

COUNTRY MONTESSORI PARENT HANDBOOK 2009-2010



Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to 'make them learn things', but by the endeavor always to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence.

–Maria Montessori

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Mission Statement

Country Montessori School is committed to maintaining its leadership in Montessori education. Our mission as educators and parents is to foster independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens, who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers. We will grow and evolve to meet the needs of our children, parents, and community.

Founding History

Country Montessori School was founded in May 1989 by an inspired group of parents and dedicated Montessori Directresses. A Board of Directors and Board-appointed Administrator operate the school. An incorporated non-profit school, CMS adheres to the traditional Montessori philosophy and is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. The primary and elementary directresses develop the curriculum based on the methods of Maria Montessori.

As an extension of our founding philosophy, parents are strongly encouraged to be involved in the school's community as active Board members and volunteers in those areas in which they have expertise. We believe your participation is vital to the success of your children's education.

Educational Goals and Philosophy

The child's spiritual, intellectual, and emotional development is our first priority. We believe that education is a partnership between the child, parent and school. When children are allowed to develop freely within a prepared environment, it will help them acquire inner guidance and an understanding of themselves and the world around them. Our goal is to foster the natural curiosity and wonder of children to create a lifelong love of learning.

Program Overview

Country Montessori School provides a traditional Montessori education that focuses on the development of the whole child; intellectual, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual. Montessori education is characterized as:

- a learning environment that is prepared
- child-centered and responsive
- learning activity that is spontaneous, dynamic, and self-directed
- hands on experience with materials
- intrinsic motivation and freedom within limits
- mixed age grouping that stresses cooperation and collaboration in a community setting.

Development of the whole child is the focus of Montessori education. The Montessori education may be supplemented with content and material outside of a traditional Montessori curriculum, however we will never sacrifice a child's emotional, intellectual, or spiritual well being for the sake of academics.

The child's natural sense of wonder, exploration, discovery, independence, and concentration are nurtured in the classroom. The Montessori method moves the child from concrete experiences in Primary to abstract concepts in Elementary. At the concrete level, a student observes and classifies natural phenomena. At the abstract level, the student conducts experiments to determine causes. In mathematics, the students are introduced to addition, subtraction,

multiplication, and division using a variety of manipulative materials. In language arts, the child writes what he has thought or spoken, and he can read what either he or someone else has written.

The Primary program (3-6 year olds) is the foundation of the Montessori method. The primary curriculum emphasizes development of psychomotor and perceptual skills as well as social and cognitive abilities. The environment aims to instill a sense of order and independence and also to combine coordination of movement with concentration. The curriculum is individualized and sequential. Starting at the primary level, children are presented lessons in sensorial, math, language arts, geography, history, zoology, botany, and practical life. The child's mastery and security in each of these areas builds the foundation for a successful transition into the Elementary program (6-11 year olds).

The Elementary program continues to use Montessori materials and techniques, along with incorporating workbooks and an integrated reading series. The elementary curriculum is highly individualized, allowing for acceleration or reinforcement when appropriate. Study in the elementary level is research-oriented. The elementary program is supplemented with activities such as the CMS Science Fair (3rd level and up), participation in the National Stock Market Game, our Poetry Festival, supervised computer-based research and field trips that reflect the current lesson plans. The school provides a pragmatic balance between cosmic education (which relates all areas of the human experience encouraging creative exploration) and skill mastery in the areas of reading, writing, and math. Testing is administered in different forms, either individually or as a group in those subject areas as a means of assessing mastery of basic facts.

School Affiliation

Country Montessori is affiliated with and recognized by the American Montessori Society (AMS). AMS maintains the highest standards of Montessori philosophical integrity and professional training. All directresses at Country Montessori earned their credentials in AMS accredited programs; AMI (American Montessori Internationale), MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) or NAMTA (North American Montessori Teacher Association). Country Montessori receives periodic and valuable AMS consultation to ensure we maintain the highest standards in Montessori education.

Admission

Country Montessori offers programs for children ages 2 years, 9 months to 11. CMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, national origin, or political belief. Each application for admission is assessed individually, pursuant to the enrollment criteria for the programs and curriculum of CMS.

The environment can adapt to students of varying academic ability and diverse learning styles. Children with exceptional needs (behavioral/emotional, developmental, learning differences) are accepted at Country Montessori if the Administrator, Director of Admissions, classroom directresses, and the parents feel the child's needs will be met within the Country Montessori setting. We will limit the number of students who require additional staff resources to ensure that all students fairly receive appropriate instruction and attention. The school makes every reasonable attempt to guide children to success in the program. Nevertheless, all new students are admitted with a 60-day probationary status.

Enrollment Criteria

Primary

For a child to be considered for our Primary program, he or she must be:

- at least 2 years, 9 months old by December 2
- toilet-trained

Elementary

For a child to be considered for our Elementary programs, he or she must be:

- at least 5 years, 9 months old by December 2
- write his/her name and write numbers
- verbalize his/her needs
- respect classroom rules and relate positively to peers and adults
- read phonetically and recognize words
- concentrate and complete tasks
- take direction from an adult
- make work choices independently

In addition to the above criteria, prospective 1st through 3rd level elementary students from outside of Country Montessori must:

- submit student evaluations and two letters of recommendation from their previously attended school (applications without these documents will not be accepted)
- pass an assessment based on appropriate academic criteria for the applied-for level
- have student and parent interviews with appropriate classroom directresses and school administrator

Applications are accepted in the following order:

1. Current CMS students whose applications and payment of required fees are received by an established re-enrollment deadline.
2. Siblings of current CMS students whose application and payment of required fees are received by an established re-enrollment deadline.
3. New students with a Montessori background whose ages will achieve balanced age groups/grade levels within classrooms.
4. New students with a commitment to the three-year cycle.

In addition, applications for the 1st level elementary students will be date and time stamped. If the number of these applications from current families exceeds the number of openings in the Lower Elementary program, the applications will be reviewed for date and time of receipt. Those applications determined to be in excess will receive priority over any 1st level applications received from non-CMS families.

Applications from families outside CMS are received throughout the year. Regardless of the date of application, prospective students are not considered for enrollment until one month following the CMS re-enrollment deadline for current families. Date of application will be taken into consideration when all other factors are equal.

Once the school year has commenced, entrance into the program will be considered on an individual basis.

Student Placement

The Director of Admissions reviews applications of all new and returning students. When a child is placed in one of our programs and classrooms, the following is considered: boy/girl ratio, ability level, prior Montessori experience, age, classroom size, and special needs. A well-balanced classroom is critical for the success of both new and returning students.

For children moving up into our next program level, class placement is based on the aforementioned criteria in addition to input by directresses from both of the levels involved. Families will be notified by mail of classroom placement prior to the start of the school year. Preferences for a specific classroom are not considered.

Siblings

It is up to the discretion of the classroom directresses as to whether it is appropriate for siblings to be placed in the same classroom.

Tuition and Fees

The financial responsibility of parents is detailed in the enrollment contract. Return of the signed enrollment contract and payment of the non-refundable M&R (Material and Registration) fee and last month's tuition deposit indicate that parents wish to enroll their child for the contract period. Acceptance of the enrollment contract and non-refundable M&R fee and last month's tuition deposit allow the school to reserve a space for the child.

Payments

The enrollment contract states that tuition is payable in two parts: 1) the non-refundable tuition deposit and 2) the balance of the tuition. The tuition deposit *is not refundable, transferable, or pro-ratable*. Therefore, if the child does not attend, or attends for less than the contracted period, no matter the reason, the tuition deposit will not be reimbursed.

The balance of the tuition is paid in monthly installments.

Payment Plan I: 9 consecutive payments of check or cash. Payment 1 is due August 1; thereafter payment is due the first of each month through April. To assist in processing manual checks, this option requires an additional one-time non-refundable \$250 fee payable August 1.

Payment Plan II: 9 consecutive payments by Automatic Payment (ACH). Payment 1 is debited August 1; thereafter payment is debited the fifth of each month through April. An ACH authorization form is provided with the enrollment contract.

For both payment plans, the non-refundable tuition deposit paid at time of enrollment is applied to the last payment (June) of the 10-month school year.

Regardless of which plan is chosen, it must be understood that enrollment is a commitment for the entire academic year. At the time of enrollment, parents agree to pay tuition for the full 10-month school year. A sibling discount of 10% will be subtracted from the tuition of the second and subsequent child(ren). This discount does not apply to childcare.

Tuition is a yearly sum, divided according to the payment plan chosen. Therefore, as school expenses remain unaffected by absence, no tuition allowances will be made for absence caused

by illness, vacation, or any other reason. Tuition payment is required, regardless of absence for an extended period.

A \$50 fee is charged if a check is returned for any reason. If two checks are returned in one school year, all subsequent payments must be made in cash.

Please pay tuition and childcare fees by separate check if at all possible. Otherwise, itemize detail of check amount in memo section (i.e. childcare, downtime, tuition). If tuition payment is received in the office after the 5th of the month, a late charge of \$50 will be assessed. If a tuition and/or childcare account are 30 days overdue, a child may not be admitted to school.

Student Withdrawals

In the event a student withdraws from CMS, the parent and/or guardian must provide written notice at least 30 days prior to the effective withdrawal date. With this written notice, CMS will waive the obligation to pay the unpaid balance of the annual tuition. Regardless of the amount of notice given to CMS for student withdrawals, **the non-refundable M&R fee and last month's tuition deposit will not be returned.**

Attendance Policy and Procedures

Beginning the school day on time allows your child to participate in valuable social interaction and learning experiences, which they would otherwise miss. Regular attendance is critical to the learning process and academic success of children.

At Country Montessori School, your child is expected to arrive, and be in class every day at 8:30 for elementary students and 8:40 for primary students. Dismissal is 12:30 for half-day children, 2:30 for full day primary students, and 3:00 for elementary students. One of the cornerstones of a Montessori education is leading by example. By getting your child to their classroom on time, you are helping to teach them responsibility and time management. The act of your child arriving every day on time shows that you, as a parent, value their education and respect the school's rules as well.

Students preparing themselves for their future need to regard punctuality and attendance as fundamental for later success. Irregular attendance and tardiness are detrimental, both in school and later on the job. Punctuality instills courtesy towards each other and respect for the work in the classroom. Promptness shows your child that you value his/her work time, as well as, his/her overall education.

Children benefit greatly with a set daily routine and a predictable schedule. Arriving at school every day on time helps children to know what to expect from the Directresses and the classroom. Morning circle time is a crucial part of the school day. During morning circle, children greet each other, attendance is taken, and the Directresses introduce new activities. The Directresses and the children discuss what will happen in class that day, as well as, what has happened in the past. Periodically, the Directress leads the class in a Birthday Circle in the morning. This is a very special event in a Montessori child's life and parents are invited to attend. It is absolutely unacceptable to arrive late to class and disrupt these special occasions.

Late arrival is disruptive and inconsiderate to the rest of the class, and nothing can be more detrimental to a child's education than irregular attendance. If unforeseen circumstances cause you to be late, bring your child to the office, sign them in, and then escort him/her to their classroom. If you arrive late, and circle time is already in progress, please allow your child to enter the room quietly so the class isn't disturbed. Your child may then join the circle without unnecessary embarrassment.

Please remember that repeated unexcused absences from all or part of the school day, as well as unexcused tardiness may warrant expulsion from, or denial of re-enrollment at Country Montessori School. Also, please keep in mind that attendance/tardiness records are part of your child's educational record and may be forwarded to prospective schools at their request.

We take your child's education very seriously. Your children depend on you to get them to school on time every day. We depend on your family's full support regarding this matter.

School Hours and Attendance

School Hours	Drop-Off Times	Pick-Up Times
Primary Half Day 8:30-12:25	8:15-8:40	12:05-12:25*
Primary Full Day 8:30-2:30	8:15-8:40	2:30-2:45
Elementary 8:30-3:00	8:15-8:25 **	3:00-3:15

Families of three and four year olds may pick up their child at 12:25 or 2:30 with the understanding that there is not an adjustment in tuition. Please notify the office if you want the earlier dismissal.

****The elementary school day commences at 8:30.** Children arriving after 8:30 will be considered tardy.

All siblings on the CMS playgrounds waiting for their sister or brother to finish an after school activity must be signed out by their parent with the primary or elementary childcare supervisor and will be charged for childcare time.

Arrival and Dismissal

For all cars entering the CMS parking lot, pull into the 2 lanes as indicated by the plastic orange cones. Carefully watch the adult directing the 2 traffic lanes. You will be signaled when to move forward and follow the white arrows into a single lane. At this point a staff member will greet your child and assist him/her from the car. Please curtail all conversations at this time. It is important to make the separation quick and positive. California State Licensing regulations require that parents of primary children sign their children in and out with full name (no initials) at arrival and dismissal time. At school dismissal, your child will be escorted to your car. Please do not leave your car in the driveway as that obstructs traffic. Please pull your car up to a Staff member, but curtail conversations at this time. When exiting the parking lot turn right and go up Monte Vista and make a U-turn. Late arrivals of primary students must park and escort their child to the office and sign him/her in.

Elementary students may be dropped off at the sidewalk without entering the parking lot. Students must use the crosswalk to safely cross the parking lot. Please continue driving up Monte Vista and make a U-turn at the end of the cul-de-sac. However, if they wish, drivers of

elementary students may enter the parking lot, but only if they stay in line with the primary parents. Sign in/out is only required for elementary students utilizing Before and After Care.

Dismissal Process for Elementary and Primary Siblings

When the primary children are dismissed at 2:30 p.m., they are taken to the playground. At 3:00 p.m., when the elementary children are dismissed, those with siblings in the primary program will go to the playground to pick up their siblings. A Staff member on the playground will sign out the primary sibling. The siblings will then walk together to the front gate to join the other children waiting for their pick-up.

There is no charge for childcare for the primary children, between 2:30 p.m. and 3:00 p.m., who are waiting for their older siblings, as long as they are picked up by the 3:00 p.m. dismissal time. Children, who are not picked up by 3:15 p.m., will be escorted back to the playground and put into After Care and childcare charges will apply.

For Before or After Care arrivals and dismissals, park your car in a marked parking space and escort your child to/from the caregiver, at which time you may sign your primary or elementary child in or out.

Release of Children

Children are expected to be picked up at their scheduled time by their regular drivers. Children will only be released to drivers other than parents who are listed on the emergency information form. Exceptions must be made in writing in advance. It is understandable that unplanned situations arise and last minute arrangements may need to be made regarding the pick-up of children. In these cases, please call the office and provide a detailed description of the person who will be picking up your child. Parents/guardians are responsible for notifying the office in writing of any special custody arrangements. Parents/guardians will be asked to provide evidence of any legal action, which curtails the non-custodial parent's rights.

Before and After Care

Before and After Care is available between the hours of 7:00 - 8:15 a.m., and between 2:30 - 6:00 p.m. for primary children and between 3:00 - 6:00 p.m. for elementary children. The parent will be billed separately for this service at the cost of \$5.00 per hour. Before and After Care will be billed in five-minute increments.

Any primary sibling of any elementary child who is picked up at 3:00 p.m. will not be charged childcare for the half hour between 2:30 and 3:00 p.m. Were the same primary and elementary students to stay for childcare, billing for the primary child would begin at 2:30 p.m. and for the elementary child at 3:00 p.m.

Pick-up after 6:00 p.m. is considered late. There is no grace period. A \$1.00 late fee will be assessed for each minute after 6:00 p.m. payable to the Childcare Staff on duty. Excessive tardiness in picking-up your children after 6:00 p.m. may warrant loss of the childcare service.

Before and After Care may be denied to students for disruptive behavior. It is especially important for all Staff to have access to work and cell phone numbers, in order that the parents may be reached in an emergency. **Please make sure the emergency form in your child's file is kept current.**

In the event that a child is not picked-up by 6:30 p.m. and the After Care provider has not been notified by the parent of an emergency situation, individuals on the Emergency Form will be contacted to pick-up the child. If they cannot be reached, Child Protective Services may be called to pick-up the child.

Childcare may be available during Winter Break and Spring Break, on a prepaid basis at \$45/day, provided there is sufficient demand. Parents will be notified of these weeks in advance. There will be a downtime week prior to and after the academic year. The school will observe, and be closed, on legal holidays. There will be no childcare provided on these holidays. Please consult your school calendar and note the days the school will be closed.

After Care Schedule

As a convenience for parents, CMS provides an After Care Program for children who are not picked up at classroom dismissal times. A typical After Care schedule is as follows:

2:30 p.m. (Primary dismissal) and 3:00 p.m. (Elementary dismissal) to 4:00 p.m.:

Children are on the playgrounds. CMS adheres to California State Licensing regulations that mandate that children under 5 years old be on a separate playground from their elder classmates. Primary children are usually on the “Boat” playground and elementary children are on the “Serengeti” playground. Occasionally, children five years old and in primary may be on the “Serengeti” playground to balance child/care giver ratios. Children may be taken into the classrooms earlier if the weather is not conducive for the children to comfortably play outside.

4:00 p.m. – Primary children are taken into a primary classroom (classrooms will rotate depending on season) and elementary children are taken into Lower Elementary I.

4:00 p.m. – 4:20 p.m. – Children are served a snack. Primary children have storytelling during their snack.

4:20 p.m.- 5:30 p.m. – Primary children have access to play bins as well as drawing, coloring, play dough and paint dots. Elementary children have access to games including chess and checkers.

5:00 p.m. – Elementary children in After Care may join the primary children for the last hour of the After Care service.

5:30 p.m. – Childcare areas are restored with art supplies, toys, and games picked up.

6:00 p.m. – After Care closes.

After 11 a.m., you may reach the Child Care Coordinator directly at 858-386-6996.

Enrichment Programs

From time-to-time, CMS provides Enrichment Programs taught by CMS staff and/or outside professionals who have passed a screening for instructing children. The instructors will send out flyers regarding the class times, costs, and sign-up processes. The instructors manage communication and class sign-ups directly with the parents and do not involve the CMS Administrative Staff. If you have questions regarding an Enrichment class, please contact the instructor directly per the information provided on the class sign-up sheet.

Parents will be charged for childcare between class dismissal time and the start time of the Enrichment Program. If a child is not picked up when the Enrichment Program ends, the child will be sent to After Care.

Classroom Environment and Structure

Maria Montessori believed that mixed-age classrooms promote an atmosphere of cooperative learning, teamwork, peer teaching, and one that encourages social interaction for emotional development. The primary and lower elementary classes are lead by two co-directresses and a classroom assistant. Families are expected to have their children remain through the 3-year cycle of their respective programs.

In both the primary and elementary classrooms, large blocks of uninterrupted time called “The Great Learning Period” are scheduled to develop patterns of concentration, positive work habits of task completion and thoroughness. At the primary level, a daily group activity (“line time”) is incorporated in the schedule. Music, gross motor exercises, sharing and topic discussions are typical line activities. In elementary, group activity or “community meetings” take place where peace education, community, self and environment awareness, as well as character are discussed. Sharing, cultural education, and birthday celebrations also take place during the “community meetings”.

We have chosen to limit the number of auxiliary programs during the school day to minimize the impact on the integral core Montessori program. We currently offer music, physical education, Spanish, elementary art, and computer instruction including keyboarding skills and supervised research.

The Three Period Lesson

Children are presented lessons one-on-one by a directress or in small groups. The cornerstone of the Montessori educational approach is the Three Period Lesson. The first period of The Three Period Lesson consists of observing, identifying, and internalizing. The second period consists of recognition and involves active, hands-on experience and exploration. The third period is remembrance or abstraction and verbalization of its meaning. This educational technique is used from primary through upper elementary levels and enables the directress to gauge a child’s understanding of the work.

The classroom is equipped with Montessori materials that are sequential and generally self-correcting. The materials correspond to the developmentally "sensitive periods" for learning and will be used differently as the child progresses developmentally.

Standardized Testing

Elementary students (2nd level and above) will be administered a nationally normed achievement test each spring. These tests are given for several reasons: provide students with the experience of taking such tests; provide some predictive information; provide a formalized achievement benchmark to the parent and teacher; and evaluate composite scores that may indicate more emphasis in a given curriculum area for the teaching staff.

Results of standardized testing will be used in conjunction with the teacher's assessment of student achievement. These tests, however, are a crude representation of what the child knows or how he learns. Results should be used as either an additional perspective or piece of information about the child. According to California Department of Education standards, a school may not publish standardized test results unless a minimum number of students take the test. For this

reason, Country Montessori School does not publish or disclose group test scores. Parents are presented with individual test results during the spring elementary Parent-Teacher conferences.

Accountability and Responsibility

Responsibility and accountability are fundamental to Montessori education. The community setting in the classroom nurtures responsible social behavior. Regardless of age and level, students actively take care of their environment. Students are encouraged to assume responsibility for their behavior. Students are encouraged to become responsible for their own learning. Assignment of non-academic jobs to students is a feature of the daily activities.

Accountability is introduced gradually and increases as the child matures. Academic accountability for elementary students is established through the use of contracts or goal sheets. Contracts are developed between teacher and individual students for a 1-2 week period covering work to be completed by the student. The child learns to deal with individual responsibility and accountability in a constructive manner. The period of time covering the contract depends on the student's level and ability.

Homework

Development of a child's lifelong love of learning is not limited to the classroom. Parents can encourage positive learning habits by:

- Setting aside time on a regular basis to listen to your child read and just as importantly for you to read to him/her. "Buddy reading" is a special time just between child and parent.
- Providing opportunities for your child to practice Practical Life skills at home. Setting a table, making a grocery list, and helping with laundry, are just a few examples of simple tasks that build a child's sense of independence and confidence.
- Providing a quiet time and place for children to practice concentration. This is an especially important skill for children to build over time and will enable them to more easily adapt to the academic requirements of higher levels.
- Exploring with your child other resources of learning such as museums, libraries, supervised Internet research, even educational television programs such as Nova on PBS. Our community is rich in cultural resources including the natural wonders of our beaches and tide pools, unique museums such as the Midway, and of course the Zoo and Wild Animal Park. This is an opportunity to model lifelong positive learning behavior and to share a special time with your child.

Primary: Homework is not assigned nor encouraged for primary students.

Elementary: Staff, taking into consideration the needs of the individual student and total class, determines homework assignments. Homework is not a critical focus of the program.

Homework provides opportunities for the student to learn to organize and budget time, as well as to acquire and reinforce study habits.

Homework assignments are supportive and supplemental for basic research and for memorization of specific facts. First level students are assigned minimal homework, as the prevailing philosophy is that it is more important for children at this level to practice reading at home with a parent or guardian and for no more than twenty to thirty minutes at a time. Again, one of our goals is to foster a love of learning in our students. To this end and again for budding first level readers, reading time at home with a loved one is far more nurturing than assigned exercises.

Homework is typically assigned on Monday and due on Friday. However, some daily homework may be assigned to upper elementary students on a regular basis. Consistent completion of

homework assignments is required. *If the homework assignments create family stress, please schedule an appointment with your child's directress(es).*

Evaluation and Reporting Student Progress

At the primary level, Parent conferences are scheduled for early November, March, and June. Personal development, academics, issues and concerns are discussed at each conference.

Primary Progress reports are distributed in early November and March. They are intended to reflect the co-directress assessment of the child's achievements within the Montessori curriculum. Students do not receive grades, but the progress report will indicate mastery level for given concepts/curriculum area.

At the elementary level, Parent conferences are scheduled for late October March, at which time progress reports are distributed.

Your child's directresses will contact you for a conference, at the end of September, should they have any concerns regarding your child's adjustment to the new school year.

At anytime however, if a parent has a concern regarding his/her child, he/she is encouraged to schedule a conference with the child's directress(es). Your child's education is a partnership between the parents and the school and fluid communication will strengthen this partnership. You may request a conference either in writing or by leaving the directresses a voicemail in their school mailbox.

Classroom Directresses

All directresses in the classrooms provide instruction to a child. Shared lesson plans, frequent co-directress meetings and communication, and shared instruction are just some of the aspects of team teaching that CMS employs to provide a strong and well-rounded education for our students. Team teaching allows for flexibility in teacher-student interaction within the classroom.

If there are any major changes or stressful events occurring in the home, please notify the directress in order that we may have a better understanding or anticipation of variance in your child's behavior.

Confidentiality

All personal information given to CMS is kept in strict confidence. Access is limited to the Administrator, staff, employees designated by the Administrator, Board Members and representatives of the State of California Department of Social Services, as appropriate. Staff may not release addresses or phone numbers of other families.

Participation in the Parent Directory is optional. Distribution of the directory and information contained therein is limited to families of students currently enrolled in CMS. The Parent Directory cannot be used for business purposes as this could jeopardize our non-profit status.

Health and Safety Policies

Illness or Accident

Please inform the office if your child will be absent due to illness. Children should be kept home if they are exhibiting one or more of these symptoms:

- 99-100 degree temperature with symptoms, 100 degrees or over without symptoms
- sore throat
- runny nose/eyes
- coughing
- sneezing
- intestinal upset
- diarrhea and/or
- vomiting

A child who has vomited, had a fever, or diarrhea, must wait 24 hours after these symptoms subside before returning to school.

All communicable diseases must be reported to the office immediately and a doctor's written release may be required before re-admission. Communicable diseases include but are not limited to:

- chicken pox
- measles
- mumps
- streptococcal infections
- scabies
- conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- impetigo
- head lice
- ringworm
- pinworms

All parents will be notified of the existence of a communicable disease at school. If a child is deemed too ill to be in school, and/or exhibiting symptoms such as a runny nose with colored discharge or fever, parents will be called to take the child home. Primary children will be kept isolated and comfortable either in the office or classroom until the parent arrives. Elementary students may remain in their building.

Medication

A medication release form (available from the school website) completed and signed by the parents must be submitted to the school office prior to a Staff member dispensing any medication. The form must include the following information: type of medication to be given, method of administration, dosage, time(s) to be given, starting/ending dates.

The medication must be in its original container with the prescription label affixed with the child's name. This is true for over-the-counter medications (including sunscreen) as well as prescription medications (including inhalers and epi-pens). All medications must be given to one of the child's directresses and may not be stored in lunch boxes. The Department of Human Services requires that all medication needing refrigeration be stored in a sealed plastic bag.

Peanut Allergies

Primary children: If your child has peanut allergies and has been prescribed an epinephrine injection (epi-pen) please send at least 3 (three), for playground, childcare, and the classroom, each sealed in a plastic bag labeled with your child's name and the prescription label including the expiration date.

Elementary children: If your child has peanut allergies and has been prescribed an epinephrine injection (epi-pen) please send at least 2 (two), for the classroom/playground and childcare, each sealed in a plastic bag labeled with your child's name and the prescription label including the expiration date.

All of our Staff, trained in CPR and First Aid, is also trained in administering epi-pens. Precautions in the classroom are taken to separate children with peanut allergies during lunchtime. Parents may be asked to provide "wet wipes" in order for all children to cleanse their hands of peanut oils after lunch. CMS snacks are peanut-free. If a child's epi-pen prescription expires, parents will be notified to bring current epi-pens to school. As it is vitally important to be prepared in case of accidental ingestion of peanuts, CMS will not admit a child who has peanut allergies unless the school has a current prescription epi-pen for that child.

School Accidents

An Incident Report will be provided to parents in case of minor accidents at school. In case of any kind of head injury, including eye, ear or mouth, the parents will be immediately contacted by telephone. In rare situations where immediate medical attention is required, the school will phone 911 and contact the parents. If it is necessary to transport a child to a hospital, one of the child's directresses will accompany and stay with him/her until the parents arrive.

Sun Protection

Given our climate, it is important for parents to apply sunscreen to children prior to arriving at school in the morning. Families may provide sunscreen for their children. Please sign a medication release form, if Staff is to reapply sunscreen to your child. If the weather is deemed too hot, over 90 degrees Fahrenheit, and uncomfortable for children, outdoor activities will be relegated to shady areas and/or held indoors. Please provide your child with a hat to wear outdoors.

Child Abuse

Country Montessori complies with the Child Protection Act of 1987 and the mandatory reporting requirements under that Act.

Any official or employee of Country Montessori who has reasonable cause to know or suspect that a child has been subjected to abuse or neglect or who has observed a child being subjected to circumstances or conditions which would reasonably result in abuse or neglect shall immediately report or cause a report to be made to the San Diego County Child Protective Services Agency. If the official or employee is uncertain as to whether reasonable cause to suspect child abuse or neglect exists, the official or employee should report according to the law and this policy and allow the San Diego County CPSA to determine whether an investigation is warranted.

Emergencies

A new Emergency Contact form must be submitted to the office with changes in your emergency information **especially changes in phone numbers**. It is essential that names and phone

numbers of persons outside the immediate family be provided. The Staff cares for children involved in minor accidents. Potentially serious accidents or illness require immediate parent notification so that appropriate action may be taken.

Disaster Preparedness/Emergency Evacuation Plan

Although an earthquake or other natural disaster is something we may never experience, it is necessary to be prepared. In order to enhance our disaster preparedness plan, CMS will procure disaster supplies sufficient for all students. Fire and earthquake drills are conducted throughout the year. In the event that evacuation from the school site is necessary (fire), children will be escorted to St. Michael's directly across Pomerado Road.

General Information

First Days

In order to make your child's transition to school positive, we suggest the following:

1. Take the opportunity to let your child see the school in advance.
2. Be positive as you talk to your child about his new school.
3. Outline the arrival procedure with your child in advance.
4. In the morning, say a short good-bye in the car.
5. Consistent attendance is important to the child.

School Attire

Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season, outdoor play and physical education. A child should wear clothes and shoes he can manage himself. Overalls, jumpsuits, dress shoes, western boots or beach shoes may cause difficulty for the younger child, and are discouraged. Please have your child wear tennis shoes on days they have Physical Education classes. Clothing promoting aggressive commercial characters or displaying offensive language is prohibited. Jewelry and watches are strongly discouraged for primary students, since they are often distracting, and may be removed at the discretion of the Staff.

On the first day, primary children must bring an extra seasonally appropriate full set of clothing in a labeled plastic bag. Each garment should be labeled with the child's name and classroom on an inside tag with a Sharpie permanent marker. Jackets, sweaters or other outerwear must be labeled. We encourage the child to take responsibility for remembering to take home jackets at the end of the day. Please help your child recognize and be able to identify his own clothing, jackets, and lunch bag. Your encouragement will help the child learn to take responsibility for personal property.

Please label your elementary child's outerwear. All "forgotten" unmarked outerwear is placed in a bin outside of Primary C. All unclaimed clothing is donated to the Goodwill prior to the December Holiday break and again at the end of the school year.

Snacks

A nutritious snack is provided in the morning for all primary students and, for all students participating in childcare, in the afternoon. Elementary students should bring their own morning snack.

Lunch

Lunch is an important learning and social experience for the child. We try to make the setting as attractive and home-like as possible. The primary students are divided into small lunch groups, and take an active role in lunch set-up and clean up on a rotating basis. The school provides napkins, place mats (except for elementary, please send a small one with your child in their lunch), plates and glasses. Filtered cold water is served. Typically, children do not drink enough water to prevent dehydration. Brain functions rely heavily on an ample water supply. Please do not send any other beverages as they will be sent home. If desired, please serve your child milk and/or juice at the morning and evening meals.

California State Law requires that children eat 1/3 of their daily food requirements at lunch. Please send a balanced lunch containing an item from each basic food group. These include: protein, fruits and vegetables, cereals and grains, and dairy. Any uneaten portions may be eaten in After Care. Snacks of obvious high sugar/fat content and low nutritional value will be returned home. Be sure the foods you send can be opened independently and eaten easily.

CMS may assess \$5 per lunch should the family fail to provide lunch for their child (ren).

If the purchased lunches by Submarina sandwiches, corndogs, pizza or chicken strips, are not enough food, please supplement your child's lunch with other nutritional food.

Refrigeration or heating of food is not provided. You may wish to include a cold pack in your child's lunch. A soft sided or cloth lunch bag is required. Due to limited storage space, please send the standard size with the approximate dimension 10 x 8 x 3 ½. Oversized or hard lunch boxes create a storage problem. Your child's name must be prominently and permanently marked on the outside.

We recommend that your child participate in the preparation of his lunch. The uneaten food is sent home so that you may adjust portions accordingly.

Parents are encouraged to come and eat lunch with their children in their classroom. Lunchtime provides a good opportunity to visit the school and to better understand your child's classroom. Please contact your child's directresses to schedule a time. Please limit visits to one family member at a time. Eating lunch with your child is a special opportunity for you to learn more about your child's classroom and their environment. Please respect this time with your child by adhering to the following guidelines:

- Please turn off cell phones. Parents who are using cell phones while at lunch with their child may be asked to leave the classroom and have lunch privileges with their child revoked.
- Do not bring electronic devices at this time. Again, parents will be asked to leave the classroom and/or have lunch privileges with their child revoked.

Napping

California State Licensing regulations require all children age five and under to be offered an afternoon nap or rest period. Exceptions to napping will be considered at the request of the parent and at the discretion of the classroom directresses. Covered mats are provided for children. They may bring in a small lightweight blanket (with their name marked on it) and a very small stuffed animal.

Sharing

Primary: Sharing is a form of Practical Life as it provides children with one of their first experiences of speaking in front of their peers and helps them gain confidence. Sharing occurs on Tuesdays during Line Time, when the children sit in their circle with a co-directress. Typically, a child presents brief information about the item he/she is sharing. He/she then has the opportunity to answer questions about the item from the other children. Ideas for sharing include books, postcards, and specimens of nature, objects from foreign countries and any handmade items. A child's favorite toy is also an acceptable item to share. It is helpful if the child can share information about or significance of the object he is sharing. If a book is brought in, it is helpful if the child marks his favorite page in advance. An enjoyable exercise between parents and child is to have the child 'practice' his/her sharing presentation. Again, the purpose of sharing is to gently introduce children to speaking in front of their peers and the "shared" items need not be elaborate or complicated. Sharing is optional, however, all children are encouraged to participate at least once. Likewise, it is not expected that children bring something every week.

Elementary: Sharing is continued into the elementary levels during line time. The elementary directresses will provide a sharing schedule for the children with their names and dates for their presentations. Sharing is scheduled for elementary students in order to provide sufficient time for all children to participate. Favorite sharing items for elementary students include handmade models, books, travel photos and souvenirs. Encourage your child to participate by keeping track of his/her assigned sharing date and helping them to prepare.

Messages

All messages regarding your child should be in written form. Written notes enable the Staff and Office personnel to efficiently organize and disseminate the considerable amount of communication received daily. It is important that any communication be in writing regarding observations, concerns, schedule changes, instructions, etc.

Directresses are not available to speak on the phone during class time. Should you wish to leave a message for a Staff member, their extensions are listed below. Messages will only be picked up before 8:00 a.m. and after 3:00 p.m. If you leave a message, please remember to make it complete and concise. Staff members have a very limited time in which to pick up their messages. Dial (858) 673-1756 and then the appropriate extension.

CMS Staff Directory

Extension

113
101
102
103
104

Mail Box

Administrative Assistant
Director of Admissions/Operations
Administrator
The Sweet Peas
The Bumblebees

106	The Dragonflies
107	Before and After Care*
108	Financial Director
109	The Eagles
112	The Reading/Art Classroom
110	The Meadows

*After 11 a.m., please reach the voicemail of the Child Care Coordinator directly at 858-386-6996.

Family Mailboxes

There is a continuing need for communication from the Office. Each family has been assigned a file folder (mailbox) in which notes from the Office, Staff, Parent-Teacher Club, and Board may be placed. The Office must approve distribution of any notices. If your child is escorted to the car at dismissal time, a Staff member will give your mail to you. If the child is picked-up after regular dismissal time (i.e. in child care), the parents need to check the family mailbox daily. Mailboxes are for school communication and personal usage such as for party invitations, or commercial use is strictly forbidden.

Also, please read the white board posted outside the Office. These notices are of a timely nature, including notification of contagious illness, reminders of field trips or meetings.

Field Trips

Occasional field trips are scheduled throughout the year. Volunteer drivers must have adequate auto liability insurance. The volunteer is liable in the event of accident, injury or death resulting from use of his/her vehicle. Specific guidelines will be provided to drivers prior to the field trip.

Permission slips will be sent home prior to the trip. Most field trips may require a fee. All children should wear their CMS T-shirt, which may be purchased at the beginning of the year as well as periodically throughout the year from the Parent-Teacher Committee.

Lost and Found

Unclaimed clothing items are kept in a waterproof, plastic bin outside of the office. All unclaimed contents of this bin are donated to the Good Will prior to the December Holiday break and again at the end of the school year. Other Lost and Found items are kept in the office with the Office Manager.

School Observation and Tours

Parents are encouraged to observe their child interacting in the school environment. Primary classrooms are equipped with one-way observation windows to enable parents to seamlessly observe their children. Contact your child's directresses to make an observation appointment. CMS has multi-use observation rooms. Please note that the room may be used for unexpected or scheduled business or classroom purposes. After the first eight weeks of the school year and at the directresses' discretion, the primary children become settled and confident in the classroom and parents may observe in class. Elementary parents may observe in class. Please limit observation time, in class, to no more than 20 minutes and abide by the general rules of observation:

- no more than 1 parent at a time is allowed in class during observations

- do not initiate conversation with a child and/or directress
- stay seated and do not move around the room (unless given permission to do so before the observation begins)
- turn cell phones off
- do not bring electronic devices into the classroom – this is meant to be a silent and respectful observation of the children’s classroom

Failure to respect these rules may result in the immediate suspension of a parent(s)’ observation privileges.

New Level Orientation

New Level Orientation (families new to CMS and/or 1st or 4th levels) is required and takes place before the start of the new school year. Classroom management, general school policies and discipline procedures are reviewed and discussed.

The Montessori Journey

The Montessori Journey is an innovative parent workshop that provides insight on what your child does on a day-to-day basis, how they learn and how the Montessori education prepares them to be life-long learners. It is a “hands-on” experience in which a Montessori classroom is simulated using the concepts of The Three Period lesson. CMS will offer the Montessori Workshop throughout the school year. **It is mandatory that all parents attend a Journey during their child’s first year of admission to CMS. Subsequent admission may be jeopardized if a parent fails to attend a Journey.**

CMS Board of Directors

The Board of Directors is comprised of parents, community members, Instructional Leads and the Administrator. All parents are encouraged to attend the Board meetings and to participate as a Board member and/or as a Committee member. These meetings are held monthly at the school at 6:30 p.m.

PARENT TEACHER COMMITTEE

The PTC is comprised of all parents and Staff at CMS. Its purpose is twofold: 1) to organize social events to encourage a sense of community and 2) to raise money for valuable items and improvements that are not affordable by the (non-profit) school's tuition funds alone.

The PTC has an Executive Council made up of six officers: President, VP Fundraising, VP Social, Treasurer, Secretary and Historian. To ensure that the Parent Teacher Committee’ work is in cooperation with the goals and objectives of the school, the Parent Teacher Committee’ Executive Council is accountable to the CMS Board of Directors. Meetings are monthly (TBD) at 3:15 p.m. and all parents and Staff are encouraged to attend.

Money raised by the PTC is recognized to be solely for the benefit of CMS, its students, and Staff. To that end, the decision about how profits will be spent is a multi-faceted one, with a majority vote of the CMS Board of Directors being the final decision.

Parent Participation Policy

As a 501 (3) (c) non-profit organization, Country Montessori does not receive any federal or state funds and is wholly dependent on tuition. The CMS Parent Participation Policy provides parents and extended family members the opportunity to get involved with and support CMS while helping to defray some expenses the school might have to bear.

Each family is required to provide 20 hours of service for the school per school year. Single parent families are required to provide ½ that amount. A list of Parent Participation Opportunities is kept in the office. Families may also elect to donate \$10 per hour of service (\$200) in lieu of providing service hours. An Hours Coordinator tracks service hours. Those families not providing service hours and/or a donation in lieu of service hours may be denied reenrollment. The Parent Participation form is included in the Enrollment packet and must be filled out and signed prior to a child's admittance to the school.

Summer Program

A summer program for Primary and Elementary students is offered during summer. Regular Staff members, as well as carefully interviewed and screened part-time personnel conduct the program. Details for the coming summer will be made available in the spring.

Celebrations and Holidays

At CMS, all holidays are celebrated from a cultural perspective reflecting the diversity of the school community. We feel that religious teaching is the province of the family. Our focus is the enhancement of our cultural studies curriculum. We highlight ceremonies, foods, costumes, arts and crafts, and underlying lessons of cultural values.

Children are encouraged to share items from home that reflect the particular holiday. A parent's choice to absent the child from any celebration will be accommodated by the Staff and Office. This must be submitted in writing for inclusion in the child's file and for Staff notification. The child will be made comfortable in the office.

Birthdays

The child's birthday is unique and special, and we enjoy sharing this important occasion. At the beginning of the child's birthday month, a packet will be sent home, which will reserve the date of celebration, and contain pages representing each year of the child's life. On each page, please attach a photograph and a brief biography highlighting important events in that year of the child's life. Please send this to school the day before your child's birthday celebration.

You may also send a special snack for the birthday celebration. The portions should be small for the primary children. Some suggestions are fresh cut fruit, small muffins, small bagels cut in half spread with cream cheese or trail mix. The primary as well as lower and upper elementary children participate in a traditional Montessori birthday celebration. A birthday candle is lit to represent the sun. The child holds the globe and walks around the sun symbolizing a year in their life, while the directress reads the biography page representing that year. The photographs are displayed in the classroom for the month, or put in a birthday book, then returned home.

If invitations are being sent out to a home birthday party, the parent must use the U.S. Mail. The child may not pass out invitations in class, as this can be a hurtful experience for those not invited. If a party is held after school, students should leave school in their own cars. Leaving school in a group can be painful to those left behind.

Halloween

The CMS Parent Teacher Committee presents an annual Halloween Carnival at the school on a Saturday in October. Please check the school calendar for the exact date. A haunted house, games, and refreshments are available. All children (and parents!) are encouraged to wear their costumes. This is a popular and favorite event of families and Staff.

Thanksgiving

Thanksgiving is celebrated on the last day of school before the holiday break with a feast prepared by the children. Parents may be asked to prepare and donate certain parts of the meal such as a turkey, Tator-Tots or a vegetable. Due to space limitations, it is not possible to accommodate parent visitors on this day.

Chanukah/Christmas/Kwanza/Chinese New Year/Norouz

These holidays are acknowledged in the classrooms. Selected songs and refreshments are typical means of celebration.

Valentine's Day

The children exchange Valentine cards in their classrooms.

Spring Egg Hunt

The children decorate eggs and the elementary children hide the eggs for the primary children.

Spring Fling

A special, school-wide music program is presented in the spring for parents. Each classroom practices months in advance for this special event. For many children this is their first time on stage and is a very exciting event. Please check the school calendar for the exact date and location of this year's Spring Fling.

End of School

The last day of school is celebrated with a special lunch, a special program and activities.

Discipline Policies

Montessori philosophy stresses self-discipline of the child. In an atmosphere of freedom within limits, the focus is placed on a sense of responsibility, respect for persons and materials, consideration of others and cooperation. Montessori discipline emphasizes non-punitive, positive methods that avoid personal humiliation. Discipline is in the form of logical consequences and will be appropriate to the child's developmental stage and level of understanding. Whenever possible, behavioral changes will be effected through positive reinforcement and logical consequences.

Misbehavior

Although the functioning of a Montessori class promotes the acceptance of a wide variety of individual needs, at times a child's behavior may become disruptive to individuals, groups, or to the work cycle of the class. Recurrences of this behavior can have a substantial impact, not only on a child engaging in the behavior, and/or children involved, but also on the class as a whole. When a directress deems behavior to be negative and damaging to other children, the class environment, or a child, steps will be taken to protect the overall functioning of the class. Depending on the nature of the problem and a child's history, each incremental step may vary in order to achieve what is determined to be in the best interest of the class and Country Montessori.

1. The directress will address the misbehavior in the classroom using natural and logical consequences. The parents will be informed that a problem is re-occurring and what corrective measures are being applied. It is necessary to have the cooperation and support of the parents in developing consistent expectations of behavior.
2. If the misbehavior continues, the parents will be contacted for a conference with the directress, Instructional Lead and Administrator. A behavioral plan will be reviewed and a timetable will be set for a behavioral modification. Both parents must sign the Behavioral Plan. The directress will keep parents and the Administrator informed of the child's progress through reports and direct observation through daily/weekly communication.

Outside professional help may be required at this point. The professional may be asked to participate in the creation and monitoring of the behavioral plan. Country Montessori does not recommend specific professionals but has a list of people or organizations that may be used as a resource. It is the responsibility of parents to choose the professional, keeping in mind that it is important that the child, family, and school are all able to work with whomever is selected. Tuition does not cover this situation.

3. If, following the implementation of the new behavioral plan, the misbehavior continues or increases in severity, the directress may propose to the Administrator that the child be expelled. The Administrator may affirm the proposal or develop an alternate plan. The parents, directresses, Instructional Lead and Administrator will meet to discuss the decision.

The process outlined above may be accelerated at the discretion of the Administrator and Staff should the safety of students and/or staff be compromised. Steps may include immediate, temporary or permanent removal of the student, with or without warning. In some cases, parents must agree to pick the child up from school within an hour of being contacted during the school day when these instances occur.

Additional consequences for certain behaviors may include suspension or expulsion from school. The following specific actions may be severe enough to require immediate suspension or dismissal:

- ⇒ Assault--Assault or harassment, whether physical, sexual, or verbal, will not be tolerated. Any form of assault will be responded to with disciplinary action and the possibility of suspension or expulsion.
- ⇒ Biting--If biting occurs, parents of the child who was bitten and parents of the child who did the biting will be notified the same day that the incident occurred. If a child continues to bite more than twice during a two week period, the child will be suspended for a day. A child who is 5 years or older will automatically be suspended from school for one day for any biting. Any child who breaks the skin while biting will automatically be suspended for

one day, with the possibility of having to remain out of school for three days. If biting continues to be a serious problem, parents will be notified for a meeting with the directresses and Administrator to discuss a behavioral plan.

- ⇒ Uncontrollable behavior--including, but not limited to, screaming, escaping from the classrooms, or running away from Staff in a manner which could be dangerous to the child's safety.
- ⇒ Bullying--Bullying means any written or verbal expression, or physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof that is intended to cause distress upon one or more children in the school, on school grounds, or at school activities or events. Bullying will not be tolerated at Country Montessori, and depending on the severity of the action, a behavioral plan may be developed or expulsion may occur.
- ⇒ Disrespect--Disrespectful behavior is not tolerated at Country Montessori. Rude, negative, or hurtful comments, damaging or destructive actions, or a disregard for personal or school property is unacceptable. Depending on the severity of the action, a behavioral plan may be developed or expulsion may occur.

Suspension or Expulsion

Suspension or expulsion is the removal of a child from school at the request of the school via its representatives. Suspension or expulsion may occur for disciplinary reasons, because a child's needs cannot be reasonably accommodated, or because of a demonstrated lack of support on the part of the child's parents (i.e., a failure to comply with the policies and/or procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook or non-payment of tuition.) Parents, whose children attend Country Montessori, are financially responsible for the replacement or repair of any school property broken or damaged by their child.

Cell Phones and Video Games

Primary and Lower Elementary children are strictly forbidden to carry cell phones to school. If a child does bring a cell phone to school, the directress will confiscate it and contact the parents who will be required to retrieve it from the directress. Upper Elementary students may bring a cell phone to school but it is to remain off and may only be used after school. No child is allowed to bring video games to school. If a child does bring a video game to school, the directress will confiscate it and contact the parents who will be required to retrieve it from the directress. Repeated violations of this policy may result in the child's expulsion from the school.

Parent-Staff Relations

Any staff member or parent with a school concern is encouraged to discuss the matter directly with the individual(s) involved as soon as possible. If a discussion does not resolve the matter or if a discussion appears to be impractical, the following procedures should be implemented.

Support and Resolution Procedures (see figure 1)

- 1 Parent/Child
 - A) Parent concern about child
 - 1) Step One
 - (a) Action: Meeting with Directresses
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent and Directresses

If the concern is not resolved:

- 2) Step Two
 - (a) Action: Meeting with Directresses and Instructional Lead
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent and Directresses

If the concern is not resolved:

- 3) Step Three
 - (a) Action: Meeting with the Instructional Lead, and Administrator
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent, Instructional Lead, Directresses, and Administrator
 - (c) Administrator informs parent in writing of final determination regarding the parent concern

2 Parent Concern about Directress

- 1) Step One
 - (a) Action: Meeting with Directress
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent and Directresses

If the concern is not resolved:

- 2) Step Two
 - (a) Action: Meeting with the Administrator
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent and Administrator
 - (c) Administrator informs parent in writing of final determination regarding the parent concern

3 Directress Concerns

A) Directress concern about child and/or parent(s)

- 1) Step One
 - (a) Action: Meeting with parents (Instructional Lead may attend)
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent(s) and Directresses

If the concern is not resolved:

- 2) Step Two
 - (a) Action: Meeting with parents, Instructional Lead, and Administrator
 - (b) Documentation completed and signed by parent(s), Instructional Lead, and Administrator
 - (c) Administrator informs parent in writing of final determination regarding the Directress concern

4 Parent Concerns

A) Parent Concerns about policies

- 1) Step One
 - (a) Action: Meeting with Administrator
 - (b) Documentation completed by parent and Administrator
 - (c) Administrator informs parent in writing of final determination regarding the parent concern

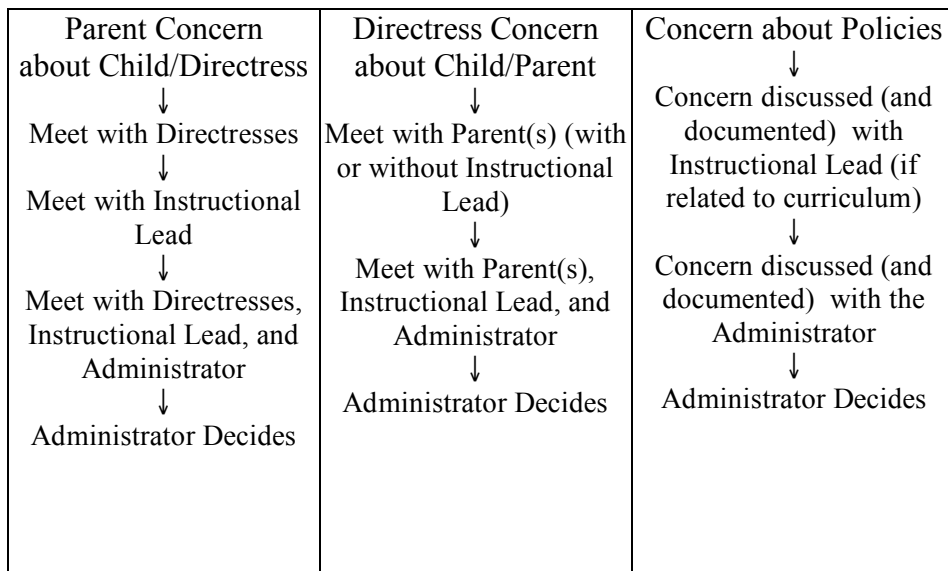
If the parent is dissatisfied with the resolution:

- 2) Dissatisfaction should be communicated:
 - (a) Immediately and directly in writing to the Administrator, and
 - (b) To the Board President

The Board will issue a written decision, which will be considered final. Action may include dismissal of the family from the school.

Support and Resolution Procedures Country Montessori School

Figure 1



Parent Partnership Policy

Open, honest, and respectful communication between parents and school staff are essential to a strong partnership to benefit our children. CMS' Parent Partnership Policy clarifies expectations regarding this partnership and expectations. All parents are required to read and sign the policy at the time of their children's enrollment to CMS. As always, if there are any questions or comments regarding the CMS Parent Partnership Policy, parents are encouraged to discuss them with their child's directresses and/or the CMS Administrator. (please see attachment for a copy of the full policy)

Summary of Parent and CMS Partnership

Working together, parents and CMS Staff, including directresses, classroom and childcare assistants, enrichment teachers, and the administration, have a strong influence on the emotional, social, academic, and spiritual development of our children. By modeling adult working relationships based upon respect and openness, we also help children to grow and mature in their relationships with others. Trust and mutual respect are the two most important factors in the Parent and CMS partnership.

Parent involvement and support is critical to the success of CMS. Staying informed about important school events, reading written communication, volunteering, attending pertinent meetings and communicating concerns openly and constructively to Staff closest to an issue, all help to build a foundation for a successful partnership. CMS and its Board of Directors are committed to open and timely communication regarding pertinent information. In addition, thoughtful questions and suggestions directed to either the school or the Board are always welcomed.

Our children and entire school community benefit from a strong partnership between parents and Staff. Together, we share an important responsibility to enable our children to become, in the words of the CMS Mission Statement, ‘independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens, who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers’.

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.

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 Parent Teacher Committee, 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, a Parent Teacher Committee 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 as 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. Starting in Spring 2007, the school has undertaken a self-study towards AMS accreditation, the first step in this process. The exacting accreditation standards of AMS ensure the school consistently provides children with an authentic Montessori education including Montessori-trained staff, Montessori materials, student assessment and recordkeeping, fluid parent communication, and most importantly, an environment and education where children develop a lifelong love of learning.

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.

At a minimum, all ECE and Elementary classroom lead directresses have a Montessori teaching credential, for the age group they teach, from an MACTE (Montessori Accreditation Council for Teacher Education) accredited teacher-training center. All of our Elementary directresses hold a minimum of a bachelor's degree in education or a related area. In addition, CMS sponsors 2 to 3 high performing employees to attend a MACTE teacher-training center to earn their Montessori teaching credential. 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 Administrator, 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 Administrator'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 School Administrator, Director of Admissions/Office Manager, 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.

Read this form, sign and return it to the office. You will be notified of any changes to the Parent Handbook during the school year.

I have read and understand the contents of the Country Montessori Parent Handbook, as posted on the school's website, and agree to abide by the policies set forth therein.

Parent or Guardian (Please print name)

Child/ren's Name (Please print name)

Signature

Date