

Country Montessori Parent-School Partnership Agreement

Background

The purpose of this document is to clarify expectations. What can parents and school expect of each other as we enter into a long-term partnership to aid the development of your children? This document seeks to answer that question by articulating expectations: those that parents can reasonably expect of the school and, in turn, what the school, with its mission of providing a superior Montessori learning environment, will expect of parents. By publishing a dialogue based on important questions and answers contained in this Agreement, we aim to reduce the misunderstanding and disappointment that can result when unstated expectations go unmet. This agreement supplements the Parent-Participation Hours Policy.

What does the school expect from parents?

Q.What is the school's most basic expectation of parents?

A.Make continuing efforts to understand and embrace the Montessori approach and to work in a cooperative partnership with the school.

These efforts should begin before admission. The school desires parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori Method by providing information and opportunities for parent education as part of the admission process-so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children-and continue to provide more opportunities throughout a family's years at the school.

Once children are enrolled, the school expects parents to attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent education events such as the Montessori Journey, read Tomorrow's Child magazine, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures found in the CMS Parent Handbook and other school publications.

Professional staff and parents are expected to work collaboratively to foster the development of the child. Children thrive when home and school work in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations, and the adults serving as role models for the attributes we're working to develop in children.

Q.What contribution can I make to create a positive school community?

A.Demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the school, the school's programs and become involved in the life of the school community.

Model respect for your children—for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, teachers and other school staff—in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children are: “respect yourself, respect others and respect the environment.” We expect the same from adults, parents, and school staff, at all times and in all relationships within the school community. We expect every member of our community – students, parents, and staff, to be willing to accept full responsibility for their attitudes, actions, and ultimately for their lives. This includes speech and outward behavior. Support your child by speaking of his/her teachers, classmates and school in positive terms. Respect and abide by the school’s policies and procedures. Honor your commitments. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Through your behavior you contribute to your children’s moral development and to the culture and climate of our school.

Get involved in the life of the school community. At CMS, parent involvement is not only strongly encouraged, but it is an integral part of everyday life. Involvement opportunities range from serving in the classroom to being a member of our parents’ group, the PTC, to being a member of the Board of Directors. CMS established the Parent Participation Policy which requires a minimum of twenty (20) hours of volunteer hours per year, per family to help offset operation costs and to provide all families an equal opportunity to benefit from involvement with the school and with their child’s classroom. More information on involvement opportunities and the Parent Participation Policy can be found on our website and in the Parent Handbook. You can make a difference. Find your area of interest and get involved. If you need help getting connected, contact another parent, the PTC Club or Board Member, and of course, the school office. Not only will your child benefit by your interest and participation, staff will greatly appreciate your involvement.

Q.How can I create consistency between home and school?

A.Strive to include Montessori principles in your parenting.

Learn as much as you can about Montessori principles as they apply to preparation of your child’s home environment as well as the way we, as parents, interact with our children. This begins with the general principle; “Never do something for your child that she can do for herself.” Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of everyday life that a child can do for himself at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style that is different from the way in which we were parented.

Children develop a love of learning and become responsible, independent, and capable when parents’ values and expectations are consistent with those of the school and reinforced, on a consistent basis, at home.

Q.What are my responsibilities regarding communication between home and school?

A.Maintain active, direct and respectful, two-way communication with the school.

Read communications that are sent home, including notes, flyers, newsletters, and calendars. School information including forms are also found on our website. Inform the school in a timely manner of pertinent changes in your child's life. Parents are responsible for keeping contact information current; especially phone numbers, and informing the school of any custodial arrangements. If the custodial arrangements of your child have changed since you enrolled your child, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of the current court order to the school.

Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with their child's directress(es). In matters large and small, remember the principle of respect even when there is disagreement, disagree respectfully and follow the school's problem-solving process in described in the Parent Handbook.

Children prosper most when the adults in their lives work in harmony and resolve conflict through side-by-side problem solving rather than face-to-face confrontation or by involving others who are not part of the problem or the solution.

What can parents reasonably expect from the school?

Q.What can I expect from the school academically?

A.Country Montessori aspires to fulfill its mission as a Montessori school.

As a Montessori school, we are different from traditional schools. Our first commitment is the whole development of the child. Montessori children learn critical thinking and problem-solving skills as well as amass a great deal of factual knowledge. Our curriculum is challenging and you can expect your child to be provided with challenging work that is appropriate for her. Parents of our graduates report that their children are well prepared academically, socially, and emotionally for middle school in area private, public, or parochial schools. It's not unusual for children working "at level" at CMS to report that they are on the "A" honor roll at other schools, while children working "above level" at CMS are significantly ahead of their peers, particularly in math. However, our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of information. We guide each child to think for herself. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.

Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom, within limits, during the school day. They are allowed to experience and learn from, the consequences of their choices thereby strengthening their critical thinking skills and promoting self-correction. The choices a child makes and the accompanying responsibilities influence the emerging character of your child. The Montessori child identifies his interests and develops his individual gifts with the goal to strengthen intrinsic motivation and self-direction. He

does this by choosing his own work, or shaping it to a considerable degree, following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others.

Significant emphasis is placed upon community service. Younger children learn by serving their small community, e.g., classmates, classroom, and family. As they grow, children reach out to the larger community and experience the many rewards of helping others. The children gain awareness and appreciation of others, of the challenges faced by others, and equally important, of their own strengths and abilities to work with others and affect the world around them. Community service is an integral part of their lives and stays with them well beyond their CMS years.

We treat each child with dignity and respect, and expect that he/she will treat all others with the same respect. We treat each child as an individual and strive to develop each child's unique gifts-within the context of the classroom and the school community. With freedom comes responsibility, and each child learns to balance his/her personal freedom with a clear sense of responsibility to him/herself, to others and to the community as a whole.

Q.What can I expect in terms of communication from the school?

A.We aim to maintain open, honest, timely, and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.

There are two regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences each year accompanied by a written progress report. In the event of special concerns, your child's directress(es) will contact you to discuss these concerns by phone or in person. If you have a concern or question about your child's classroom or progress, please contact your child's directress(es) first before talking to administrative staff. In addition to conference reporting, directresses will communicate with you via classroom letters and newsletters, e-mail messages, and short reports as needed for individual children.

Each CMS directress is a well-trained professional and her evaluation is confidential and based on direct observation of your child. She will always offer her current best understanding of your child's progress and his/her strengths and needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the directress(es)' observation(s), which may be augmented by input from the administrative staff. For elementary children, we also provide a portfolio of your child's work and at the end of the school year, results from standardized testing.

We will promptly consult you should it ever become clear that a child is not benefiting from the school's program and outside professional assistance is needed by the directress(es) to help the child.

Regarding on-going, school-wide communication, the school distributes a printed newsletter, "Country Notes" as well as the Parent Handbook, school calendar, and other flyers and publications. We also invite you to attend Open House events such as Mother's Night and Father's Night, as well as parent education opportunities.

Q.What can I expect of the school environment?

A.We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive, as well as aesthetically beautiful.

Dr. Montessori said that the classroom directress' first responsibility is to prepare the environment. This means that the learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level. It is important that those materials be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. In a broader sense, the whole school environment must meet these criteria: to appeal to the child and to inspire his work.

We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school buildings and grounds are physically safe, secure, and well maintained. If you notice something that needs to be addressed, please bring it to the attention of the administrative staff.

Our community of children and adults comprise a social environment and culture that impacts the child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally supportive and safe for every child. This does not mean that there are no problems. It does mean that we will work with your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering him with problem-solving and social skills and aiding him/her in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in different communities and organizations.

Q.What professional standards can I expect of the school and faculty?

A.The school is an affiliate of the American Montessori Society (AMS) and maintains high standards for training and professionalism among its faculty.

The school's educational program meets or exceeds California Standards of Education and the National Math and Science Teachers Association of Standards.

Montessori professional staff continues to strengthen the education program through an on-going review and development process. The average tenure of a CMS directress is 8 years with 25% of them in their second decade of teaching at Country Montessori.

CMS has a strong tradition of "growing our own" in providing talented and hard-working employees with professional and personal growth opportunities. The school benefits by retaining high-performing employees and the children benefit from the continuity of directresses and other staff who work with them.

The school also promotes a culture of professional growth by providing time and resources for at least sixteen hours of professional development and continuing education for directresses. Annually, directresses, in collaboration with the School Head of School, identify areas of desired or needed professional development. In addition to on-site workshops, directresses are encouraged to attend professional conferences locally and out-of-state. AMS consultants visit the school annually to assess the directresses and

School Head of School's performance and to provide constructive feedback.

Q.What can I expect of the school administration?

A.Integrity; a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the community; mission-driven decision embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open-door to your questions or concerns.

Administrative staff interface with all the various constituencies of the school; students; parents; extended families; faculty; board members; alumni; prospective parents; professional visitors; government officials; other schools and educational organizations; and the general public. In your interactions with the administration, you can expect professional and courteous conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication. The Head of School, Director of Admissions/Operations, Administrative Assistant, and Accountant comprise the Administrative team. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well-intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, the administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.

Country Montessori School

Parent-School Partnership Agreement Acknowledgement

Please visit our website:
www.countrymontessori.org
Go to the Admission tab and then to Forms

I/We have read, understand, and agree to follow the Parent-School Partnership Agreement described within.

Student(s) Name(s)

Father/Guardian signature

Date

Mother/Guardian signature

Date

Head of School signature

Date

Please return this page, with all signatures, to the school. A copy will be placed in your child's file and a copy will be returned to you.