

Safety Harbor Montessori Academy



Parent Handbook 2011-12

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SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Safety Harbor Montessori Academy is a learning community composed of children, their families, and a dedicated staff. Our program is based on love and respect for all members of the community. Our primary goal is to help our students reach their full potential in all aspects of their development.

With the Montessori curriculum as our foundation, we strive to emphasize the magic of learning for its own sake, rather than for external rewards or approval. Our rich learning environment encourages curiosity, self-direction, creativity, and concentration, as well as respect for our environment and all its inhabitants.

ADMISSIONS POLICY

Safety Harbor Montessori Academy reserves the right to decide, in its sole discretion, whether its programs are appropriate for each child seeking admission. Safety Harbor Montessori Academy's admissions policies are in no way based upon religious, racial, ethnic, political, or socio-economic background. We value diversity in our student population, and we believe that learning to interact with people of varied cultures and backgrounds is one of the most valuable social skills our children can develop.

The following forms are required prior to your child's first day:

1. Application
2. Tuition Contract
3. Emergency Release Form (**two** notarized forms required)
4. Immunization Form
5. Physical Exam Form
6. SHMA Release Form
7. Signed Discipline Policy
8. Student Identification Form (Preprimary & Primary students only)

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Safety Harbor Montessori Academy believes that all children desire to be productive and in control of themselves. We also believe discipline should include acknowledging the child's contributions, respecting his achievements, and praising his progress. To that end, our discipline policy is designed to help our students develop self-discipline and self-respect.

Beginning with orientation, and throughout the school year, the children are made aware of appropriate and considerate behavior, and why these are necessary for the enjoyment and harmony of the group. Through gentle reminders and consistent modeling, the children become sensitive to the needs of others and develop a respect for their learning environment. When a gentle reminder is not enough the teacher will intervene, respectfully but firmly, to stop the behavior. The teacher will redirect the child towards more positive, productive activity, so that s(he) is able to feel proud of her(him)self and her/his accomplishments.

If used consistently, this positive approach to discipline is extremely effective with most children. If a child does not respond, the child's parent(s) will be called for a conference. Through close cooperation between home and school, effective solutions can usually be found.

If a child becomes too disruptive to remain in the classroom, s(he) will be taken to the office for a conference with the administrator, and her parent(s) will be notified. In the event that a child becomes extremely disruptive, the child's parent/guardian will be notified and required to bring the child home from school. For safety reasons, aggressive behavior (i.e. hitting and kicking) will always result in the child's removal from school for the remainder of the day.

While a Montessori environment is normally successful with a very wide range of students, nothing is right for every child. One of our greatest challenges is to be objective and compassionate, yet realistic in considering the needs of each child as a unique individual. When we fail despite our best efforts to work with the child to help him/her meet appropriate behavioral expectations within the school's fundamental ground rules, we sadly and reluctantly must counsel the family to seek out another school setting in which the child can experience success.

Policy on Biting: While it is our belief that a young child who bites does so without malice, but rather as an expression of anger and frustration that s(he) is unable to express verbally, it is nonetheless extremely dangerous. A child who bites must be excluded from the group, either temporarily or permanently, depending on the severity of the situation. S(he) also needs to be soothed and comforted, and shown ways to express his/her feelings safely.

Policy for Middle School: Student's behavior must be reasonable and respectful at all times. If students are not able to maintain these standards, they will be required to bring a guardian to school to help them. Physical aggression or inappropriate physical contact will always result in suspension from school for the remainder of the day.

TIME SCHEDULE FOR CLASSES

Preprimary: 9:05 to 11:40 or 2:30

Primary:

Mornings 9:15 to 12:00

Full Days 9:15 to 3:00

Elementary Grades 1 – 3: 8:45 to 3:15

Elementary Grades 4-6: 8:45 to 3:30

Middle School:

Grades 7-8 8:40 to 3:45

Abbreviated Day Dismissal Times:

Preprimary: 11:40

Primary 12:00

Lower Elementary 12:15

Upper Elementary 12:30

Middle School: 12:45

ARRIVAL PROCEDURE

Please arrive promptly for school. Tardiness is disruptive to the child who is late, as well as to the rest of the class. Upon entering the parking lot please drive to the back building for elementary drop-off, to the side gate for preprimary drop-off and to the front driveway for primary drop-off. Form one lane in the driveway and pull as far forward as possible. Drivers are asked to remain in their cars at this time, and children should remain in the cars with the doors closed until a staff member comes to open the door and escort them into the building. For your child's safety, never allow him to get out of the car or walk into the building alone.

Encourage your child to be prepared to leave the car promptly. Brief good-byes are usually easier on both child and parent! If your child is reluctant to go you may park and walk him into the building. Cars may **not** be left unattended in the drive way as it is the emergency fire lane, so be sure to park in a designated parking space.

If you would like to inform the staff of a situation affecting your child, please do so in writing to assure we get the message during this busy time. If a response is necessary we will communicate with you at the first available moment.

Early arrival - if you drop off more than 10 minutes before your child's class begins, your child will be taken to extended care and you will be charged the morning extended care daily rate. If you arrive early and want to wait until normal class time please park in a parking space rather than waiting in the driveway where traffic will be blocked.

If you arrive late, park in a designated parking space and walk your child to his/her classroom. Elementary and middle school students arriving late should be walked into the office. They must have a tardy slip in order to enter their classroom after class has begun. It is important to escort your child into the building once the teachers have gone in, as his/her class may have gone outdoors, on a trip, etc. Your child will be recorded as tardy if s/he arrives more than five minutes after his/her starting time.

DISMISSAL PROCEDURE

Again, you will drive to your designated building entrance and form one lane at the elementary building and one lane at the primary and preprimary entrance. During the first few weeks of school the teachers need help identifying the children's cars. Preprimary and primary children will be given a color-coded window card for you to display in your passenger window. If you will be carpooling, send a signed note to your child's teacher stating whom your child is to ride with. Do not call your child to come from the porch, and explain to her in advance that she must wait for a teacher to take him/her to your car to ensure safety at this busy time.

It is very important to your child's sense of well being that s/he be picked up on time. If you know you will be late please call and let us know. Please remember not to leave your car unattended in the driveway, even if you are late. If your child is not picked up on time, your child's teacher will try to reach you. You are considered late if you arrive more than ten minutes after the usual dismissal time, your child will be signed into enrichment care or lunch bunch and you will be charged the appropriate fees.

In case of an emergency that prevents you from picking up your child, please call the school. Children will be released to *Authorized Persons Only*. If you know in advance that a person other than a regular parent or car pool parent will be bringing your child home from school, a note of explanation identifying the driver and car should be sent with your child. For the children's safety we will ask for picture identification.

SECURITY

A coded security system is used to prevent unauthorized people from entering areas with children. There will be no admittance at the preprimary and elementary buildings, as they do not have staffed reception areas. All visitors must sign in at the main reception area, including during conferences and field trips. Children who leave early should be signed out at the reception area as well. We will ask for identification of all visitors we do not know personally. Please understand that it takes a while for us to learn parents' names and faces, and we may ask for identification for several months.

EXTENDED CARE

Extended care is available to all full-time primary, elementary and middle school students. Care is available beginning at 7:30 AM and ending at 5:45 PM whenever school is in session, as well as during professional days. Activities will include cooking, sports and games, homework assistance, animals and nature, and arts and crafts. Days when extended care is not available are marked on the school calendar with an asterisk.

Morning and evening extended care is available to students on a monthly or daily basis (see schedule below). Monthly extended care students will pay the discounted monthly rate on the first of each month. This rate will also include care on any school professional days at no extra charge.

Daily extended care will be billed at the end of each month. Rates are available for morning, afternoon, abbreviated day and full day for professional education days.

SHMA provides gratis extended care for siblings of students that must arrive early or leave late due to their sibling's daily arrival and dismissal schedule. Students dropped off or picked up beyond their sibling's normal hours WILL be charged the applicable extended care rate. Students will also be charged for extended care if they attend while waiting for an after school activity if the waiting time is more than 15 minutes.

If you do not arrive by 5:45 PM we will begin to call the emergency contacts listed in your child's file. It is very important that you arrive promptly at this time. **In the event that you are late a fee of \$1.00 per minute will be assessed. There are no exceptions to this policy.**

PARENT CONFERENCES/ASSESSMENT

Student assessment conferences will be held three times a year, in October, January, and May. Additional conferences may be arranged as needed by calling the school office. Progress reports are sent home twice a year, in January and May. Standardized tests will be given annually in the spring for grades three through eight. Teachers **only** accept telephone calls **after** class time. Feel free to call and leave messages or e-mail and the teacher will respond after the school day is over.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT AND OBSERVATION

Safety Harbor Montessori heartily invites all parents and other family members to participate in their children's educational experience. You are encouraged to observe through the observation windows at any time. When observing, you may wish to take notes. You are welcome to call your child's teacher after class and discuss your observations. Since the beginning of school is a transitional period we ask that in-class observations begin after the first six weeks. Teachers will be happy to schedule an appointment for you after that time.

We need your cooperation and support when it comes to visiting and entering the classroom. Students are distracted and interrupted when adults enter the room, and maintaining valuable classroom time is essential for all of our students. It may not seem like much of an interruption to go in for a just minute, or drop off a lunch box, but the cumulative effect is that our students are distracted!

Once the year is well under way, you may choose to visit your child's class in one of the following ways:

Plan a special presentation demonstrating your occupation.

Give a cultural presentation.

Read to the children in the classroom.

Volunteer in the garden.

Help with a gardening or cooking activity.

If you are not directly participating in a classroom activity, try to remain in the background so as not to interrupt the natural flow of the class.

Always make an appointment with your child's teacher if you wish to visit in the classroom.

Becoming involved in your child's education does more than enrich the learning experience. It demonstrates to your child the importance you place on education. Our teachers are eager to hear your ideas, and we welcome the opportunity to make arrangements for your involvement.

DIVORCE/SEPARATION/CUSTODY ISSUES

When parents are separating, going through a divorce, and/or determining custody of their children, they should keep the school informed of all events in writing.

These events can be very stressful to children, so it is essential that the school remain informed but neutral in all situations. Our students need to know that their school is supported and respected by both parents, and that their parents' conflict will not be brought into their school environment. To this end, SHMA strongly objects to being involved in any custody disputes. Furthermore, it is unfair to all our students and staff to have teachers and staff members taken away from the important work they do with our students in order to testify on very private matters.

If a teacher or staff member is forced to testify or make a statement through a subpoena, a charge of \$500.00 per day will be charged to the students account. All information pertaining to custody matters must be in the form of an official court order. Students must be released to either parent according to law in the absence of a specific court order.

PROBLEM RESOLUTION

Any educational issues needing to be resolved should be directed to your child's teacher. If a satisfactory resolution is not achieved an appointment should be made with the Head of School. Any financial issues needing resolution and/or clarification should be directed to the Office Manager or the Business Manager.

Head of School
Business Manager
Office Manager

Melinda Robinson
Mark Robinson
Lydia Buening

COMMUNITY RESOURCES

If your family requires assistance beyond the scope of what a school setting can provide, please let us know. We can direct your family to community resources that can assist you with financial, health, emotional, legal, or educational difficulties. Your request will be held in the strictest confidence.

LUNCHES AND SNACKS

Good nutrition is essential to children's healthy development. The food that children eat is the material their bodies use to grow, and it affects their energy level, mood, and general health. Lunches should be wholesome and nutritious. Please do not send cakes, candies, or other sugary foods and beverages to school. 100% fruit juice, milk, and water are the preferred beverages. McDonalds, Checkers, and other fast foods should not be brought in for lunch.

Lunches should be packed in a lunch box with a thermos or disposable drink container. A small ice pack will be necessary for foods that require refrigeration. Please supply a cloth place mat and all utensils needed for your child's lunch, and be sure your child's lunch box is clearly labeled with his/her name on the outside. Hot lunch, catered by our middle school students, is also available during most of the school year. More information regarding that program will be sent home periodically.

The school will provide healthy, nutritious snacks each day at mid-morning, as well as in the afternoon for children who attend enrichment care. The children are invited to share in food preparation. Snack time can be a wonderful way to introduce another culture to the children. Anyone interested in sharing a special snack with the class should contact their child's teacher.

DRESS GUIDELINES

Children should dress comfortably in clothes that are easily cleaned. Please keep in mind that the children may be gardening, working with art materials, or with animals. They will get messy from time to time.

During physical education classes, all children should wear shorts or pants that allow freedom of movement, a shirt that can be tucked in, and athletic shoes. Because the children will be playing outdoors most every day, only rubber-bottomed shoes that remain securely in place should be worn. Sandals, clogs, crocs and cowboy boots are not safe on the playground.

Clothing need not be fancy, but should reflect that the children are in a learning environment. Leotards, swimsuits, clothing with inappropriate logos, or otherwise inappropriate attire is not permitted. Halter tops, excessively baggy clothes, and exposed undergarments are not appropriate for school. Hats and jewelry other than small earrings or necklaces should be avoided because they tend to get lost and can be a distraction in class.

BIRTHDAYS

In a Montessori primary classroom birthdays are celebrated with a special ceremony in which the birthday child carries a globe (representing the earth) around a candle (representing the sun) one complete orbit for each year of her life. For all levels, a photo from each year of your child's life may be sent in advance so that your child's life and growth can be shared with the class.

If you choose, you may bring a special snack to share with the class to celebrate your child's birthday as well. Suggestions include muffins, bagels, or a favorite fruit or vegetable and dip. The health department requires that all foods including baked goods be store bought or prepared at school. Please keep the snack simple. It should be able to be served and cleaned up in 15 minutes or less. Also, particularly with younger children, try to make each serving the same rather than offering a selection to avoid conflicts. Always let your child's teacher know of your birthday plans in advance. Party favors and balloons should not be sent to school.

A nice way to commemorate your child's birthday as well as help build the school library is to donate a book. The library committee will inscribe your child's name and birthday on the inside cover. Of course, this is completely optional.

Teachers will be happy to hand out birthday party invitations to the class, but only if every child in the class is invited. Otherwise, a class list with addresses can be obtained from the office so that invitations can be mailed.

TOYS AND SHARING DAYS

Children should not bring toys or other personal belongings to school unless they are specifically requested to do so for sharing days. Suggestions for sharing days are books, nature discoveries, cultural artifacts, and souvenirs. Items intended to provide your child with security such as a special teddy bear, a blanket, etc. are permitted. Any other toys or objects will be held at the office until the end of the day. The school will not be held responsible for any personal items that are lost or left at school. Please do not send valuables or non-replaceable items to school.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips are intended to supplement various aspects of the classroom curriculum and to introduce students to the cultural and scientific resources within our community. Parents will receive notice of field trips well in advance of the scheduled trip. Permission slips should be signed and returned promptly or children will not be allowed to participate. Parents will be invited to assist and drive for all field trips. We need and appreciate your help in driving and chaperoning the children.

Please remember the following guidelines when driving on a field trip:

1. All children must wear seat belts or be in a car seat in the back seat.
2. Convertibles with the top down, or any type of open-air vehicle may not be used to transport children.
3. Stay with the children assigned to you at all times. Do not allow children to go alone to the rest room or any other place.
4. Drive directly back to school following the field trip. Do not stop anywhere for a snack.
5. After the field trip please walk your children back to their classroom and stay with your group until the teacher arrives.

NEWSLETTERS AND NOTICES

Parents will receive any notices or newsletters every Wednesday via e-mail. In an effort to avoid wasting paper and ink, any information that can be e-mailed will be distributed electronically. Hard copies will be sent to families who have not opted to communicate via e-mail. Please read all information carefully, respond or return any requested material by Friday of the same week. Watch for announcements on the message boards and our web site as well.

PARENT EDUCATION

Parent workshops will be held to introduce you to the Montessori method and philosophy from time to time. We urge all parents to share these evenings with us so that we may work together toward your child's healthy development and education. Following is a brief discussion on some of Montessori's philosophy. For anyone interested in more information, we have included a reading list at the end of the discussion.

One basic idea of the Montessori philosophy is that carried unseen within each child is the person that the child can become. To develop his/her physical, intellectual, and spiritual powers to the fullest, the child must have freedom - a freedom achieved through order and self-discipline. The child's world is full of sights and sounds that at first appear chaotic. From this chaos the child gradually creates order and learns to distinguish among the impressions that assail his/her senses, slowly gaining mastery of self and environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called "the prepared environment." Among its features is an ordered arrangement of learning materials in a non-competitive atmosphere that helps each child develop at his/her own rate.

"Never let the child risk failure until he has a reasonable chance of success," said Dr. Montessori, understanding the need to acquire basic skills before participating in a competitive learning situation. The years between two and six are those when a child learns the ground rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be devoted constructively to preparing the child to take his/her place in society through the acquisition of good manners, organizational skills, and work habits. Between the ages of six and twelve, the child is able to think abstractly, and is engaged and motivated by the imagination. Learning must challenge his imagination in order to be meaningful.

Dr. Montessori recognized that self-motivation is the only valid impulse to learning. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, creates stimulating activities, and functions as the reference person and role model for the class. But it is the child who learns, motivated through the work itself, to persist in his chosen task. The Montessori child is free to learn because she has acquired an "inner discipline" from exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Montessori's educational philosophy. Habits of concentration, perseverance, and thoroughness established in early childhood produce a confident and competent learner in later years. Historically, Montessori schools have taught children to observe, to think, and to make judgments. Montessori introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age, and provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand in hand. Through the elementary and middle school years, children in a Montessori environment acquire a strong academic and emotional base, allowing them to grow into capable young adults with integrity, intellectual honesty, and social grace.

READING LIST

Many of these titles and others are available for loan from the school. Please inquire at the office.

- A Parents Guide to the Montessori Classroom. By Aline Wolf.
- Maria Montessori, A Modern Approach. By Paula Polk Lillard.
- Montessori Today. By Paula Polk Lillard.
- Punished by Rewards. By Alfie Kohn
- How to Talk So Kids Will Listen. By Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish
- Postive Pushing. By Jim Taylor
- Children Believe Everything You Say. By Jennifer Day
- The Absorbent Mind. By Maria Montessori. (Dr. Montessori's last book about the development of the child's mind.)
- The Discovery of the Child. By Maria Montessori. A 1948 revision of some of Dr. Montessori's earlier writings.
- From Childhood to Adolescence. By Maria Montessori.
- Turning Points. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development.
- Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius. By Angeline Lillard

EMERGENCIES

In the event of an emergency such as severe weather, parents should tune in to Bay News 9, WARM 94.9 FM (radio) or Channel 13 (FOX) for an announcement regarding school closing. A general policy pertaining to hurricanes is as follows:

If a hurricane or tropical storm watch is issued school will remain open.

If a hurricane or tropical storm warning is issued school will be closed.

A message will be left on the school's voice mail with the latest information on the school's status. If an emergency arises and children need to be dismissed, you will be contacted by telephone. In the unlikely event that emergency shelter or evacuation is required, you will find us at Countryside Baptist Church or Leila Davis Elementary School.

ILLNESS

Please keep your child home if s/he shows signs of illness. It is essential that everyone cooperate in this manner to keep the spread of illness to a minimum. An ill child not only unnecessarily exposes his classmates to illness, but also is more susceptible to additional illness. We realize that parents sometimes have very pressing schedules that make it difficult to keep children home from school but alternate arrangements should be planned for since unexpected illnesses are an inevitable part of growing up. The school is not permitted to keep sick children in our care. If your child becomes ill during a school day you will be contacted so that you can pick him up as soon as possible. Your child needs to stay home from school if she:

Has a fever of 100 degrees or higher.

Has a contagious disease. (Please inform the school immediately.)

Displays any of the following symptoms: severe coughing, diarrhea, vomiting, sore throat, a rash of unknown origin, heavy or discolored mucus discharge from the nose, or unexplained eye redness and/or drainage.

These suggestions should aid you in the determination of whether your child should or should not be sent to school. We rely on your good judgment. When in doubt, keep your child home.

MEDICATION

In order for the staff to dispense prescription medication, a parent must sign a consent form. All medication must remain in the original container with a pharmacist's label that indicates the child's name, date, type of prescribed medication, and the amount, method, and time of dosage. The consent form must contain the same dosage information as the pharmacy label. Over the counter medications may be dispensed with a doctor's note only, and must be in a new and unopened container. Medication consent forms are available in the office and must be signed for each period that medication is to be administered. Do not put medication in your child's lunch box or backpack, regardless of age! It must be given to a staff member to be placed in a locked container out of children's reach. Sunscreen and insect repellent should be applied by parents before school.

FIRST AID

The Pinellas County License Board has strict rules governing first aid for your child. We are allowed to use bandages, soap, water, ice and TLC that are appropriate to your child's injury. In the event of a serious injury we will notify parents and your child's pediatrician (if necessary) so that your child can receive appropriate care. 911 will be called in all cases of illness or injury that we are not comfortable handling. If a parent cannot come immediately in situations requiring medical attention, children will be transported to the nearest hospital via ambulance. Parents are responsible for any ambulance expenses.

HEALTH/COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Parents are urged to provide any information on their child's health that will enable the staff to create an environment that meets the needs of all our students. Raising our awareness of your child's specific needs allows us the opportunity to seek professional assistance should these needs stretch beyond the scope of our staff's expertise.

All children attending a group setting should be properly immunized against certain communicable diseases. It is the parent's responsibility to keep children properly immunized at all times.

In order to prevent the spread of diseases and/or microorganisms our policy is to wear gloves when attending to open cuts, to keep all open cuts bandaged at all times, and to use frequent hand washing by both adults and children.

ABSENCES

If you know that your child will be absent in advance, please send in a note informing her teacher of when and why. If your child is ill and will not be able to attend on a given day, please call the office to let us know. We must have a note on file explaining all absences for children attending grades one through eight. If your child is absent more than 15 days during a school year due to illness, we must have a note of explanation on file from her/his health care provider. Excessive absence or tardiness at the elementary or middle school level may cause the school to deny promotion and/or re-admission for the following school year.

TUITION PAYMENTS

Annual payments are due June 1st. Semester payments are due June 1st and November 1st. Monthly payments are due the first of each month, beginning with June 1st and continuing through

March 1st. A late fee will be assessed on all monthly balances for payments received after the 15th of the month according to the following schedule:

- Less than \$500 - \$10/month
- \$500 to \$1,499 - \$25/month
- \$1,500 to \$5,000 - \$50/month
- Over \$5,000 - \$100/month

If for some reason you are unable to make your payment on time, please contact the business office. Your cooperation in this area will allow us to focus our time and attention on education rather than accounting.

If you would like to change your child's attendance schedule or payment plan you must notify the front office in writing at least five school days prior to the desired schedule change. Upon acceptance of your child's schedule change, a \$50.00 schedule change fee will be due and your tuition account will be adjusted to reflect this schedule change.

MONTHLY STATEMENT

A monthly statement will be issued at the beginning of the month for all accounts with outstanding balances. If you have a question concerning the status of your account, please contact the office manager or business manager.

SUGGESTIONS FOR A CHILD-FRIENDLY HOME

***Limit television viewing and computer gaming. It's difficult for the real world to compete with special effects, multiple camera angles, and marketing experts. This is true for all age levels.

Have as few rules as possible, but stick to the ones you have. Consistency is the most effective form of discipline.

Store clothes and belongings at a height that is accessible so that your child can be independent.

Make sure a source of running water is within your child's reach.

Allow your child to assist in preparation of meals and snacks.

Place an appropriately sized broom, dust pan, and cloth within your child's reach so that he can clean up after himself.

Help your child organize her toys and belongings so that everything has its own place. This is especially important in middle school!

Make children feel significant by giving them important jobs.

When possible within the limits of safety, allow your child to suffer the natural consequences of his choices, so that s(he) can learn from them.

Try to avoid showing your child the easier way. Let her figure it out for herself. She will be so proud when she does.

Slow down and experience life at your child's pace instead of the other way around. You will be amazed at all the little wonders you have been missing.

Have the patience to allow for short legs, inexperienced fingers, and wandering spirits. Life is complicated, and it takes practice.

Remember that growing up is a journey, not a race. Confidence, inner strength, and integrity must be given time to develop.

Thank you for entrusting us with your child's education. We look forward to sharing the coming year with you, and we invite you to take an active roll in your child's education. If you have any problems, questions or suggestions please let us know.