6 degrees F. indicating fever. In such cases, a student will be immediately isolated from the others and the parents/guardians will be contacted.

Please remember to telephone the school each day that your child is absent. Leave a message with office staff or on the answering machine with your name, your child’s name, reason for absence, and expected length of absence.

Accidents

If a student suffers a very minor injury, it will be treated at school. All staff hold current First Aid and CPR certification. In the event of a more serious injury, the staff will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent/guardian. If one cannot be reached, they will call the child’s physician as listed on the emergency contact form. If necessary, an ambulance or paramedics will be called. Until the arrival of a parent/guardian, physician, or ambulance, the staff will be in charge and make all decisions about the care of the child.

Parents/guardians will be expected to assume responsibility for any resultant expense not covered by our insurance. It is to you and your child’s benefit that you **keep the school up to-date on phone numbers, emergency numbers, and other pertinent information.**

Helmets

Students riding bicycles, unicycles, skateboards, scooters, skates/roller blades to school must wear a bicycle helmet as required by California State law. They may not ride these vehicles on the Fairgrounds, but must get off the vehicle at the gate and walk in.

Parents/Guardians of students not following these procedures will receive a phone call, and the student may be restricted from using these forms of transportation as a consequence.

Drug-Free/Smoke & Tobacco-Free/Alcohol-Free/Weapons-Free Environment

Tree of Life is committed to providing an environment free of illegal drugs, tobacco and smoking, ENDS (electronic nicotine delivery system), alcohol, and weapons to promote safety in the workplace, employee and student health and well-being, and a work and learning environment that is conducive to attaining high work standards.

Bringing to the campus, possessing, or using, or being under the influence of intoxicating beverages or drugs on the school premises or at any school-sanctioned activity or function is prohibited and will result in disciplinary action up to and including termination for employees and suspension or expulsion for students.

Smoking and ENDS use are not allowed anywhere on the school campus. It is the responsibility of each staff member and student to adhere to this rule, and to inform his or her guests of our non-smoking policy.

Firearms, knives, explosives, or other dangerous weapons are not allowed on campus, unless in the case of possession of any object of this type, the pupil had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, which is concurred in by the principal.

The school reserves the right to use appropriate means to provide a safe work environment for its employees and students. These means may consist of but are not limited to:

- Search of school property.
- Search of employee or student property, including employee or student handbags and vehicles, brought onto school property.

Medication Policy

For your child's safety, ALL MEDICATION (prescription and over the counter) administered at school requires the following:

1. All prescription medication must be in a container labeled by a licensed pharmacist.
2. All over-the-counter medication must be in the original manufacturer's container with the student's name clearly written on the container.
3. All prescription and over-the-counter medication require a written statement by the medical practitioner detailing the method, amount, and time schedule the medication is to be taken, updated each new school year and when any changes are made.
4. A written statement by the parent/guardian indicating the desire that the school staff assist the pupil in the manner set forth in the medical practitioner's statement must be on file at school. Medication forms are in the school office and in each classroom.
5. Request your pharmacist to divide the prescription medication into two medication containers, one for home and one for school.
6. Inhalers need to have the prescription label applied to the inhaler itself by the pharmacist.
7. **DO NOT SEND MEDICATION TO SCHOOL WITH YOUR CHILD!** Do not send the medication in the child's lunchbox or backpack. **An adult needs to bring the**

medication (including cough drops) to the office or the Guide, and the appropriate medication form must be completed and signed.

8. Medical practitioner's notes may be faxed to Tree of Life School at 707-462-0914.

Nutrition Policy

Good nutrition is an important contributor to human health, especially for a growing child. Children are calmer, more focused, and feel better in general with a good protein breakfast before beginning studies, and with healthy snacks and lunch throughout the day. We want to serve as a model of exemplary nutrition to our students and their families, so we recommend to families that they serve their children healthy foods, such as 100% fruit juice, fresh fruits and vegetables, whole grain crackers and breads, protein foods, and low-fat dairy products. We recommend avoiding foods with artificial ingredients and preservatives, hydrogenated fats and oils, and refined sugars, which have been shown to be detrimental to health. We want our students to be healthy, to grow strong bodies and minds, to understand nutrition issues that are often hidden and ignored by mass-media advertising, and to learn to make reasonable and healthy nutrition choices.

1. **As one step in promoting better nutrition and encouraging families to become label readers and choose healthier foods, our school policy does not allow refined sugar or artificial sweeteners to be an ingredient in either snack foods or lunch foods brought from home or eaten during school hours or in the child care program.** Refined sugar includes sucrose, dextrose, high fructose corn syrup, refined fructose, corn syrup, brown sugar, glucose, organic sugar, and sugar. Artificial sweeteners include aspartame, sucralose, and saccharin. Accepted sweeteners include fruit juice, agave nectar, honey, molasses, pure maple syrup, dehydrated cane juice, dates, stevia, coconut sugar, and xylitol. Foods containing unacceptable sugars and sweeteners will be removed, and a reminder note will be sent home. (Read ingredients labels.)
2. All food prepared and served at the school during school hours will be of the highest nutritional quality, using whole grains and organically grown products whenever possible. No hydrogenated fats, artificial flavors, or artificial colors will be allowed as ingredients. Occasionally, depending on availability and budget constraints, products (e.g., bread) in the school's meal program might have a minimal amount refined sugar as an ingredient.
3. When eating away from school at a restaurant during school hours, no items with refined sugars or artificial sweeteners may be ordered.
4. Birthday, testing day, or other sharing snacks brought from home that contain refined sugar or artificial sweetener may not be eaten during school. Examples of appropriate snacks that may be shared and eaten at school include fruit kabobs, fruit leathers, cookies and cakes sweetened with fruit juice or honey, vegetables, and bean dip, 100% fruit frozen juice bars, fruit "sundaes" with yogurt and nut topping, popcorn, fruit smoothies and juice, whole grain unsweetened crackers/breads and cheese or nut butters, tortilla chips and dip, whole wheat pita and hummus, etc. (See cookbooks in our lending library.)
5. Each student can order a free meal from our school's healthy breakfast and lunch program or can bring a healthy lunch and snack in a reusable lunch container labeled with his/her name that includes a placemat, utensils, and cloth napkin. If the lunch needs to remain cold, be sure to include an ice pack. Do not include foods in lunches that need to be heated; heat the food at home and keep it warm in a thermos. A water or drink bottle for beverages is less wasteful than juice boxes or bottles. Children should be responsible for making their own lunches with adult guidance in choosing foods to prepare a balanced lunch menu. It is helpful to prepare lunches the evening before to save time and indecision in the morning. The school eats lunch together as a community at noon, conversing together, as well as practicing good manners.
6. Students may take a fifteen-minute snack break in the morning at their discretion during the hours permitted in each class. They may take one food from their lunch container to eat for snack. An after-school snack should also be included for students who stay later.

7. Students are not allowed to share their lunch or snack food with others. This prevents students from accidentally eating a food to which they may have an allergy or sensitivity or foods their family prefers them not to eat, and it also prevents food bullying. **If your child has food allergies, be sure they are on record in your child's file, on our food allergy list, and that staff has been notified.**

Parent/Guardian Participation

Tree of Life School is a community of families actively working to provide the best quality of life to all of its members. As adult members of this community, parents/guardians have the responsibility of protecting and nurturing the children. To this end, there are three ways by which parents/guardians are expected to participate in Tree of Life School activities: 1. Parent Council participation; 2. Parenting/family support meetings; and 3. Family service to the school. **We appreciate your participation in all three activities!**

Parent Council and Parenting and Family Support

At Tree of Life, parents/guardians are students too! Learning is a life-long activity. The best way to demonstrate this to our children (since parents are the first educators) is to continue learning and improving ourselves. This is one function of Parent Council, along with school governance, and **all parents and guardians are members of Parent Council.**

A goal of this school is to educate and support parents/guardians so that the children will have the optimum opportunity for development both at home and at school. To accomplish this, Tree of Life School Parent Council will hold a variety of Parenting/Family Support activities monthly, such as discussion groups, speakers, workshops, staff/family conferences, and family gatherings. Childcare will be provided at Parent Council meetings, held 6 times per year, for those who need to bring their children in order to attend. Parent Council also plans school events, elects a representative team to the Board Cabinet, forms committees, and holds meetings to address family suggestions and concerns. Meeting attendance counts toward your School Service hours!

We understand that there are occasionally calendar conflicts or illnesses that might prevent attendance at a Parenting/Family Support activity. In that event, we will have written materials, or audio or video recordings that can be studied by those who could not attend. Parents' Lending Library is available in the office with many good books and recordings you may borrow. The monthly newsletter will also include information to help you have a better understanding of your child's development. We now email most newsletters and bulletins. If you don't have email, you can pick up a copy in the office. **A communication folder will be sent home daily. Please review the information in the folder on a daily basis.**

Service to the School

Service to the community is another aspect of the children's curriculum which can be modeled by its **adult members**. Tree of Life School gratefully acknowledges all of its members who volunteered time, energy, and skills to initially organize and create it! It will grow more beautiful through the years as each family adds its own energy to its growth. By participating in service to the school, parents/guardians become a part of the school's structure and involved in a practical way in their child's education.

It is expected that most families will enthusiastically want to help the school in whatever way they can. Thirty (30) hours per year are expected per family to be performed by the adults (students are welcome to help, but hours are not counted). Service activities are listed on the Volunteer Jobs sheet posted on the bulletin boards, in the monthly newsletter, and on Parent Square. These may include classroom cleaning, grounds and building maintenance, field trip assistance, fundraisers, and promotional activities. Adults who wish

to volunteer as specialty or club instructors (e.g. art, music, bike repair, gardening, sewing, etc.) or classroom helpers, under the supervision of classroom Guides, on a regular basis are required to attend a training session prior to working with groups of children at school.

“Respect all the reasonable forms of activity in which the child engages and try to understand them.”—Maria Montessori

School Facilities Maintenance Policy

As part of our Practical Life Curriculum, students learn responsibility and daily living skills through helping to maintain and clean their school environment. In addition to this learning aspect of maintenance, involving students and families in these activities helps to develop a sense of community and pride in our school. Schools with family and student involvement in maintenance tend to be cleaner and safer. Being a small school with a limited budget, it also helps direct more of our funding to instructional staffing and programs, materials for use by the students, and infrastructure updating.

We expect students to:

1. Clean up any messes they have made while working, eating, or playing inside or outside their classroom, leaving their area and materials clean and ready for the next person.
2. Put away materials when they are finished with them or before getting out a different work or changing activities. If something needs to be left out to continue later, it should be put in a place where it will be out of the way and labeled with the student’s name.
3. Put tools and outside play equipment back where they belong at end of use. If more than one person is using the equipment, the last persons to use it should put it away.
4. Complete satisfactorily at least one school maintenance job each day. These necessary jobs are decided upon by each class at the beginning of the year with some type of rotating schedule. They may include housekeeping and yard maintenance. Generally, fifteen minutes per day will be scheduled for this purpose. Staff will instruct students on the proper performance of each job and use of the necessary tools.
5. Replace or repair materials or equipment that they break or misuse as a natural and logical consequence of their actions. The school purchases the equipment it needs at the beginning of each school year and cannot afford to replace what is broken by students. Parents/guardians will be contacted if their students have not followed through within a reasonable time with replacement or repair of items for which they were responsible.
6. Recycle and dispose of trash in the proper receptacles. Food other than meat products should be put in the compost bucket or bin. Vegetable matter may be chopped and put in the worm box. Plastic, metal, glass, and paper should be put in their proper recycling containers.

“The exercises of practical life are formative activities, a work of adaptation to the environment.”—Maria Montessori

We expect parents/guardians and families to participate in school maintenance in at least one of the following ways:

1. Participate in a schoolwork day, usually held on weekends.
2. Help with lawn mowing, edging, weed removal, brush trimming, or other yard work.
3. Help with normal use repairs and minor construction.

“It is almost possible to say that there is a mathematical relationship between the beauty of his surroundings and the activity of the child; he will make discoveries rather more voluntarily in a gracious setting than in an ugly one.”—Maria Montessori

Conferences and Progress Reports

In addition to the orientation/planning conference before school begins, two student-led conferences and two Guide-led conferences are held each year. Progress reports are issued twice a year in conjunction with Guide-led conferences. During conference weeks, school is dismissed earlier on the conference days. Sign up for conference appointments posted by your child’s Guide on Parent Square. The student needs to be present at all conferences. **Please be polite and turn off and put away your cell phone during conferences.** A parent/guardian, student, or Guide may request a conference at any time during the school year to discuss progress or any other matter. Meetings are relaxed and helpful to families and staff in gaining further insights into ways to help children gain confidence. It is helpful to notify staff of any changes happening at home that may affect the child (moving, death, birth, etc.). The staff will notify families of any unusual occurrences or behavior at school.

Transition from Other Schools

Students and families transitioning to this school will find several differences in philosophy of education and operation if they have not had previous Montessori educational experiences. It can take up to three years for the full transition from a teacher-oriented school to a student-oriented learning environment. We encourage families to become familiar with these differences in order to ease transition. The student’s Guide will meet with each family before attendance to orient the family to school philosophy and its accompanying procedures. Significant differences may include the following:

- There are no grade levels. Please reinforce this by referring to your child’s class as Primary, Jr. Elementary, or Sr. Elementary, rather than by grade level. Each student proceeds with studies at her/his unique pace and level. A combination of factors indicating developmental level are used to determine class placement, including academic skills, emotional development, physical development, social skills, and aptitude for the level of work and thought.
- Students are helped to evaluate their own work as much as possible by using controls, correction keys, and rubrics. Students may also get peer and staff comments and evaluations, but letter grades are not used. However, students are required by the State of California to participate in mandated student testing at grade levels.
- Students work with a multi-aged classroom group to which they are matched by developmental level. Changes to the next level are decided upon by staff, student, and parents/ guardians based upon attainment of skills and completion of necessary projects that demonstrate mastery of those skills, as well as social/emotional development.
- Students develop a set of goals to achieve, and these are reviewed with their Guides on a regular basis. Students have a responsibility to record progress made toward their goals in their work journals.
- Students have many choices of activities available to them throughout the day to help them achieve their goals in large blocks of work time. This allows for in-depth learning that meets each student’s individual needs.
- Individual and small group work choices are the main modes of education, rather than class group lessons. However, group lessons are usually held at least once a day.
- Montessori materials, research resources, books, experiences, and projects are the main instructional sources used. Textbooks may be used as additional resources.

- Competition, punishment, and reward are not used as motivational factors. Rather, respect for each student's natural curiosity and learning potential fosters learning for enjoyment and discovery. In this environment, everyone achieves, and no one fails or loses.
- Parents/guardians are responsible for checking in with their children daily about their progress toward their goals, helping with their work, and reading with them at home.

Discipline Policy

"Discipline must come through liberty...We do not consider an individual disciplined only when he has been rendered as artificially silent as a mute and as immovable as a paralytic. He is an individual annihilated, not disciplined."

"Averting war is the work of politicians, establishing peace is the work of education."

"We must help the child act, think, and will for himself. This is the art of serving the spirit, an art which can be practiced to perfection only when working with children."

—Maria Montessori

Our Montessori environment encourages students to become **self-disciplined**. The physical objects, the adults, and the students are all part of this environment. The adults in this environment are responsible for establishing a successful working relationship with each student. This is accomplished by being supportive, showing respect, and establishing rapport.

The adults show support by reflecting the student's feelings through paraphrasing verbal and nonverbal messages by using conversation to relate event to relationship or feelings, to relate from general to specific, and to ask questions about specifics. Students are given acknowledgement and appreciation for help given, accomplishments, efforts, time taken to do a task well, and benefits of an action. The adults show respect for the student by: using constructive criticism and gentle reminders to point out what to do differently; expressing personal emotions through "I-messages" without attacking the child; and being non-judgmental by avoiding labeling, insults, prophesying, threats, accusations, bribes, bossing, sarcasm, and stereotyped responses. Rapport is established by sharing interests and warmth, and by using humor and a sense of fun. A helping approach to discipline is used to encourage volitional, social, and emotional development of each student by allowing choices to be made by the student and by teaching social and emotional skills. The environment provides for the student's physical needs, safety and security, social development, self-esteem, and self-actualization. When a student's needs are not met, the student will show symptoms often termed "inappropriate behavior." These may include innocent behavior, volitional behavior, psychological outcomes, emotional expression, social need, rule testing, and rebellion. Some of these are the result of conditions at the student's home or previous psychological or emotional trauma, while others are a matter of developmental level. In any individual case, a student who is disruptive or violent will be removed from the situation and an adult will help the student to find an appropriate activity. Students will be taught how to meet their own needs and how to handle their emotions in a non-violent way. Through the development of will, knowledge of appropriate behavior, and an environment suited to the student's physical, social, and emotional needs, the student becomes self-disciplined.

Children who have committed an act of physical violence or whose behavior continues to be unsafe or seriously disruptive will be removed from the classroom, and parents/guardians may be contacted to remove them immediately from the school. Parents/Guardians will be notified about the incident. Further actions per the following guidelines for suspension or expulsion may then be considered.

Grounds for Suspension and Expulsion (per Section 48900 of the *California Education Code*)

A pupil shall not be suspended from school or recommended for expulsion, unless the Principal of the school in which the pupil is enrolled determines that the pupil has committed an act as defined pursuant to any of subdivisions (a) to (r), inclusive:

- (a) (1) Caused, attempted to cause, or threatened to cause physical injury to another person.
- (2) Willfully used force or violence upon the person of another, except in self-defense.
- (b) Possessed, sold, or otherwise furnished a firearm, knife, explosive, or other dangerous object, unless, in the case of possession of an object of this type, the pupil had obtained written permission to possess the item from a certificated school employee, which is concurred in by the Principal or the designee of the Principal.
- (c) Unlawfully possessed, used, sold, or otherwise furnished, or been under the influence of, a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind.
- (d) Unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell a controlled substance listed in Chapter 2 (commencing with Section 11053) of Division 10 of the Health and Safety Code, an alcoholic beverage, or an intoxicant of any kind, and either sold, delivered, or

otherwise furnished to a person another liquid, substance, or material and represented the liquid, substance, or material as a controlled substance, alcoholic beverage, or intoxicant.

- (e) Committed or attempted to commit robbery or extortion.
- (f) Caused or attempted to cause damage to school property or private property.
- (g) Stole or attempted to steal school property or private property.
- (h) Possessed or used tobacco, or products containing tobacco or nicotine products, including, but not limited to, cigarettes, cigars, miniature cigars, clove cigarettes, smokeless tobacco, snuff, chew packets, and betel. However, this section does not prohibit use or possession by a pupil of his or her own prescription products.
- (i) Committed an obscene act or engaged in habitual profanity or vulgarity.
- (j) Unlawfully possessed or unlawfully offered, arranged, or negotiated to sell drug paraphernalia, as defined in Section 11014.5 of the Health and Safety Code.
- (k) (1) Disrupted school activities or otherwise willfully defied the valid authority of supervisors, teachers, administrators, school officials, or other school personnel engaged in the performance of their duties.

(2) Except as provided in Section 48910, a pupil enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 3, inclusive, shall not be suspended for any of the acts enumerated in this subdivision, and this subdivision shall not constitute grounds for a pupil enrolled in kindergarten or any of grades 1 to 12, inclusive, to be recommended for expulsion. (l) Knowingly received stolen school property or private property.

(m) Possessed an imitation firearm. As used in this section, "imitation firearm" means a replica of a firearm that is so substantially similar in physical properties to an existing firearm as to lead a reasonable person to conclude that the replica is a firearm.

(n) Committed or attempted to commit a sexual assault as defined in Section 261, 266c, 286, 288, 288a, or 289 of the Penal Code or committed a sexual battery as defined in Section 243.4 of the Penal Code.

(o) Harassed, threatened, or intimidated a pupil who is a complaining witness or a witness in a school disciplinary proceeding for purposes of either preventing that pupil from being a witness or retaliating against that pupil for being a witness, or both.

(p) Unlawfully offered, arranged to sell, negotiated to sell, or sold the prescription drug Soma.

(q) Engaged in, or attempted to engage in, hazing. For purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" means a method of initiation or preinitiation into a pupil organization or body, whether or not the organization or body is officially recognized by an educational institution, which is likely to cause serious bodily injury or personal degradation or disgrace resulting in physical or mental harm to a former, current, or prospective pupil. For purposes of this subdivision, "hazing" does not include athletic events or school-sanctioned events.

(r) Engaged in an act of bullying. For purposes of this subdivision, the following terms have the following meanings:

(1) "Bullying" means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or by means of an electronic act, and including one or more acts committed by a pupil or group of pupils as defined in Section 48900.2, 48900.3, or 48900.4, directed toward one or more pupils that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

(A) Placing a reasonable pupil or pupils in fear of harm to that pupil's or those pupils' person or property.

(B) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience a substantially detrimental effect on his or her physical or mental health.

(C) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her academic performance.

(D) Causing a reasonable pupil to experience substantial interference with his or her ability to participate in or benefit from the services, activities, or privileges provided by a school.

(2) (A) "Electronic act" means the creation and transmission originated on or off the schoolsite, by means of an electronic device, including, but not limited to, a telephone, wireless telephone, or other wireless communication device, computer, or pager, of a communication, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

(i) A message, text, sound, or image.

(ii) A post on a social network Internet Web site, including, but not limited to:

(I) Posting to or creating a burn page. "Burn page" means an Internet Web site created for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in paragraph (1).

(II) Creating a credible impersonation of another actual pupil for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in paragraph (1). "Credible impersonation" means to knowingly and without consent impersonate a pupil for the purpose of bullying the pupil and such that another pupil would reasonably believe, or has reasonably believed, that the pupil was or is the pupil who was impersonated.

(III) Creating a false profile for the purpose of having one or more of the effects listed in paragraph (1). "False profile" means a profile of a fictitious pupil or a profile using the likeness or attributes of an actual pupil other than the pupil who created the false profile.

(iii) (I) An act of cyber sexual bullying.

(II) For purposes of this clause, "cyber sexual bullying" means the dissemination of, or the solicitation or incitement to disseminate, a photograph or other visual recording by a pupil to another pupil or to school personnel by means of an electronic act that has or can be reasonably predicted to have one or more of the effects described in subparagraphs (A) to (D), inclusive, of paragraph (1). A

photograph or other visual recording, as described above, shall include the depiction of a nude, semi-nude, or sexually explicit photograph or other visual recording of a minor where the minor is identifiable from the photograph, visual recording, or other electronic act. (III) For purposes of this clause, "cyber sexual bullying" does not include a depiction, portrayal, or image that has any serious literary, artistic, educational, political, or scientific value or that involves athletic events or school-sanctioned activities.

(B) Notwithstanding paragraph (1) and subparagraph (A), an electronic act shall not constitute pervasive conduct solely on the basis that it has been transmitted on the Internet or is currently posted on the Internet.

(3) "Reasonable pupil" means a pupil, including, but not limited to, an exceptional needs pupil, who exercises average care, skill, and judgment in conduct for a person of his or her age, or for a person of his or her age with his or her exceptional needs.

(s) A pupil shall not be suspended or expelled for any of the acts enumerated in this section unless the act is related to a school activity or school attendance occurring within a school under the jurisdiction of the superintendent of the school district or principal or occurring within any other school district. A pupil may be suspended or expelled for acts that are enumerated in this section and related to a school activity or school attendance that occur at any time, including, but not limited to, any of the following:

(1) While on school grounds.

(2) While going to or coming from school.

- (3) During the lunch period whether on or off the campus.
- (4) During, or while going to or coming from, a school-sponsored activity.
- (t) A pupil who aids or abets, as defined in Section 31 of the Penal Code, the infliction or attempted infliction of physical injury to another person may be subject to suspension, but not expulsion, pursuant to this section, except that a pupil who has been adjudged by a juvenile court to have committed, as an aider and abettor, a crime of physical violence in which the victim suffered great bodily injury or serious bodily injury shall be subject to discipline pursuant to subdivision (a).
- (u) As used in this section, "school property" includes, but is not limited to, electronic files and databases.
- (v) For a pupil subject to discipline under this section, Principal may use his or her discretion to provide alternatives to suspension or expulsion that are age appropriate and designed to address and correct the pupil's specific misbehavior as specified in Section 48900.5. (w) It is the intent of the Legislature that alternatives to suspension or expulsion be imposed against a pupil who is truant, tardy, or otherwise absent from school activities.

For purposes of notification to parents/guardians, and for the reporting of expulsion and suspension offenses to the State Department of Education, the school shall specifically identify, by offense committed, in all appropriate official records of a pupil each suspension or expulsion of that pupil for the commission of any of the offenses enumerated in this policy.

Uniform Complaint Procedures

Tree of Life Charter School recognizes that it has primary responsibility for ensuring that it complies with applicable state and federal laws and regulations governing educational programs. The school shall investigate and seek to resolve complaints at the local level. It shall follow the Uniform Complaint Procedures (UCP) when addressing complaints alleging:

- Unlawful discrimination based on ethnic group identification, religion, age, sex, sexual orientation, color, ancestry, national origin, disability, or other criteria protected by law, including Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972;
- Failure to comply with state and/or federal laws in adult education, consolidated categorical aid programs, migrant education, vocational education, childcare and development programs, child nutrition programs, and special education programs.

The school acknowledges and respects students' and employees' rights to privacy. Discrimination complaints shall be investigated in a manner that protects the confidentiality of the parties and the facts. This includes keeping the identity of the complainant confidential except to the extent necessary to carry out the investigation, as determined by the Board of Directors or its designee on a case-by-case basis. The Board shall ensure that employees designated to investigate complaints are knowledgeable about the laws and programs for which they are responsible. Such employees may have access to legal counsel as determined by the Board or designee. Tree of Life Charter School recognizes that a neutral mediator can often suggest an early compromise that is agreeable to all parties in a dispute. The Board shall ensure that the mediation results are consistent with state and federal laws and regulations. **Compliance Officer**

Tree of Life Charter School designates the Principal and/or the Chair of the Board of Directors as the Compliance Officer and Title IX Coordinator. The Compliance Officer shall receive and investigate complaints and ensure compliance with law. The designee appointed by the Compliance Officer may conduct the investigation. Contact: Tree of Life Charter School Compliance Officer, PO Box 966, Ukiah, CA 95482, phone 707-462-0913. **Procedures**

The following procedures shall be used to address all complaints that allege that the school has violated federal or state laws or regulations governing educational programs. The Compliance Officer shall maintain a record of each complaint as required for compliance with the California Code of Regulations, Title 5, Section 4632.

Level I

Any person expressing a complaint relating to a program activity, a possible violation of federal or state law, or the school's personnel policies is encouraged to discuss the matter with the individual allegedly responsible for the inappropriate activity, or to discuss the matter with the Compliance Officer. This should occur within three working days of the alleged act and must be initiated no later than six months from the date when the alleged discrimination occurred or when the complainant first obtained knowledge of the facts of the alleged discrimination. (Title 5, Section 4630)

- If such a discussion does not resolve the matter or a discussion appears to be impractical, the complaint should be submitted in writing to the Compliance Officer.
- The written complaint should be filed within five working days of the alleged incident or knowledge of the incident. The written complaint should contain the specific details describing the alleged violation of the program, law or personnel policy, and the desired remedy.
- Within five working days of receipt of the written complaint, the Compliance Officer shall hold an investigative meeting and attempt to locally mediate the complaint.

Level II

If the complainant is dissatisfied with the response or mediation attempt:

- The complainant should then, within three working days, request an appeal or direct intervention to the Board of Directors in writing, with copies to the Principal.
- Upon receipt of the complaint, the Board of Directors shall investigate and determine if inappropriate activity has occurred.
- Within sixty working days after receipt of the complaint, unless the parties have agreed to mediate and extend the timelines, the Board of Directors will respond in writing to the complainant with a report of their investigation and decision.

Uniform Complaint Procedures, cont'd

The report, based on the investigation, shall state the findings of the complaint, what steps shall be undertaken to resolve or correct the problem, if any, notice of the complainant's right to appeal the decision to the California

Department of Education, a detailed statement of all specific issues that were brought up during the investigation, and, in a discrimination complaint, notice of the right to seek civil law remedies no sooner than sixty days after filing an appeal with the California Department of Education.

Level III

If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution of the complaint by the Board of Directors, the complainant may wish to contact a national or state agency. If so, the school will terminate the internal complaint procedure. The complainant may appeal in writing to the California Department of Education (CDE) within fifteen days of receiving the written report from the Board of Directors. An appeal to the CDE is accepted on a case-by-case basis. The CDE accepts appeals based on one or more of the following:

- Tree of Life Charter School (TOLCS) failed to comply with complaint procedures
- TOL failed to implement its final decision from a local investigation
- TOL failed to respond to CDE's request for information regarding the complaint
- No action was taken by TOLCS within sixty days of receipt of the complaint
- All concerned persons are not in substantial agreement with the facts or conclusions relating to the allegations in the report
- TOL refuses to conduct an on-site investigation
- Documents regarding the complaint indicate that TOLCS officials interpreted and applied pertinent governing statutes inappropriately
- Another compelling rationale

Civil Law Remedies

Nothing in this policy precludes a complainant from pursuing available civil law remedies outside of the school's complaint procedures. Such remedies may include mediation centers, public/private interest attorneys, injunctions, restraining orders, etc. For discrimination complaints, however, a complainant must wait until sixty days has elapsed from the filing of an appeal with the California Department of Education before pursuing civil law remedies. The moratorium does not apply to injunctive relief and is applicable only if the agency has appropriately, and in a timely manner, apprised the complainant of his/her right to file a complaint.

Harassment Policy and Title IX

It is the policy that employees, students, volunteers or guests at the school or wherever TOLCS students are present in accordance with official school schedule are entitled to a harassment-free work and learning environment and will have management support in reporting any type of harassment or related inappropriate behavior, including sex discrimination, sexual harassment, or sexual violence they might encounter.

Harassment is verbal or physical conduct that has the intent or effect of unreasonably interfering with an individual's or group's work performance, or that creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment. The basis for harassment includes but is not limited to age, color, disability, national origin, race, religion, sex or sexual orientation.

Sexual harassment includes any unwanted or unwelcome attention or action of a sexual nature when submission to such conduct is made a term or condition of employment; or submission to or rejection of such conduct by the recipient is used as the basis of employment decisions affecting the recipient; or the conduct unreasonably interferes with an employee's job performance or student's learning activities; or the conduct creates an intimidating, hostile, or offensive work environment.

Reporting Harassment:

TOLCS's Harassment Policy assures employees, students, volunteers, or guests support in reporting any type of harassment. Persons experiencing or witnessing any type of harassment should use the following procedure:

- Deal with it immediately, advising the person that the behavior is inappropriate and must stop.
- If the person experiencing or witnessing harassment prefers not to discuss the matter with the offender, or the offender fails to respect a request, report the incident to the Principal or to a Board or Cabinet member.

Employees must report any information about student harassment to the Principal or to a Board or Cabinet member, even if a student or his/her parent does not want to file a complaint.

Employees who have information about violations of this Harassment Policy or Title IX of the Education Amendments of 1972 but do not provide this information to TOLCS or do not cooperate in any investigation are subject to disciplinary action. Harassment prevention training is made available to all employees annually.

TOLCS will promptly investigate all reported incidents and take any appropriate corrective or disciplinary action, up to and including termination. Information will be revealed only on a need-to-know basis. TOLCS will not condone retaliation against any employee who reports possible harassment or inappropriate behavior or who assists with an investigation.

Conflict Resolution and Problem Solving

Issues can often be resolved by using non-violent communication and the problem-solving process. Staff, students, parents, and other community members are encouraged to use the following procedures for solving problems:

1. Invite the person(s) you want to solve a problem with to meet with you.
2. Honestly express what you are observing and feeling without blaming or criticizing. The listener responds empathically by checking that what s/he is receiving is what the speaker wants to communicate.
3. Identify your needs, values, desires, or thoughts that are creating your feelings.
4. Clearly identify the problem. Gather and organize information about the observations, feelings, and needs through dialogue to identify the real problem or unmet needs of each person.
5. Make a request that would meet the needs of all parties. Share possible solutions, list criteria, predict consequences.
6. Agree to ideas/actions that would meet the needs of all parties and apply them.
7. Check in after applying the idea/action to examine its effectiveness. Meet again to find an alternative solution if the first solution is not working.

Visiting and Observing

Parents/guardians are welcome to visit school to observe at any time. It is preferred that guests make an appointment for a visit or observation. Student guests are welcome to visit and join classroom activities for one day if they are considering applying for enrollment and their parents have made a preliminary observation; emergency and medical forms must be completed by the parent/guardian if the student visits without the parent/guardian being present.

During an observation, visitors should not expect to be able to speak with staff or ask questions; staff will be happy to speak with visitors during a pre-arranged meeting before or after the visit. Upon entering the learning environment, remember to use a quiet voice. It is helpful to take notes while observing, noticing types of social interactions and learning activities. Please make yourself comfortable and feel free to move to different locations in the classroom, but refrain from interrupting the children or engaging them in conversation. If they talk to you, tell them you have come to watch their work.

A Montessori classroom is a dynamic learning environment. There is more to the Montessori classroom than the activities of one particular child. When observing, alternate between a wide-angled view of the entire classroom and a focus on a particular child. Listen to the activity level as it rises and falls. There will be some individual learning activities, some small group learning activities, or a large group lesson being presented.

Notice that children learn in different ways. With some types of materials, groups of children work cooperatively, and with others you will find an individual child working alone intensely. Still other children are walking through the classroom seemingly not engaged in any direct activity. However, very often, this last type of child is engaged in actively absorbing information through observation of the children and materials in the classroom. Try alternating your focus on these different learning patterns.

If your child has experienced a primary Montessori education, you will notice different behavior patterns in the older students. While younger students are focused on process, older students become aware of finished accomplishment and product as well. You will see the intense self-gratification that the learning process affords the child.

Watch the way the adults interact with children and compare it with the traditional classroom mode by which you were probably educated. Notice the way in which a Guide (adult teacher) corrects or redirects a child and look at the instances in which s/he does not. Listen to the Guide's tone of voice with the child.

The Guide is a facilitator of the child's autonomous learning process. S/he guides rather than insists. The Guide prepares the environment, gives the child the tools to utilize the materials, and then does whatever else is necessary to help the child interact with the environment without assistance. Sometimes this involves direct encouragement, while at other times indirect appreciation or even judicious absence is more effective.

There is a basic respect for each individual child's particular style of learning in the Montessori classroom.

Watch the ways in which the children offer assistance to one another with the materials and with everyday tasks, and the ways that they are directly sociable with one another.

The classroom contains a wide range of ages of children as well as materials that are appropriate to the different developmental levels. Note how the children go to the materials that are appropriate to their own level. Note also how the younger children absorb the older children's work simply by being near them, and how, conversely, the older children will assist the younger ones with work that they have already mastered.

You may notice a Guide asking a child to ask a friend for help, thus facilitating the peer tutoring process.

These activities have a strong social component to them—one that includes a sense of responsibility for and community with all those in the class. There are always pockets of purely social activity present in any Montessori classroom, as the child's natural desire to form friendships and be part of an ongoing community is every present.

The generation of autonomy is a function of the prepared environment of the Montessori classroom. What this means is that the child will have available all needed materials, in good working order, to complete a task that has usually been self-chosen. The structure of Montessori provides the child with as much time as s/he needs to complete the task. Elementary students have assigned work as well as free choice in their academic presentations. It is their responsibility to stay focused and current with their assignments. Conclusion: We recognize that you will not be able to sort out and see all the dimensions of the classroom that are outlined above, and we hope that you are not disappointed when you discover that all aspects of the classroom have either not been present during your observation or that you did not see it all. We know that learning how to read the Montessori classroom is difficult at first, but we know that with each successive observation your skills will become increasingly honed.

Montessori Parenting Recommendations

- Help your child to become capable and independent. Never do for a child what s/he can do for her/himself. Have your child dress, brush teeth and hair, put soiled clothes in hamper, hang up outer clothing, help put clean clothes away, make bed, clear off and clean table after eating, and make sure s/he has everything needed for school each day.
- Talk to your child with appropriate words in a normal, non-yelling tone of voice. Children will imitate adults. If they hear inappropriate language or tones of voice, they will copy them. It is up to the adults to provide an environment free from language you don't wish them to use, and rich with the descriptive language children crave!
- Demonstrate good manners and expect your child to use them.
- Use helping discipline to teach your children appropriate behavior. Set and enforce limits of respect and responsibility with natural and logical consequences. Rewards, punishments, violence (spanking, slapping), and verbal abuse only provide these examples for children to imitate and develop an external locus of control—that is, the child's behavior depends on the reward or punishment. Helping discipline provides an internal locus of control with good behavior modeling, no manipulation, and recognition of feelings as well as limits. To learn more, come to our Parent Council meetings for the parenting seminars!
- Encourage your child to interact with the environment, rather than be passively entertained by TV, videos, and video/computer games. Development takes place by interaction and observation, not by observation alone. Incorporate your child's help in your daily activities so s/he feels useful and important.
- Limit TV, video, movie, and video/computer game viewing to 7 hours of quality time or less per week. Do not allow children to see or hear R rated programs. Watch PG/PG13 rated programs with your child and talk with them during and after the program about anything that might be disturbing. There is an amazing amount of programming "for children" that is detrimental to children. Especially check programs for violence (a recent study showed 85% of TV programming is violent), language, and sexual innuendoes.
- If your child uses a home computer, software should be informational and constructive rather than violent and competitive. Check out children's programs before purchasing—there are some real duds. Monitor Internet access!
- Play beautiful music for your child to develop an ear for music. Dance and sing! Listen to different styles of music. Remember not to play music too loudly, or ear damage will occur.
- The world is so full of its own miracles that children do not need to be stimulated by the fantasies so often provided by adults. Although children in the second stage of development (~ages 6-12) are able to distinguish fantasy from reality, the real world offers a much richer basis for the development of imagination and creativity. We recommend that most of the stories, toys, and shows you provide for your children help the child discover the wonders of the real world, its history, and healthy, productive relationships with others.
- Make your household environment accessible to your child. Have a stool available so a small child can reach sinks and counters. Mount a mirror so the child can check appearance. Have a special place in the cupboard or refrigerator where a child can get a

healthy snack when hungry or thirsty. Provide shelves for storing toys—toy boxes do not help a child with organization. Rotate toys periodically if there are too many to fit on the shelves. It is hard for a child to choose from too many items, and even harder to keep the room clean and orderly. Provide tools for clean-up.

“We habitually serve children; and this is not only an act of servility toward them, but it is dangerous, since it tends to suffocate their useful, spontaneous activity.”

—*Maria Montessori*

- Read to your child every day. A good time is before bed as part of bedtime ritual. Even older children enjoy having adults read longer chapter stories to them. Let older children read to you too. Get a subscription to a magazine, such as *Cricket*, *Muse*, *Highlights for Children*, *National Geographic World*, or *Ranger Rick*.
- Allow your child to experience the natural and logical consequences of her/his actions. Don't try to soften the blow, and don't exaggerate or rub things in. Just observe and allow things to run their course without exerting your parental emotions into the mix.
- Explain changes to children—especially before they happen, if possible. Children like routine and order—even minor changes can be upsetting. Expect your child to regress a bit if there are major changes in your life, such as moving, a new baby, a separation or divorce, a different work schedule, etc.
- Have art materials available for your child's use and a well-defined place to use them. Items such as paper, colored pencils, crayons, scissors, paper punch, glue, paste, and paints with a smock allow for creativity. Give your child lessons on how to use the materials and how to clean up afterward.
- Children should have home responsibilities that they do not get paid for doing—they are part of living in a home. (Does anyone pay you for vacuuming?) Teach older children how to sort, wash, dry, and fold their own laundry. Children who can write love to make shopping lists and job charts for you. Children should be able to care completely for any pets that belong to them, or to help care for family pets. (See the lists on the following pages.)
- Children may receive an allowance to help them learn about the value of money. It works particularly well if this money is earned by doing extra jobs around the house and yard that are not part of the child's regular home responsibilities. A child may also have the option of paying you (or someone else) to do one of her/his jobs if s/he opts not to do it, and if you agree!
- Spend time with your child. Simply having a child help you with your work is one of the best ways of spending quality time. Don't let the TV or computer take the place of human interaction. Notice your cell phone manners! Put away or turn off your phone while conversing or doing activities with your child and during family mealtimes so you have an uninterrupted, quality experience.
- Have fun with your child. Remember, childhood doesn't last forever!

Montessori Quotes on Education

“Education demands, then, only this: the utilization of the inner powers of the child for his own instruction.”

“Our aim is not only to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.”

“The needs of mankind are universal. Our means of meeting them create the richness and diversity of the planet. The Montessori child should come to relish the texture of that diversity.”

“The more the capacity to concentrate is developed, the more often the profound tranquility in work is achieved, then the clearer will be the manifestation of discipline within the child.”

“We seek to sow life in the child rather than theories, to help him in his growth, mental and emotional as well as physical, and for that we must offer grand and lofty ideas to the human mind.”

Home Responsibilities for Children

Assuming responsibilities can enhance the individual interpersonally and intrapersonally. As the child learns the benefits of order resulting from cooperation, s/he begins to view her/himself as a person who can contribute to others. Growth in this area is best acquired developmentally, whereby the child becomes useful and *needed* at an early age, with the expectation of becoming more self-reliant and independent as time passes. The following list is intended to meet the needs of parents/guardians for a guide of what to do and what to expect from children in sharing responsibility. The list, prepared by parents and teachers, is cumulative; as a child advances in age s/he can continue to maintain past responsibilities as well as assuming new ones. Children may be able to accomplish tasks at ages above or below those suggested. Before assigning duties, it would be helpful to keep some of the following principles in mind:

1. Children have rights as well as responsibilities. If these rights are arbitrarily or impulsively withdrawn by the adult, the child may feel dominated or revengeful and will resist any effort to elicit his/her cooperation.
2. Children should be consulted about the jobs that need to be done. After they have helped identify the work, then they must set the standards for the work and be involved in the evaluation of the completed job.
3. Allow the children choices in which jobs they would like to do. (Not doing jobs is not one of the choices.) They must then follow through with their choices or experience the consequences.
4. Allow the consequences to follow logically from the uncompleted job. Do not discuss beforehand what will happen if someone does not fulfill the commitment.
5. Place appropriate time limits on when a task should be completed. If the child participates in setting these limits, s/he will be more willing to meet them.
6. Vary the tasks to do. Children become easily bored with the same thing. They like the challenge of a new or unusual job.
7. Use common sense in the number of tasks expected of each child. S/he may stage a “sit-down” strike if s/he feels used.
8. Remember you are a model of “order” to your child. Do not expect orderliness or cleanliness from them that you would not expect from yourself.
9. Examine your own standards. Perhaps you are a perfectionist about your house, feel uncomfortable if things are slightly out of order, or are concerned about what others will think. Learn to accept the house as a place of work and communication for the members, and not as a reflection of your own personal worth.
10. Never do anything for a child that s/he can do for her/himself.

Home Responsibilities for a 2–3-Year-Old

1. Pick up unused toys and put in the proper place.
2. Put books/magazines in a rack.
3. Sweep the floor (child-sized broom).
4. Place napkins, utensils, plates on table.
Utensils are on, but not correctly at first.

5. Clean up what they drop after eating.
6. Clears own place at table, putting dishes on the counter after cleaning leftovers off the plate.
7. Toilet training.
8. Simple hygiene: brush teeth, wash and dry hands, and brush hair.
9. Undress self; dresses with some help.
10. Wipes up own accidents.
11. Helps carry and put away groceries.

Home Responsibilities for a 4-Year-Old

1. Set the table, including good dishes.
2. Put groceries away in proper places.
3. Help with grocery shopping, getting items requested to put in cart.
4. Polish shoes and clean up afterwards.
5. Follow a schedule for feeding pets.
6. Help do yard and garden work.
7. Help make beds and vacuum.
8. Help do dishes or fill dishwasher.
9. Dust the furniture.
10. Help prepare plates of food for dinner.
11. Help prepare dinner, prepare cold cereal, make sandwiches.
12. Share toys with a friend, practice courtesy.
13. Get the mail.
14. Should be able to play without constant adult supervision and attention.
15. Polish silver.
16. Help polish the car.
17. Sharpen pencils.
18. Hang small laundry items on clothesline.

Home Responsibilities for a 5-Year-Old

1. Help with meal planning and grocery list.
2. Make own sandwich or simple breakfast and clean up afterwards.
3. Pour own drink.
4. Put in certain ingredients for a recipe.

5. Make bed and clean room.
6. Dress on own and choose outfit.
7. Scrub sink, toilet, and bathtub.
8. Clean mirrors and windows.
9. Separate clothes for washing.
10. Fold clean clothes and put them away.
11. Answer the telephone and begin to dial the phone for use.
12. Paying for small purchases.
13. Help clean out the car.
14. Take out the garbage, empty compost.
15. Feed own pets and clean their areas.
16. Learn to tie shoes.
17. Decide how to spend family entertainment fund.
18. Peel vegetables, tear lettuce for salad.

Home Responsibilities for a 6-Year-Old

1. Choose own clothing for the day according to the weather, and dress self.
2. Shake rugs.
3. Water plants and flowers.
4. Cook simple foods (eggs, toast, etc.)
5. Completely prepare own school lunch.
6. Hang up own clothes in closet on hangers.
7. Gather wood for the fireplace.
8. Take pet for a walk.
9. Responsible for own minor injuries.
10. Clean out the inside of the car.

Home Responsibilities for a 7-Year-Old

1. Oil and care for bike; lock when unused.
2. Take phone messages and write down.
3. Sweep and wash patio area.
4. Water the lawn.
5. Leave the bathroom in order; hang up clean towels.
6. Do simple ironing—flat pieces.
7. Wash marks off walls; scrub floors.
8. Get self up in morning with alarm clock; go to bed at night by self.

9. Train pets; wash dog or cat.

Home Responsibilities for 8/9-Year-Old

1. Clean Venetian blinds.
2. Run own bath/shower water, clean tub.
3. Straighten own closet and drawers.
4. Shop for and select own clothing and shoes with parent.
5. Sew buttons; sew rips in seams.
6. Read recipes and cook for family.
7. Write simple letters/thank-you notes.
8. Help care for younger siblings.

9. Polish good wood furniture.

Home Responsibilities for Age 10 + 1.

- Operate washer and dryer.
2. Wash the family car.
 3. Mow and edge lawn.
 4. Clean oven and stove.
 5. Clean pool and pool area.
 6. Change linen on beds.
 7. Do chores without reminders.
 8. Manage own money and make change.
 9. Be responsible for personal hobby.

School Hours

Monday, Tuesday, Thursday, Friday: 8:30 a.m.-3:15 p.m.

Wednesday: 8:30 a.m.-1:30p.m.

School Calendar 2023-24

August 15-17	Family Orientation Conferences
August 19-20	Parent Volunteer Work days: 9am-Noon
September 4	Labor Day Holiday; No School
September 7	Back to School Picnic
September 21	International Day of Peace Celebration @ school
September 25-29	Scholastic Book Fair
October 9	Indigenous Peoples' Day: No school
October 24-26	Student-Led Conferences
October 24	United Nations International Day Celebration @ school
November 1-3	Staff attending Montessori conference: No School
November 11	Veteran's Day; No School
November 20-24	Thanksgiving Break; No School
December 18	Winter Party & Talent Show @ SPACE Theatre
December 20-January 5	Winter Break
January 15	Martin Luther King, Jr Holiday: No school
January 16-19	1 st Semester Guide Led Conferences
February 16/19	Presidents' Holidays Break; No School
March 9	Dinner/Auction Fundraiser
March 19-21	Student-Led Conferences
March 25-29	Spring Break; No School
April 1	Make up day for emergency closure, if needed
April 10	Open House
April 22-26	National Green Week and Earth Day
May 30-June 4	2 nd Semester Family Conferences
June TBD	End of Year BBQ/Performances
June 6	Last Day of School

School Hours

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p.m.**

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