

# MAY SANDS



## MONTESSORI SCHOOL

1400 United Street, #110  
Key West, Florida 33040

[www.MaySandsMontessori.com](http://www.MaySandsMontessori.com)

## FAMILY HANDBOOK

SY2019

We encourage respect for self, others and environment, promote a desire to seek knowledge, and provide an academically challenging program.

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# Welcome

It is our goal to work in partnership with parents, students, guides, and support staff to provide the very best education for our students. It is with that purpose in mind that the Parent/Student Handbook outlines our school's policies and procedures. Please keep this handbook in a convenient place for future reference. Should you have questions or need clarification of these policies and procedures, please do not hesitate to contact us. We hope your experience with the May Sands Montessori School is an enriching and rewarding one.

## Development of Administrative Procedures

The Charter School Board delegates to the Principal the authority to determine what administrative procedures will be needed to implement policies adopted by the Board. Administrative procedures shall be consistent with the adopted policies, and shall describe the manner in which those policies are to be implemented.

The Principal shall recommend appropriate administrative procedures to the Board for adoption. The Principal may also issue administrative and student handbooks as may be necessary for the effective administration of the school and distribute them to employees and students and/or their parents.

As long as the provisions of these administrative procedures and handbooks are consistent with Board policies, or with Federal/State law, they will be considered to be an extension of the policy manual and binding upon all employees and students.

Administrative procedures shall be available electronically on the School's web site, and printed copies shall be maintained in the School Office.

## Mission Statement

The May Sands Montessori School is a public school, open to all children, striving to reflect the diversity of our community. Our innovative academic program, rooted in the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, challenges the student, individually, in a safe and nurturing environment. Students are guided in the development of self-discipline, self-confidence, cooperation and responsibility; and are instilled with solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism and peace.

The May Sands Montessori School's educational philosophy is based on the premise that excellence in education requires:

- Ⓢ A close collaboration between parents, guides, and administration; families are ultimately responsible for their child's growth and development.
- Ⓢ Guides (teachers) who keenly observe each student's style of learning to provide a developmentally appropriate, experiential learning program.
- Ⓢ A carefully prepared learning environment that fosters a love for learning and allows students to achieve learning gains through personal motivation.

## Philosophy

It is the philosophy of the May Sands Montessori School to:

- Ⓢ Implement an individualized, child-centered curriculum that includes movement, manipulation and discovery within a multi-age classroom.
- Ⓢ Facilitate the delivery of that curriculum in a manner that instills a sense of wonder about the universe and the child's place within that universe.
- Ⓢ Engage families in the education of children; Parent support is key to a quality Montessori program. The parent and guide unite in a partnership of school and home that fosters the complete development of the child and young adult.
- Ⓢ Extend the classroom out into the community, creating a web of exchange among community members, family, and educational staff.

## Educational Program

***Our aim therefore is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core.***

*-Maria Montessori*

Dr. Maria Montessori placed emphasis on following the child, being aware of the spirit of the individual. To inspire students to pursue knowledge should be the goal of the effective educator. In addition to satisfying the academic needs of the child, the emotional and physical aspects of development should also be addressed. Our Montessori educational program provides a holistic, integrated approach that attempts to meet the needs of the whole child while attending to the curriculum.

Our educational program promotes independence and interdependence – connectedness. With the understanding that all beings are connected in a web of life, educators can proclaim

this truth and nurture individuals to become physically, intellectually and spiritually aware of their human potential.

Maria Montessori developed a method of educating children by instilling in them the wonder of our existence. Cosmic Education is the act of presenting an idea of the universe and humanity's place within it. Dr. Montessori felt that nothing could be explained without the knowledge of humanity's relationship to the universe. Dr. Montessori believed in presenting knowledge of the origin of our universe in narrative form. In addition to the academic curriculum, the May Sands Montessori School believes in teaching Cosmic Education and Character Education. It is believed that by creating a sense of compassion, global awareness and our connection to nature, we can instill in children sociological and ecological values that will benefit them and all humankind in the future.

## Educational Programs

*'Our aim therefore is not merely to make the child understand, and still less to force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his inmost core.'*

*-Maria Montessori*

Dr. Maria Montessori placed emphasis on following the child, being aware of the spirit of the individual. To inspire students to pursue knowledge should be the goal of the effective educator. In addition to satisfying the academic needs of the child, the emotional and physical aspects of development should also be addressed. Our Montessori educational program provides a holistic, integrated approach that attempts to meet the needs of the whole child while attending to the curriculum. Our educational programs promote independence and interdependence. Montessori educators nurture individuals to become physically, intellectually and spiritually aware of their human potential.

### **Montessori Primary Preparatory Program**

As a public school of choice, our Primary program offers an introduction to the Montessori learning environment for students in their Kindergarten year. We have developed a rich curriculum, which contains all of the essential learning materials commonly found in a traditional Montessori primary classroom, to support our youngest student learners. Our Kindergarten

students develop their scholarly learning habits under the direction of our Lead Guide and through active participation in the environment.

### **Montessori Lower Elementary Program**

All of the essential qualities of an authentic Montessori program are evident in our Lower Elementary learning environments; students in grades 1-3 form a community of learners who gain precision with specialized materials through large blocks of uninterrupted work time, under the direction of a Lead Guide and the support of a classroom assistant. Students are expected to hone their scholarly skills through responsible participation in the academic environment, and are provided with experiences in collaborative learning where they develop leadership qualities.

### **Montessori Upper Elementary Program**

Students in our Upper Elementary learning environments exercise their growing independence by means of increased responsibility, through peer collaboration, and by exhibiting follow-through with independent studies. Our Upper Elementary program is organized using the traditional Montessori model; students in 4th – 6th grade form the learning community, and they are provided large blocks of uninterrupted time to access the curriculum. The Upper Elementary Lead Guides share responsibility in presenting lessons, and the Classroom Assistants serve as tone keepers in the learning environments.

### **Montessori Early Secondary Program**

Dr. Montessori had a vision for the Early Secondary program, and students at May Sands Montessori School are guided in their academic development using the essential components of her vision. The students form a strong community through activities that foster cooperation and leadership. The curriculum is advanced and largely project-based, and includes blocks of uninterrupted work time for students to collaborate and gain a deeper understanding of the content. The Guides lead students in the development of seminars, which enhance collaboration and nurtures active listening skills. Students are also guided in selecting community service projects within the school as well as in our greater community. In addition to cultivating strong academic scholars, May Sands Montessori School nurtures citizens who demonstrate responsibility, respect and service.



# The Method

Our educational program is rooted in the Montessori philosophy, and maintains a vision toward advances in education. Through close and careful observation, Maria Montessori developed a method of educating children that placed the individual needs of the child as the foundation for learning. Three components of Montessori's discoveries serve as our educational cornerstone: the Four Planes of Development, Cosmic Education, and the Universal Human Tendencies.

## **The Four Planes of Development**

Upon understanding that all humans need to make sense of their environment, Maria Montessori realized the existence of stages in human development that were unique to the individual. Montessori believed that humans developed in a series of four stages, and suggested propensities toward the acquisition of certain knowledge existed within each stage. Maria Montessori created the concept of the Four Planes of Development based on her many years of observing children. Within each of these planes, exist periods of time in which the individual is particularly sensitive to acquiring information in a particular manner.

The passage to the second level of education is the passage from sensorial, concrete exploration of the world to abstract exploration of knowledge. The child in the second plane of development (approximately 7 - 12 years old) possesses an abstract mind and seeks to find purpose and reason behind knowledge. It is believed that by creating a sense of compassion, global awareness and our connection to nature, we can instill in children, sociological and ecological values that will benefit them in the future.

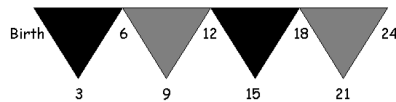


Fig. 3 Maria Montessori's Four Planes of Development

## **Cosmic Education**

Maria Montessori stated that for the elementary child it is "the power of imagination that educates". She designed a curriculum that presented a vision of the universe to the child in the form of an engaging impressionistic story. This provides a large narrative framework for the children's later knowledge. Studies of all branches of science are integrated into this framework. In addition to the academic curriculum, the May Sands Montessori School believes in teaching cosmic education - the knowledge of humanity's relationship to the universe. The goal of Cosmic

Education is to develop a global vision within the child along with gratitude for the universe and their lives within it.

***“If everything in the universe came about from the same source – the original fireball that many believe preceded the creation of the stars – then we as human beings are related to all other human beings, as well as to the animals, plants, oceans, and heavenly bodies. Therefore if we deliberately destroy nature or harm other living beings we might be ultimately destroying ourselves.”***

- Aline Wolf, *Nurturing the Human Spirit*

## **Universal Human Tendencies**

Maria Montessori was not only an educator, but a keen anthropological observer as well. Montessori's studies in anthropology enabled her to reflect on the behaviors of early humans, correlate similar behaviors with those of the humans of her time, and realize universal human tendencies toward certain behaviors. These tendencies are: exploration, orientation, order, imagination, manipulation, repetition, precision, control of error leading to perfection, and communication.

Maria Montessori also observed and studied human tendencies; the way we learn. Dr. Montessori believed education should correspond to the child's developmental periods, and guides should apply their knowledge of human tendencies when working with children. The May Sands Montessori School operates on the understanding of the universal human tendencies. In the Montessori classroom the child learns through exploration of the prepared environment. The role of the guide is to continue to adapt the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs.

The May Sands Montessori School acknowledges the importance of the prepared environment and offers:

- Ⓢ An integration of the arts, sciences, geography, history, and language that inspires students to seek knowledge for personal satisfaction.
- Ⓢ The presentation of knowledge as part of a large scale narrative in which the origins of the earth, life, human communities (agricultural and urban), empires, and modern history unfolds, always in the context of the wholeness of life.
- Ⓢ The presentation of formal scientific language of zoology, botany, anthropology, geography, geology, etc. that exposes the child to accurate, organized information while respecting the child's intelligence and interests.

- Ⓢ The use of time lines, pictures, charts, and other visual aids, to provide a linguistic and visual overview of the first principles of each discipline.
- Ⓢ A mathematics curriculum presented with concrete materials that simultaneously reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic correlations.
- Ⓢ An emphasis on open-ended research and in-depth study that uses primary and secondary sources, such as books, as well as other materials.
- Ⓢ "Going-out" which entails the ongoing use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

## The Materials

Montessori materials make up a large portion of the elementary prepared environment. These manipulative materials have been scientifically designed and tested. In our Primary and Elementary classrooms, you will find a visual representation of the knowledge to be explored. There is a variety of materials within the scope of learning any concept. Each child is able to have many varied experiences manipulating materials, enabling exploration and discovery of concepts. Individual children may work with the materials to different extents, thus accommodating different learning styles.

In a Montessori classroom there is an emphasis placed on research for even the youngest elementary school students. Research builds a framework for creative thinking and exploration. Through research, students learn the varied means of gaining and evaluating information and how to use reference materials.

## The Guide

The guide is a catalyst for learning and observes as the child chooses his/her activities. Maria Montessori valued the role of the prepared educator in the learning environment. In the Montessori classroom, the role of the guide is to continue to adapt the environment and facilitate exploration while observing and assessing the child's individual needs; the guide is the link between the child and the environment. By implementing observation techniques, the guide is able to meet the individual needs and interests of each child. The guide is dedicated to the development of students who are self-disciplined, cooperative, responsible, creative thinkers of the community and world. Along with preparing students to be productive members of society, the guide strives to provide solid foundations in intellectual growth, humanitarianism and peace.

# Outline of Instructional Methods

We believe learning environments should accommodate the sensitive periods Maria Montessori realized in Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum is best described as an integration of subjects that spiral in depth of content over the span of the multi-age cycle within each program level. In addition to core subject areas of Geography, Geometry, History, Language Arts, Mathematics, and the branches of Science, Montessori education includes practical life lessons as well as peace education.

## **Geography**

Even the youngest student in the Montessori classroom has experience with physical and cultural geography. First lessons with the globe provide primary program students with an awareness of the differentiation between the Earth's water and the continents. The use of continent puzzle maps – present throughout the primary and elementary learning environments – provide further discovery of physical geography and offer a thematic focus for studying biomes and cultural geography. Early Secondary program students expand their knowledge of physical geography by developing a thorough understanding of the Earth's geologic composition, which has affected its physical structure over time. At this program level, economic and cultural geography are also studied through the divergent lenses of history and current events, which provides opportunity to engage in scholarly debate.

## **Geometry**

The study of geometric shapes begins with concrete objects in the primary Montessori program, and carries forward throughout the Early Secondary program in a more abstract, complex and analytical manner. Identification and classification of plane figures and solid geometric shapes become the work of the primary Montessori student. Geometry studies for the elementary program level include definitions and properties of plane and solid shapes, and expanded forms of plane shapes (i.e. types of triangles and polygons). The study of nomenclature to describe specific aspects of geometric shapes is the work of elementary program level students, which lead to measurement and manipulation of shapes as they progress in their studies.

## **History**

In a Montessori elementary classroom, the first lessons of history are presented in narrative form, beginning with the scientific theory of the origin of our universe. Dr. Montessori held firm to the

belief that children whose imaginations were engaged would be more apt to learn. Studies of the history of our mother planet lend a strong connection to the science of zoology, and imbedded in these studies is a component of the curriculum that provides the etymological origins of language. The study of early humans and how our species evolved is a concept that is presented throughout the elementary program years. Discussions on the fundamental needs of humans provide opportunities for the study of early civilizations and potential correlations to current day issues. The use of timelines is a key component of Montessori education, and enables students to place facts from any discipline in a linear progression. In this regard, history is not a separate subject, but a manner in which one organizes content in linear form.

## **Language Arts**

Dr. Montessori understood that the sensitive period for developing language occurred from birth through approximately age six. It is for this reason that the primary environment holds a wealth of materials to provide experiences for the development of spoken and written language. Early lessons in phonemes form the basis of the language curriculum in the primary environment. Students experience letters and sounds through multi-modal forms of sandpaper letters, objects and modeling. Once the phonemic coding is in place, students build on their knowledge by using the moveable alphabet for word building and the study of phonemic blends for vocabulary development. Literacy is an integral component of all subject areas; nomenclature cards are prevalent throughout the Montessori curricula, and provide students with varying levels of matching words, objects and definitions. Instructional Guides at all program levels provide regular opportunities for listening to stories, which helps to build sustained focus and comprehension in pre-readers, and an appreciation for literary genres and the spoken word in older students. Composition is the written form of language, and is encouraged from the very first lessons of phonemic development. Formal instruction in handwriting emerges as a result of repeated practice with the sandpaper letters, which supports proper letter formation. As students progress in the Montessori program levels, they develop a wider working vocabulary (e.g. personal dictionaries), begin to study grammar (e.g. functions of the parts of speech), and take part in literature circles or shared reading groups to build skill in reading and critical thinking.

## **Mathematics**

Dr. Montessori developed materials to teach a specific concept in practical form, and provided opportunity for independent exploration by making these materials self-correcting. The

Montessori Math curriculum begins with concrete representation of quantity and symbol, and contains a variety of materials that progress in complexity of concept to enable students to move toward abstraction. Mathematics in the primary environment offers an introduction to the decimal system in an inviting and interactive form known as the Golden Bead Material. Young students begin composing numbers into the thousands through manipulation of the materials and in connection to the symbols presented by the Instructional Guide. The Bead Cabinet is also a learning tool introduced in the primary environment, but is used throughout the elementary program, as well. The Bead Cabinet is perhaps the most versatile Montessori Math material; for it provides students with a concrete form of linear counting that also incorporates skip counting, multiples, and the square and cube of numbers. The use of bead bars, which were developed in the same fashion as those in the Bead Cabinet are used throughout the elementary Math curriculum to support student learning of mathematical operations. As students become proficient with mathematical concepts, the reliance on representative materials subsides. Students in the Upper Elementary and Early Secondary learning environments are more able to complete their studies in abstract format, though there exist occasions when a return to the concrete materials is needed to reintroduce or reinforce a concept.

## **Branches of Science**

The Montessori Science curriculum is interwoven with history, mathematics and language, and begins with a descriptive overview of the origin of our universe. Progressing from this first impressionistic lesson, students learn about types and formation of galaxies, the composition of stars, the planets that form our solar system, the formation of Earth, and the composition of our planet. Further lessons draw upon physical science concepts such as the states of matter, exploration of elements and compounds, and basic atomic theory. The study of plants and animals is also a part of the curricular web that flows through all Montessori program levels. Primary students learn classification of living and non-living organisms, and begin learning the differing characteristics of plants & animals. The Science curriculum progresses to identifying the parts of plants and animals, as well as more advanced classification of animals, and eventually to the biological characteristics that differentiate the propagation of animal species. Students in the elementary and early secondary program levels learn about the interrelationships of living organisms through lessons in ecology and environmental science, which also provide opportunity to study chemistry and revisit molecular theory. The branches of science are interrelated in the

Montessori curriculum, and the progression of the spiral depth of knowledge is quite evident throughout the academic program levels.

## **Practical Life**

Dr. Montessori held to the belief of education as an aid to life, and created activities for the young Montessori student that developed fine motor control, coordination and courtesy. While most of the practical life lessons are introduced in the Primary program and provide exercises in gaining fine motor precision, older Montessori students' practical life activities expand to include real world activities. As the student sweeps up pencil shavings, in the active care for the school's plants, or through the preparation of communal snack, Montessori students are developing independence in their environment.

## **Peace Education**

Early lessons in grace and courtesy provide the framework for a peaceful and connected learning environment. Students are guided in practical life activities that require sharing, taking turns, active listening, and respect. Students develop these characteristics through active participation in their environment and the classroom becomes a community of peacekeepers.

## **Presentation of Lessons**

The guide generally presents lessons in brief, small group presentations. The lessons utilize Montessori materials, hand-made materials, nomenclature booklets and cards, and more traditional education tools (such as microscopes and thermometers). The plan for the composition of small groups involves consideration of student abilities, interest, and prior experience with the content to be presented. Students who are familiar with the lesson may serve as peer guides. After each lesson is presented there are a variety of follow-up activities, which enable the student to gain mastery of the concept presented. There are also extension activities, games, and other materials that can be introduced to revitalize interest and which engender mastery of the concept. Nomenclature is an integral component of many lessons. The traditional style of presenting nomenclature follows the Montessori Three-Part Lesson. Each lesson teaches approximately 3-5 Focus. The first part of the lesson requires the guide to present the nomenclature (e.g., "This is the isosceles triangle"). The second part asks the student for comprehension of the nomenclature while naming it (e.g., "Show me the isosceles triangle"). The third part asks the student to show comprehension of the nomenclature without assistance (e.g.,

“What is this triangle called?”), thus checking for mastery of the nomenclature. This type of lesson is used to give vocabulary in any subject as well as for learning non-phonetic words.

The Three-Part Lesson allows the guide to quickly assess individual student comprehension, and the student is actively involved in the learning process. The brevity of the lesson allows the student to explore and manipulate the material, which leads toward mastery of the subject. The Three-Part Lesson follows the natural progression of learning, asking for information only when the student has demonstrated that he/she understands, thus ensuring more confidence and a sense of accomplishment.

## Freedom and Responsibility

Freedom and responsibility are an integral part of the Montessori environment. Students are active participants in their academic success. The adult is responsible for setting limits in a firm, fair, and consistent manner. Students are free to make choices within those limits. They are responsible for accepting the consequences of their choices, which leads to the development of self-discipline. This freedom develops the ability of the child to make reasoned choices based on a framework of self-discipline that has been developed over time.

## Connection to the Community

Through the multi-age classroom, freedom of movement inside and outside, and the use of research and real-life materials, the Montessori classroom has great relevancy to the world beyond the school. Within the Montessori environment the child develops humanitarian values, a foundation of courtesy, respect and purpose, through experience and guidance.

## Non-discriminatory Policy

The May Sands Montessori School, Inc. shall admit students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to all members of the student body. The school does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in administration of educational policies, admission policies, athletic or other school-administered programs.



## Cultural Diversity

We celebrate the diversity of all ethnic and religious backgrounds of the children in our community. We do not subscribe to any specific religious organizations or practices. We invite all families to share with us their ethnic observances and celebrations.

## What is a Charter School?

Charter schools are public schools that operate under a performance contract, also known as "the charter", which frees them from most rules and regulations created for traditional public schools. An individual, a group of parents or classroom guides, a business, a municipality, or a legal entity creates charter schools. As part of the contract, charter schools are held strictly accountable for academic and financial results. They have the independence and autonomy to make their own decisions. Financial control allows for the ability to implement and pay for the decisions made by charter school founders.

## Charter Board of Directors

The May Sands Montessori School is a not-for-profit corporation, managed by a nine-member Board of Directors: five (5) parents/guardians of students enrolled in the school, and four (4) representative members of the community. The election, terms of office and duties shall be as contained in the Articles of Incorporation and By-Laws. There are four officers of the Charter Board of Directors: the President, Vice-President, Treasurer and Secretary.

### **Board Procedures**

These procedures have been designed to keep discussion orderly and to provide an opportunity for you to participate in a Board of Directors' meeting.

The school encourages family participation in our school community. For complaints about school-related issues, the board asks families to talk first to the employee closest to the problem - usually a classroom guide or principal. Should a satisfactory solution still not be achieved, please submit your concern to the Board.

### **How to get on the Agenda**

The Board can only act on items included in the formal agenda (which is posted at least 72 hours prior to the meeting during which action is sought). If you want the Board to formally discuss or

act on an item, your item must be placed on the official meeting agenda. To do so, follow these steps:

1. Notify the Board Secretary a minimum of 5 work days before the board meeting when the item is to be considered. Requests must reach the board secretary by 4:00 p.m. the previous Monday (meetings are usually on a Monday).
2. Identify yourself and/or all individuals who will speak on the agenda item.
3. Provide summary information so that the Board can be prepared to address the item. Written documentation is preferred because it reduces the chance of error or misinterpretation. The board packet, which will contain the agenda, narratives, recommendations, and supporting documentation, is usually, prepared 5 days prior to regular meetings. Packets are sent to Board members at least three days before the meeting.

When you submit items for the agenda, you and other speakers will be invited to sit at the board table and address the Board members. Discussion limit is 10 minutes, unless the Board agrees to extend the time.

The Board generally deals with an agenda item as a discussion item at one meeting and as an action item at a subsequent meeting. This allows time for reflection and further staff and community input. If agenda items, questions or problems relate to legal issues, state law permits the Board to go into closed session to receive such presentations.

### **How to comment on Agenda Items**

You may also present information, ask questions, or comment on topics already on the agenda. With agenda items, usually the Board hears recommendations and data by the administrative staff and then discusses the topic before taking action. Your time to speak will be after the Board members' discussion and before their action on that item.

The Board Secretary will invite speakers to the board table. To address the Board about an agenda item, you should take these steps:

1. Sign your name the "sign-in sheet" found on the board table.
2. Identify the agenda item you wish to address. The Board secretary will invite you to speak when your item is being discussed.

In the interest of time and to avoid duplication, it is suggested that groups wishing to speak should select a representative to speak for all. Representative speakers will be given extra time accordingly by the Chairman.

## **Late Additions to the Agenda**

Due to the importance of a posted agenda for public access to Montessori meetings, last minute additions are to be discouraged. When it is necessary for an item to be added, it must be sponsored at the beginning of the meeting by a Board Member. Once sponsored, all late additions must pass by a two thirds vote of the Board to be accepted as an addition. If passed, the item will be officially added to the agenda by the Chairperson.

## **Charter School Committees**

Charter School Committees are appointed by the Charter Board President, with the approval of the Charter Board of Directors, and are responsible for carrying on the functions of the Corporation. The Charter Board President and the Principal are standing members of all committees. Corporation members (parents & guardians of Charter School students) choose a committee on which to serve.

## **Student Life**

### **Kindergarten and First Grade Entry**

Students entering kindergarten must attain the age of 5 on or before September 1 of the school year for which entry is sought. [Florida Statute §1003.21]

Students entering first grade must attain the age of 6 on or before September 1 of the school year for which entry is sought. [Florida Statute §1003.21]

### **Starting School**

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another and are in an unfamiliar situation. At the beginning of the school year, it is not uncommon for parents to escort their child into the classroom. Please do not linger or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about separating from you; reassure your child about where you will be during the day, and about what time you will pick him or her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. Our instructional team is adept in helping children feel comfortable in their new learning environment.

## **Arrival and Dismissal**

Families are asked to refrain from parking or dropping children off across United Street. Those who must do so need escort their children and use the crosswalk @ United and Pear streets.

Our school day begins at 8:15 and ends at 3:15. For safety purposes, students are not permitted on campus before 7:45. Students arriving between 7:45 and 8:15 will be supervised on the playground. The Lead Guides will escort students to their classrooms at 8:15.

Late arrivals are very disruptive and affect your child as well as the rest of the class. We appreciate your adherence to our arrival policy. If you arrive after 8:15, please park and walk your student to the office to obtain a late arrival note.

Our dismissal procedures are in place to facilitate as swift a process as possible, for the safety of your child. Thanks for placing your family name card on the dashboard in easy view. Students are dismissed promptly at 3:15. If your child is not yet at the dismissal area when you arrive to the front of the car line, please drive around the block to return to the cue, or find an available space to park & walk up to the dismissal area. We are designating a Parent Waiting Zone for those families who prefer to walk up to retrieve their child.

The dismissal procedure ends @ 3:30 so that our staff may be able to close out the day on time. Students who are not picked up by 3:30 will be sent to Extended Care, where charges will apply.

It is a school policy that children will be released only to their parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the dismissal record. Please keep this record up to date, including carpool arrangements. Special dismissal arrangements require advance notice in the form of a note or phone call; **last-minute arrangements for play dates are not permitted.**

## **Extended Care**

The school offers extended child care, after the school day, to currently enrolled students. Students participating in our extended day program need to have an extra snack packed in their lunchbox. Payment for the extended day program is due at the time of registration. To help us provide the highest quality program, families are strongly encouraged to pre-register. The cost for our After School Program is \$12 per day for students who are pre-paid. Students who are pre-paid for the entire week are offered a discounted rate of \$50 per week. A "drop-in" rate of \$15/day will apply for students who are not pre-paid and will be due at the time of pick-up. A sibling

discount is offered at a rate of \$5 per additional sibling. Participation in the After School Program will be denied to students with outstanding balances.

Payments returned to the school due to insufficient funds will require cash repayment, including bank charges that were incurred. Students are not permitted to carry balances on accounts beyond three (3) days; the school reserves the right to withhold participation in extended child care on accounts with balances of more than three (3) days.

Please note: There is no supervision available after 5:30 pm. There will be a \$1/minute charge – made payable directly to the Extended Care Director for students left beyond 5:30.

## **Student Attendance Policy**

The typical school year requires at least 180 student attendance days. It is expected that every student will maintain regular attendance throughout the school year. Families are strongly discouraged from taking vacations during the school year, as continuity with the student's education is paramount to academic success.

Students enrolled in May Sands Montessori School are required to attend school unless the absence has been excused. Additionally, each student is required to be on campus by the specified starting time of the school day. The Principal may grant an excused absence for the following reasons:

- Illness or injury (subject to signed documentation by an appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional or public health unit),
- Religious holiday,
- Death in the family, or
- Extreme circumstance (subject to documentation).

An "excused" absence is:

- a) Due to sickness of, or injury to, the student, attested to orally or in writing by the student's parent or guardian, or, in the event the absence is of three days or more, by a written statement of a licensed practicing physician, chiropractor, dentist, or other appropriate licensed health care or mental health professional;
- b) Due to religious instruction for the student or religious holidays of the student's own faith to be observed by the student, when the absence is requested in writing by a parent or guardian at least three (3) school days in advance of the absence, as delineated in Rule 6A-1.09514, Florida Administrative Code.
- c) Due to a medical, chiropractic, dental, or other appointment with a licensed professional related to the physical or mental health of the student, when the appointment cannot be

scheduled outside of school hours and when written documentation is provided by the parent or guardian prior to the scheduled appointment;

- d) Due to attendance at an Individualized Educational Program (IEP) meeting at which the student's educational program is the topic;
- e) Due to attendance in an administrative or judicial proceeding which involves the student as a witness or as the subject of the proceeding;
- f) Due to a death in the immediate family of the student and such absence does not exceed seven (7) school days;
- g) Due to placement in The Florida Keys Children's Shelter and such placement transition period does not exceed three (3) school days. (By the fourth day, Shelter personnel are required to enroll the student in the appropriate public school closest in geographic proximity to the Shelter.)
- h) With written permission of the principal or the principal's designee, for good cause shown, including insurmountable conditions as defined by rules of the state board of education in Rule 6A-1.09513, Florida Administrative Code.
- i) Due to participation in an approved special event. The student must receive advance written permission from the school principal or the principal's designee. (Examples of special events include public functions; conferences; and regional, state and national competitions).
- j) Due to having, or being suspected of having, a communicable disease or infestation which can be transmitted to other students or school staff. (Examples include, but are not limited to, fleas, head lice, ringworm, impetigo, and scabies.)

An "unexcused" absence is any absence that does not fall into one of the above excused absence categories.

#### **Each parent or guardian of a student at the May Sands Montessori School:**

- Is responsible for maintaining his or her child's regular attendance at school, and is required to submit justification for each absence.
- **Must report the absence to the school office the day before, the day of, or within two school days following the absence. The absence will be considered unexcused if not reported within the established timeframe.**
- Has a responsibility to notify the school and request information on homebound instruction if the student is expected to miss at least 15 consecutive school days due to illness, medical condition, or social/emotional reasons, or if the student is expected to be absent intermittently throughout the school year for the same reasons.
- Has a right to be notified if the student misses school and the parent or guardian has not reported the absence to the school.
- Is responsible, if the student is to be home schooled, for requesting information concerning home schooling, notifying the school principal or principal's designee that the student will be home schooled, and withdrawing the student from May Sands Montessori School in accordance with the school's withdrawal procedures.

1003.21 Florida Statutes provides that all children who have attained the age of six years or who will have attained the age of six years by February 1 of any school year, or who are older than six years of age but who have not yet attained the age of 16 years, except as hereinafter provided, are required to attend school regularly during the entire school term. Students less than 16 years of age may not be withdrawn from school for any reason unless:

- a) The student is expelled through charter school board action;
- b) The student is specifically exempted by Florida law from attending a public school; or
- c) The student is transferring his or her enrollment to another school, home education program, or private tutoring program in accordance with Florida law.

Enforcement of student attendance is the responsibility of the administration and staff of the School; every student's absence shall be recorded and reported. Student attendance records shall be maintained in accordance with Section 1003.26 and in accordance with School policies and administrative procedures. Student attendance reporting for the May Sands Montessori School is completed electronically through the use of Monroe County School District's FOCUS Student database.

The potential consequences for a student who does not attend school as required by law may include:

- Contacting the student's parent(s) or guardian(s) and to schedule a conference concerning the student's non-attendance.
- Implementing truancy interventions by the Student Service Team as required by law.
- Adverse grades and penalties for course work and class assignments.

Each classroom teacher shall be responsible for checking, accurately documenting and reporting the presence, absence, or tardiness of students assigned to that teacher's class, activity, or event.

The principal or principal's designee shall take appropriate action in a timely manner (by the end of the following school day) for each unexcused absence or absence for which the reason is unknown. As a minimum, the student's parent or guardian shall be contacted to determine the reason for the absence. Initial contact may be made through the following means as available and as applicable to the information specified in the student database for parental contact: personal phone call, written notice sent with student to home, or written notice mailed to parent. The principal or principal's designee will evaluate the reasons given and the circumstances relating to the student's absence to determine if the absence is an excused or unexcused

absence. If the absence is excused, the student must be allowed to make up assigned work. The classroom teacher shall be responsible for providing make-up assignments for excused absences. If a student has five unexcused absences or absences for which the reason is unknown within a calendar month or 10 unexcused absences within a 90-calendar-day period, the primary teacher must report to the principal or the principal's designee that the child may be exhibiting a pattern of nonattendance. The principal or the principal's designee may refer the case to the Student Service Team to determine if there is a developing pattern of nonattendance. The Student Service Team may also review patterns of excessive excused absences or a combination of excused and unexcused absences.

If the Student Service Team determines that early patterns of truancy are developing or if the Student Services Team finds that a pattern of nonattendance is developing, whether the absences are excused or not, a meeting with the parent or guardian must be scheduled to identify interventions to remediate the situation.

A notice will be sent to the parent or guardian. This notice will include information related to the truancy and the date, time, and location of the parent conference to address this student's nonattendance issues.

The parent/guardian conference will focus on remediation of the underlying causes of the student's nonattendance, and parents/guardians will also be provided with information regarding the potential consequences to both the student and the parent/guardian for continued nonattendance.

If the initial meeting with the parent does not resolve the issue, the Student Service Team shall implement interventions which may include, but are not limited to:

- Student counseling;
- Frequent communication between the teacher and the family;
- Changes in the learning environment;
- Attendance contracts;
- Referral to other agencies for family services;
- Mentoring;
- Tutoring;
- Peer tutoring;
- Class or schedule changes, or
- other changes in the learning environment;
- Evaluation for alternative education programs
- Other interventions, including, but not limited to, recommending to the Superintendent, through the school principal, that a truancy petition be filed.



The Lead Guide will be responsible for documenting parent contacts, parent conference and parent/student interventions in the student's cumulative file.

All students are required to attend the first 10 days of school. Failure to report to school on the first day of class, and attend for ten consecutive class days, shall jeopardize the student's enrollment, potentially resulting in withdrawal from the school. Situations involving personal or medical necessity shall be the only exemptions from automatic withdrawal. Any student who is absent from the program over 10 consecutive days during the school year may also be withdrawn from the program. Each parent or guardian will be notified of his/her child's non-attendance status and provided the opportunity to justify the absence within three (3) days. The parent or guardian has the right to appeal to the Charter School Board of Directors if he/she is dissatisfied with the determination made by the Principal.

### **Student Placement, Progression, Promotion, and Retention**

Children should be placed in the educational setting most appropriate to their personal, social, physical, and educational needs. Each student shall be moved forward in a continuous pattern of achievement and growth, consistent with Montessori philosophy.

Appropriate student school and grade level placement as well as completion of required immunization and physical examination shall occur within 30 days of enrollment. A student enrolled in the May Sands Montessori School will be promoted to the next grade level when s/he has completed the course(s) and demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas.

A student in grades K-8 may be eligible for a waiver of retention criteria for acceptable good cause as outlined in this policy.

A student may be retained at the same grade level/course(s) when s/he has not demonstrated satisfactory mastery of the State-mandated requirements in the required subject areas. Parents must be informed in advance of the possibility of grade level retention of a student.

#### **Student Promotion**

Student promotion shall reflect the overall performance of the student; the classroom teacher will make a recommendation for each student's promotion, based on factors that may include, but are not limited to:

- ✓ Previous retentions

- ✓ Observations
- ✓ Checklists
- ✓ Student portfolios
- ✓ Classroom and district approved assessments
- ✓ Current grades/marks
- ✓ Level of text at which student is successful

The primary responsibility for determining each student's proficiency and ability to function at the next academic level is that of the classroom teacher and/or a Promotion & Retention Committee. The final determination resides with the school principal.

### **Mandatory Remediation/Retention**

Any student in kindergarten through grade 3 who exhibits a substantial deficiency in reading based upon locally determined or statewide assessments or through teacher observations must be given intensive reading instruction immediately following the identification of the reading deficiency [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(a)]. Immediate intensive intervention must be provided daily for all students who have been identified with a reading deficiency.

The student's reading proficiency must be reassessed by locally determined assessments or through teacher observations at the beginning of the grade following the intensive reading instruction. The student must continue to be provided with intensive reading instruction until the reading deficiency is remedied [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(a)].

Progress monitoring three times per year must occur following the guidelines established in State Board Rule 6A-6.054, F.A.C.

If the student's reading deficiency is not remedied by the end of grade 3, as demonstrated by scoring Level 2 or higher on the Grade 3 FSA Reading, the student must be retained [Florida Statute §1008.25(5)(b)].

Students in grades 1-5 who are identified as being considerably or substantially below grade level (kindergarten through grade 2) or Level 1 or Level 2 (grades 3-5) in reading, writing, mathematics and/or science must receive remediation and may be retained [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(c)]. However, students whose test scores and classroom performance indicate that they are almost at grade level may be promoted with close monitoring or promoted with a progress monitoring plan.

The following options are available for students who have not met the levels of performance for

student progression [Florida Statute § 1008.25(2)(b)]:

- remediate before the beginning of the next school year and promote
- retain and remediate using an intensive program of instruction that is different from the previous school year and takes into account the student's learning style.

Each student who does not meet minimum performance expectations for the statewide assessments in reading, writing, science, and/or mathematics must continue remedial instruction or supplemental instruction until expectations are met or the student graduates from high school or is not subject to compulsory school attendance [Florida Statute § 1008.25(4)(c)].

## **Retention**

Students who score consistently at Level 1 and/or lower Level 2 (with no scores in Level 3 or above) on state/district assessments and whose classroom performance in reading, writing, mathematics and/or science indicates that they are below grade level should be retained unless exempted from retention for good cause.

Students whose state/district assessment scores range from Level 1 to upper Level 2 (with no scores at Level 3 or above) should be considered for retention. Compelling verifiable evidence indicating the student is performing at or near grade level may be utilized to enact a decision to promote such students.

Students whose state/district assessment scores range between Level 1 to Level 3 or above should be considered for promotion with a progress monitoring plan. Such students may be promoted without a progress monitoring plan if compelling, verifiable evidence overwhelmingly indicates that the student is performing at or above Level 3. However, such students may be retained if compelling verifiable evidence shows that the student's classroom performance is equivalent to Level 1 or lower Level 2.

## **Students Retained for Reading in Third Grade**

Third grade students retained for reading must be provided daily intensive interventions in reading to improve the student's specific reading deficiency, as identified by a valid and reliable diagnostic assessment. This intensive intervention must include effective instructional strategies, the opportunity to participate in the district's Third Grade Summer Reading Academy, and appropriate teaching methodologies necessary to assist those students in becoming successful

readers, able to read at or above grade level, and ready for promotion to the next grade [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(a)].

Progress monitoring plans for all students who did not score above Level 1 in the state assessment for Reading and who did not meet the criteria for one of the good cause exemptions must be reviewed to address additional supports and services needed to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency. In addition, a student portfolio must be completed for each such student [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)1].

Third grade students retained for reading due to a reading deficiency as evidenced by not scoring Level 2 or above on the reading portion of the state assessment must be provided intensive instructional services and supports to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency, including a minimum of 90 minutes of daily, uninterrupted, scientifically research-based reading instruction and other strategies which may include, but are not limited to [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)2]:

- a) small group instruction:
- b) reduced teacher-student ratios:
- c) more frequent progress monitoring:
- d) tutoring or mentoring:
- e) transition classes containing 3rd and 4th grade students:
- f) extended school day, week, or year; and/or
- g) Summer Reading Academy.

Written notification **must** be given to the parent(s)/guardian(s) of any third grade student retained for reading stating that his or her child has not met the proficiency level required for promotion **and** the reasons the child is not eligible for a good cause exemption. The notification **must** comply with the provisions of Florida Statute §1002.20 (15) (STUDENT PROGRESS REPORTS) and must include a description of proposed interventions and supports that will be provided to the student to remediate the identified areas of reading deficiency [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)3].

Third grade students retained for reading must have a high-performing teacher as determined by student performance data and above-satisfactory performance appraisals [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)5].

Parents/guardians of third grade students retained for reading **must** be provided with:

- reading enhancement and acceleration strategies
- at least one of the following instructional options:

- a. Supplemental tutoring in scientifically research-based reading services in addition to the regular reading block, including tutoring before and/or after school [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6a];
- b. A "Read at Home" plan outlined in a parental contract, including participation in "Families Building Better Readers Workshops" and regular parent-guided home reading [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6b]; or
- c. A mentor or tutor with specialized reading training [Florida Statute §1008.25(7)(b)6c].

## **Considerations for Special Program Students**

### English Language Learners (ELL)

Students identified as Limited English Proficient (ELL) must meet the district levels of performance. However, ELL students who are identified as being substantially below grade level in reading in English may be retained only if approved by the ELL committee.

### ESE Students

Specific determinations for retention of students with disabilities shall be determined on an individual basis considering the following factors: disability, diploma option, grades, state assessments, portfolios etc.

*For additional ESE information regarding evaluations, data and placement of students into ESE programs please refer to the State of Florida & School Board Approved Admissions and Placement Manual.*

### 504 Students

Students with 504 plans must meet the district levels of performance. The Team must determine if the reason(s) for retention is/are caused by the disability of record on the active Section 504 Accommodation Plan

*For additional 504 information regarding evaluations, data and placement of students 504 plan please refer to the State of Florida & School Board Approved Admissions and Placement Manual.*

## **Tutorial/Remediation Program**

Remediation **must** be based on the results of diagnostic assessment(s), and it **must** be systematically embedded in the total educational program for the student. The daily instruction for the student will be modified based on both the diagnosis and the contents of the Progress Monitoring Plan or other educational plan(s) (e.g., IEP, ELL Plan). Remediation **must** include an instructional program that is not identical to that provided during the previous school year. The Tutorial/Remediation Program provides immediate and ongoing assistance to students throughout the school year as needed.

As required by Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(b), schools **must** develop, in consultation with the student's parent, a progress monitoring plan. A progress monitoring plan is intended to provide the school district and the school flexibility in meeting the academic needs of the student.

A student who is not meeting the school district or state requirements for proficiency in reading and math shall be covered by one of the following plans to target instruction and identify ways to improve his or her academic achievement:

1. A federally required student plan such as an individual education plan;
2. A school-wide system of progress monitoring for all students; or
3. An individualized progress monitoring plan.

The plan chosen must be designed to assist the student or the school in meeting state and district expectations for proficiency. If the student has been identified as having a deficiency in reading, the K-12 comprehensive reading plan required by § 1011.62(8) shall include instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance.

Low-performing students may be required to attend remediation programs held before or after regular school hours or during the summer.

Each plan must outline an intensive remedial program in the area(s) of weakness designed to assist the student in meeting state and/or district expectations for proficiency.

Each student who does **not** meet the levels of performance as determined by the district/state **must** be provided with additional diagnostic assessments to determine the nature of the student's difficulty and areas of academic need [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(a)].

Data from the additional assessments are to be used to formulate the progress monitoring plan.

Diagnosis and remediation will occur as soon as possible after a student has been identified as deficient in reading, writing, mathematics and/or science.

If the student identification occurs during the last nine weeks of the school year, the diagnosis will be made at the beginning of the following school year with remediation immediately following.

Diagnostic assessments may include:

- ✓ student portfolio
- ✓ teacher assessment
- ✓ text/placement tests
- ✓ diagnostic software results

The progress monitoring plan for a student who has been identified as deficient in reading **must** identify:

- ✓ The student's deficiencies in phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension;
- ✓ the desired levels of performance in these areas;
- ✓ the instructional and support services to be provided to meet the desired levels of performance.

It is the responsibility of the teacher, the academic coach and the principal to ensure that the progress monitoring plan is substantive and that the outlined instructional and support services are provided. The school district will assist schools and teachers in the implementation of research-based reading activities [Florida Statute §1008.25(4)(b)]. The progress monitoring plan should clearly identify:

- ✓ the specific diagnosed academic needs to be remedied;
- ✓ the success-based intervention strategies to be used;
- ✓ how, when, how often by whom, and how long intensive remedial instruction is to be provided; and
- ✓ the monitoring and reevaluation activities to be employed.

### **Criteria for Good Cause Exemption: Grade 3**

The district school board may only exempt students from mandatory retention for good cause. Good cause exemptions shall be limited to the following:

- ✓ Limited English proficient students who have had less than 2 years of instruction in English for Speakers of Other Languages program.
- ✓ Students with disabilities whose individual education plan indicates that participation in the statewide assessment program is not appropriate, consistent with the requirements of State Board of Education rule.
- ✓ Students who demonstrate an acceptable level of performance on an alternative standardized reading assessment approved by the State Board of Education.
- ✓ Students who demonstrate, through a student portfolio, that the student is reading on grade level as evidenced by demonstration of mastery of the Florida Standards in Reading equal to at least a Level 2 performance on the state assessment.
- ✓ Students with disabilities who participate in the state assessment and who have an individual education plan or a Section 504 plan that reflects that the student has received

intensive remediation in reading for more than 2 years but still demonstrates a deficiency in reading and was previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3.

- ✓ Students who have received intensive remediation in reading for 2 or more years but still demonstrate a deficiency in reading and who were previously retained in kindergarten, grade 1, grade 2, or grade 3 for a total of 2 years. Intensive reading instruction for students so promoted must include an altered instructional day that includes specialized diagnostic information and specific reading strategies for each student. The district school board shall assist schools and teachers to implement reading strategies that research has shown to be successful in improving reading among low-performing readers.

Requests for good cause exemptions for students from the mandatory retention requirement shall be made consistent with the following:

- ✓ Documentation shall be submitted from the student's teacher to the school principal that indicates that the promotion of the student is appropriate and is based upon the student's academic record. In order to minimize paperwork requirements, such documentation shall consist only of the existing progress monitoring plan, individual educational plan, if applicable, progress report, or student portfolio.
- ✓ The school principal shall review and discuss such recommendation with the teacher and make the determination as to whether the student should be promoted or retained. If the school principal determines that the student should be promoted, the school principal shall make such recommendation in writing to the district school superintendent. The district school superintendent shall accept or reject the school principal's recommendation in writing.

### **Student Assessment & Progression**

The May Sands Montessori School is committed to providing its students with a nurturing and academically challenging program. Each student's strengths and needs will be identified, utilizing evaluative and diagnostic instruments as well as classroom guide observations. As a public school of choice, the May Sands Montessori School's achievement standards are aligned with Florida Education Standards and are consistent with those of the Monroe County School District.



All students of the May Sands Montessori School will participate in all required state assessment tests. In addition, each Montessori instructor assesses each student's performance in the core academic areas through observations and diagnostic use of the materials.

Regular parent/classroom guide conferences will also be scheduled to further assess student progress. Students are expected to show mastery of the elements of the curriculum within the three year cycle. Each student will be required to show mastery of the grade level skills as designed by the Monroe County School District.

### **Standardized Assessments**

The instructional staff of the May Sands Montessori School will administer the Stanford Test of Achievement to all Kindergarten, first and second grade students every year, and will administer the Florida Standards Assessments in English Language Arts and Math (FSA) to all third through eighth grade students every year. The Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test in Science (FCAT) will be administered to students in grades 5 and 8. In addition, students in grades 7 and 8 will participate in End of Course Assessments related to their course schedule.

### **Exceptional Student Education**

For eligible students with learning differences, the May Sands Montessori School will develop and implement appropriate Individual Education Plans in accordance with federal and state law and regulations. The school will:

- Ⓢ Review the student's current Individual Education Plan (IEP) and the level and extent of services provided by the student's previous educational institution in the context of the educational program provided by that institution.
- Ⓢ Review the student's existing evaluation data available in the student's cumulative records folder.
- Ⓢ Contact the School Board's Director of Exceptional Student Education to arrange for appropriate meetings with the School Board's representative, the student's classroom guide, and the student's parent(s).
- Ⓢ All programs developed under a student's IEP shall be provided and implemented in accordance with all appropriate federal and state laws and regulations, including but not limited to, the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), the Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA), Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, and Florida's Equity in Education Act.

Elementary and secondary Exceptional Students will be required to demonstrate mastery in the same general areas of study as regular education students unless otherwise specified on the Individual Education Plan (IEP).

### **Modifications**

Regular education courses may be modified for exceptional students, including but not limited to:

- Ⓢ An increase or decrease in the instructional time;
- Ⓢ Variations in instructional methodology;
- Ⓢ Classroom guide instruction or student response through special communication systems;
- Ⓢ Modification of test administration procedures and other evaluation systems to accommodate the student's disabilities.

### **Contract for Services**

The May Sands Montessori School currently contracts with specialists to ensure that federal, state and county guidelines for exceptional student education are followed.

### **Least Restrictive Environment**

Students with exceptionalities will be educated in the least restrictive environment. For those students whose special needs are so severe that the needs cannot be adequately addressed at the school, the child will be appropriately referred to another educational setting.

A continuum of alternative exceptional education placements shall be available. Each student with exceptional education needs shall be educated to the maximum extent appropriate with students who are assigned in regular classrooms.

Special classes, separate schooling, or other removal of exceptional education students from regular classes shall occur only when the nature or severity of the disability cannot be satisfactorily accommodated with supplementary aids and services in the regular classroom.

### **Referrals and Evaluations**

Parents or lead classroom instructors may refer a student for formal evaluations. The Monroe County School District is responsible for providing qualified individuals to perform evaluations for students referred for speech, academic or behavioral difficulties. Specific procedures for referrals

and evaluations are contained in the Monroe County School District's Manual for the Admissions and Placement of Exceptional Students.

### **English as a Second or Other Language (ESOL)**

Limited English Proficient (LEP) students will be under the supervision of an ESOL-certified staff member, and will follow or exceed the curriculum guidelines and accommodations outlined by the district.

### **Gifted**

The Montessori program is inherently suited for the gifted learner. The curriculum is open-ended and presents many opportunities for problem solving and critical thinking. Learning is self-paced, which allows students to advance independently of their peers. Long uninterrupted blocks of time allow for in-depth study of topics of choice.

The school serves gifted students using a consultant model. A Gifted Education specialist works with classroom guides to plan, implement, and monitor instructional alternatives for each individual student. Goals are accomplished in the regular classroom.

### **Speech**

Students who are suspected to have a speech difference will be formally evaluated by the school district's speech therapist. If it is determined that speech therapy is necessary, services will be provided on campus by a private speech therapist contracted by the school.

### **Academic Referrals**

The school contracts with a special education instructor to deliver services to students who have been determined to have a specific learning disability. The school supports a tutor model for students with a specific learning disability.

### **Behavior Referrals**

Students whose behavior in the classroom or other learning environment is disruptive, disrespectful or uncooperative shall be subject to disciplinary and corrective action by the instructor or by the Principal, if necessary. Repeated disruptive, disrespectful or uncooperative behavior will require close observation and, if determined necessary, formal evaluation.

## **Discipline**

The school practices positive discipline techniques that will assist the student in developing self-control and pro-social behavior. This consists of direct guidance until the student has acquired the self-control and degree of independence to act freely on his/her own. Students have the right to work and choose activities on their own, as long as they do not infringe on the rights of others, harm themselves, others, or the environment. Guides are directed to intervene when the student is engaged in disruptive, abusive, dangerous, or destructive behavior. In such cases guide will first attempt to redirect to a more positive activity. If the inappropriate behavior persists, the guide will require the student separate from the group until sufficient self-control is regained. All adults at the school are expected to remain kind, calm, and firm in maintaining classroom order. The following factors will contribute to good standards of behavior:

- ✓ Guides model the behavior expected from their students.
- ✓ Clear limits and expectations for behavior are set.
- ✓ Logical consequences are implemented and connected to the misbehavior.
- ✓ Positive behavior is encouraged
- ✓ Consequences are applied fairly and consistency is maintained.
- ✓ Conflict resolution skills and peace education are modeled and implemented.

## **Ground Rules**

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. Our goal is to establish a safe, warm, and caring environment where we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle conflicts. Cooperation and collaboration are encouraged rather than competition.

Ground rules are necessary to establish and maintain an environment conducive to the development of self-discipline, self-control, concentration, and independence. They are responsibilities based on the rights of people in the group to learn and work safely and respectfully. The class and school ground rules are stated clearly and consistently throughout the school year. Each class will work together to develop their own set of class ground rules. All ground rules will be based on the core Montessori values of respect for self, others, and the environment.

Our educational program takes a natural approach to discipline. The manner in which materials are meticulously taken for practice, the concentration that is required to carry out the task, the

last detail of returning materials to the shelf; there is both order and responsibility imbedded in each component of every activity. Everything is done with precision and care; there is an intrinsic discipline in the Montessori classroom that drives student expectations for behavior. This discipline extends to our outdoor environment; we expect playground equipment to be used for its intended purpose, cared for and returned to storage so that it may be taken again and enjoyed. When students misuse or destroy materials, they show a lack of discipline or self-control. Our approach is based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Our discipline policy uses natural and logical consequences and is never punitive. For example, if something is broken through misuse, it must be repaired or replaced, preferably not by the parents alone, but also by the student whose action led to the damage. Practice in fully experiencing responsibility for the consequences of one's actions is a most effective means toward the development of self-discipline. Families can help increase student's sense of intrinsic discipline and self-control by giving responsibilities at home, for example:

- ✓ Require your child to manage her/his backpack, lunch box, homework folder & assignments. Provide a defined space to place these items, and be consistent with a routine for collecting items, daily, before school.
- ✓ Enlist your child's help in setting the table for meals, and in returning their used tableware to the sink. Again, consistency is important for establishing order and responsibility.
- ✓ Help your child appreciate the value of their personal belongings; when toys, sports equipment, jewelry, or electronics are used for their intended purpose and cared for properly, they will be available for future enjoyment.

As parents we want the best for our children; we work hard to provide for them and to protect them. In the words of Paula Polk Lillard, a contemporary leader in Montessori theory and practice, "All parents need to remember that true happiness comes through having character and discipline, and living a life of meaningful contribution -- not by having and doing whatever you wish."

### **C.A.R.E.**

The Staff & Administration of the school have developed an acronym to help students remember the expectations for behavior at school: C.A.R.E.

**Courtesy** – the manner in which we treat each other, our belongings, our home, learning and play environments.

**Awareness** – our careful attention to our surroundings and our place within it.

**Responsibility** – being accountable for our actions, our belongings, our learning and play environments.

**Enthusiasm** – the vigor we give to everything we do.

When students fail to meet these expectations, there are a variety of interventions that our instructional staff employs.

## **Code of Conduct**

Repeated instances of inappropriate behavior must be documented by noting the behavior, date, and time on a Conduct Form. Our goal is to maintain a positive and peaceful environment for all students. Physical or verbal aggression or violence will not be tolerated. If this occurs at school, the student should be sent home. A parent conference will be required before the student is readmitted to class.

The principal may suspend a student from school for willful disobedience, open defiance of a staff member's authority, use of profane or obscene language, other serious misconduct, or repeated misconduct of a less serious nature. Parents will be notified in writing of the reasons for suspension and shall be provided with an opportunity for a conference within 24 hours of the effective date of the suspension.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school.

### **Addressing Non-Violent Behaviors**

Step 1: Documentation

- ✓ Student – Guide Conference
- ✓ Consequences established up to and including removal from classroom.

Step 2: Documentation

- ✓ Student – Guide Conference and Parent Phone Call
- ✓ Additional consequences established

Step 3: Documentation

- ✓ Family Conference with Guide and Principal
- ✓ Action plan established; alternate strategies/consequences planned.

#### Step 4: Documentation

- ✓ Second Family Conference with Guide and Principal
- ✓ Action plan reviewed and revised; Family School commitment form reviewed.

#### Step 5: Documentation

- ✓ Third Family Conference with Guide and Principal
- ✓ Action plan and commitment form reviewed
- ✓ Mandatory in-school suspension (1-3 days); student placed on probation.
- ✓ Timeframe established for resolution of issue(s); follow-up meeting scheduled.
- ✓ Student/family notified of potential dismissal from school.

#### Step 6: Documentation

- ✓ Fourth Family Conference with Guide and Principal
- ✓ Notification sent to Charter Board President
- ✓ Action plan, commitment form and resolution timeframe reviewed
- ✓ Mandatory out of school suspension (1-3 days); student placed on probation.
- ✓ Follow-up meeting scheduled with attendance from Charter Board President.
- ✓ Student/family notified of dismissal from school pending resolution of issue(s).

#### Step 7: Documentation (formal letter)

- ✓ Fifth Family Conference with Guide, Principal, and Charter Board President
- ✓ All documents reviewed
- ✓ Student is dismissed from school due to insufficient progress in resolving issue.

### **Addressing Violent Behaviors**

#### Step 1: Documentation

- ✓ Family Conference with Guide and Principal
- ✓ Family School commitment form reviewed.
- ✓ Action plan and resolution timeframe established.
- ✓ Notification sent to Charter Board President
- ✓ Mandatory out of school suspension (1-3 days); student placed on probation.
- ✓ Follow-up meeting scheduled with attendance from Charter Board President.
- ✓ Student/family notified of potential dismissal from school.

#### Step 2: Documentation

- ✓ Family Conference with Guide, Principal and Charter Board President
- ✓ Action plan, resolution timeframe, and commitment form reviewed.
- ✓ Mandatory out of school suspension (up to 10 days); student placed on probation.
- ✓ Follow-up meeting scheduled with attendance from Charter Board President.
- ✓ Student/family notified of potential dismissal from school, pending resolution of issue(s).

### Step 3: Documentation

- ✓ Family Conference with Guide, Principal, and Charter Board President
- ✓ All documents reviewed
- ✓ Student is dismissed from school due to insufficient progress in resolving issue.

## **Anti-Bullying / Anti-Harassment Policy**

The school is committed to providing an educational setting that is safe, secure, and free from harassment and bullying for all of its students and school employees.

The school will not tolerate bullying or harassment of any type; physical, verbal, emotional, and cyber-attacks are not acceptable. Conduct that constitutes bullying and harassment, during school or any school-related event or program, is prohibited.

**"Bullying"** means systematically and chronically inflicting physical hurt or psychological distress on one (1) or more students or employees. It is defined as any unwanted and repeated written, verbal, or physical behavior, including any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, by an adult or student, that is severe or pervasive enough to create an intimidating, hostile, or offensive educational environment; cause discomfort or humiliation; or unreasonably interfere with the individual's school performance or participation; and may involve but is not limited to:

- a. teasing
- b. social exclusion
- c. threat
- d. intimidation
- e. stalking
- f. physical violence
- g. theft
- h. public humiliation
- i. destruction of property.

**"Harassment"** means any threatening, insulting, or dehumanizing gesture, use of data or computer software, or written, verbal or physical conduct directed against a student or school employee that:

- ✓ places a student or school employee in reasonable fear of harm to his/her person or damage to his/her property
- ✓ has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's educational performance, opportunities, or benefits; or
- ✓ has the effect of substantially negatively impacting a student's or employee's emotional or mental well-being; or



- ✓ has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of a school.

**"Bullying"** and **"harassment"** also encompass retaliation against a student or school employee by another student or school employee for asserting or alleging an act of bullying or harassment. Reporting an act of bullying or harassment that is not made in good faith is considered retaliation.

### **Procedure for Reporting**

Any student or student's parent/guardian who believes s/he has been or is the victim of bullying or harassment should immediately report the situation to the school principal. The student may also report concerns to teachers and other school staff who will be responsible for notifying the principal. Complaints against an employee should be reported to that person's direct supervisor. All reports should be filed as soon as possible and may be filed up to ninety days after the last alleged act of bullying occurred.

All other members of the school community, including students, parents, volunteers, and visitors, are encouraged to report any act that may be a violation of this policy.

Written and oral reports shall be considered official reports. Reports may be made anonymously. Reports may be delivered to the front office. Reporting forms can be obtained from the school office. Formal disciplinary action may not be based solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

### **Procedure for Investigation**

All complaints about bullying and/or harassment that may violate this policy shall be promptly investigated by the principal or designee. Documented interviews of the victim, alleged perpetrator, and witnesses shall be conducted privately and shall be confidential.

Reasonable effort shall be made to respond expeditiously to all reports of bullying. A maximum of 10 school days shall be the limit for the initial filing of incidents and completion of the investigative procedural steps. The highest level of confidentiality possible shall be provided regarding the submission of a complaint or a report of bullying and/or harassment and for the investigative procedures that are employed.

According to the level of infraction, the principal will determine the appropriate intervention or course of action for the alleged perpetrator. The victim's parents will be notified by telephone and/or in writing of actions being taken to protect the child.

## **Consequences**

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for students who commit acts of bullying or harassment or found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment may range from behavioral interventions up to and including suspension or expulsion, as outlined in the Student Code of Conduct.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a school employee found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment or found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall include discipline in accordance with the school policies and procedures.

Consequences and appropriate remedial action for a visitor or volunteer found to have committed an act of bullying or harassment or found to have falsely accused another as a means of bullying or harassment shall be determined by the school administrator after consideration of the nature and circumstances of the act, including reports to appropriate law enforcement officials, if appropriate.

## **Child Abuse Prevention**

Teachers are mandated by Florida law to report suspected cases of child abuse, neglect, exploitation, or deprivation to the Florida Department of Children and Families via the abuse hotline at **1-800-96 ABUSE (1-800-962-2873)**. **The reporter's identity is kept strictly confidential.**

## **Student Dress Code**

Students may dress casually and in a manner that is not distracting, extreme, or disruptive to the educational process. Students who violate the established dress code must remain in the school office until appropriate clothing is delivered and put on. The following standards are established to assist students in selecting appropriate apparel for school:

- ✓ Students shall wear shoes appropriate for running, walking and playing on the playground. Flip-flops are not appropriate footwear for our outdoor environment. Students should wear sneakers or another type of sturdy shoe to school.
- ✓ Students in Lower and Upper Elementary will require indoor shoes – ones with firm soles are preferred over slippers; these shoes will remain at school throughout the year. Flip-flops can be worn in the classroom.
- ✓ Closed-toe shoes **are required** for all off campus activities.

- ✓ Bathing suits are inappropriate for school except for physical education swimming activities.
- ✓ Hats and sunglasses shall not be worn in classrooms.
- ✓ Clothing or accessories imprinted with alcoholic or tobacco product endorsements or rude statements are not permitted.
- ✓ The length of shorts and skirts shall be at least as long as the natural, extended reach of one's arm to the tip of the thumb.
- ✓ Students' shirts must cover the torso; midriff shirts are not permitted.

The Principal is authorized to act on specific cases, which disrupt good order and school discipline.

## **Lunch**

Our school community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness program. We count on your support to help us teach the students about health and nutrition.

Packing a healthy lunch your child will enjoy shouldn't be a challenge; natural and minimally processed foods are relatively easy to pack. Prepackaged "kid's meals" contain an overabundance of sodium and preservatives and very little nutrition. We strongly discourage their use. We also ask that you keep sugary desserts such as cookies & cupcakes out of your child's school lunch. **Gum, candy, soda, and caffeinated beverages are not permitted.** We encourage the purchase of organic fruits whenever possible, as they are not contaminated with harmful pesticides. Please also read food & drink labels; **avoid corn syrup, high fructose corn syrup, artificial sweeteners, partially hydrogenated or hydrogenated oils, the food preservative BHT, and any artificial food colorings.**

Students should bring lunch to school in a labeled lunch box. We discourage families from bringing lunches throughout the day, as we cannot guarantee it will reach students in time for lunch. **Please do not send food that requires heating to school.** Many foods can be heated at home and packed in thermos, which will keep warm until lunchtime. We encourage you to place foods in reusable or recyclable containers. All uneaten food that can be contained will be sent home. You will want to monitor your child's lunchbox to determine the correct amount and type of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a healthy lunch.

\*\* Please let us know in advance if you are taking your child out for lunch. \*\*

## **Birthdays**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their school friends. Montessori classes have a special birthday celebration in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. You are welcome to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. We ask that you save the cupcakes and cake for your home celebration and provide a healthier snack for school. Some suggestions are fruit salad or fruit kabobs, frozen juice pops, mini bagels and cream cheese, or muffins. Your child's guide will discuss birthday celebrations at the first class meeting.

It is our preference that you do not send birthday party invitations to school to be distributed; rather invitations should be sent through the mail. The only exception to this rule would be if every child in the class is invited.

## **Field Trips & Outings**

Instructors will plan educational field trips or outings throughout the school year to enrich the curriculum as well as the students' overall educational experience. Trips are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by the class or to take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming field trips will be sent home in advance. Permission slips and any required fees must be returned to school in advance of the trip, in order for your child to be able to participate.

We may use a local transportation system, or parents may be asked to assist with transportation. All field trip drivers must have completed a school district background screening, have a valid driver's license, and must possess automobile insurance. Our school insurance does not cover field trip volunteer drivers. Instructors will assign students to each car; students may not switch cars to sit with particular friends. **Please do not make any stops to or from a trip.** If you volunteer to chaperone on a trip, please stay with the group of children assigned to you.

Any private vehicle used to transport students under this policy shall be:

1. currently registered in the State of Florida,
2. insured for personal injury protection and property damage liability in at least the minimum amounts required by law, and
3. in good working order.

An employee, parent, or other adult wishing to transport students in a private vehicle will request approval by submitting his/her driver's license, vehicle registration, and insurance ID card along with the completed **Private Vehicle Request** form to the principal within five (5) business days

before the planned travel. The principal will follow the established procedure to determine whether approval of the request to transport students in a private vehicle is appropriate.

Student transportation in private vehicles may only be authorized for trips within the State of Florida. When transportation is authorized in a private vehicle, students may only be required to use the occupant crash protection system provided by the vehicle manufacturer. A student who is transported to an activity in a private vehicle approved under this policy shall return from the activity in the same vehicle, unless the student is released to his/her parent.

Notwithstanding any other provision of this policy, in an emergency situation which constitutes an imminent threat to student health or safety, school personnel may take whatever action is necessary under the circumstances to protect students.

Occasionally, small groups of children will participate in **“going out”** activities. These are different from field trips, which are planned by the instructor for the entire class. Going out activities are stimulated by students' interest in a particular subject. The goal is for the children to use the local library or other community resources to find answers to their questions and complete their research projects. These outings do not involve the entire class. Students will be carefully prepared and chaperoned for these experiences.

### **Student Cell Phone Policy**

It is our recommendation that students do not bring cell phones to school. Students who do bring them must adhere to the following procedures:

- ✓ Cell phone use by students is prohibited during school hours including after school care.
- ✓ Cell phones must be silenced upon entering the campus.
- ✓ Instructors will provide a receptacle in their classrooms for cell phones.
- ✓ All phones will be placed in this receptacle upon entering the classroom.
- ✓ Phones will be returned at the end of the day.

### **Student Health**

Children are expected to be in good health when attending school. Weather permitting; students go outside to play every day. If you feel your child is too sick to go out to play, he or she is probably too sick to be at school. If your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call our office by 8:15 to let us know he or she will be absent.

Colds, flu, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed. Students with infectious conditions, such as chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, or ringworm must stay home until the infectious stage has passed. Please inform the office of your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

Students with a fever (100.1 or greater), sore throat, eye infection, persistent cough, or severe nasal excretions should remain at home. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home as well.

If your child becomes ill at school or exhibits any of the above symptoms, we will contact you to arrange for an early dismissal. We understand how difficult this can be for working parents, yet all of our children become ill from time to time. Please make arrangements in advance for a friend or relative to come when you cannot.

Conditions for school reentry following illness must be adhered to by students and staff of the school.

### **Bacterial Infection**

A child or member of staff may return to school 24 hours after ingesting the first dose of a prescribed antibiotic.

### **Viral Infection**

A child or member of staff may return to school after having been **fever free without medication for 24 hours**. Clarification: The last dose of Acetaminophen was given at 9am on Sunday morning. A temperature check 6 hours later indicates the individual is fever free. The 24 hour period begins at that moment. If the individual remains fever free during this time frame, he/she may return to school on Tuesday morning.

If a student or member of staff presents at school with a fever of 100.1 or greater, severe nasal discharge, persistent cough, red eye with drainage or discolored sputum, he/she must be dismissed from school and must remain at home for 24 hours. The individual may return to school after 24 hours if they are symptom free or sooner if accompanied by a doctor's note stating they are "clear" to return to school on "Date\_\_\_\_\_".

## Open Wounds

A student or member of staff may not attend school if his/her wound is draining outside of the bandage, or the bandage will not stay in place. The focus is to prevent exposure of any potentially infectious or contagious fluid to any other individual; all open wounds must be securely covered at all times, with no visible drainage or strike through the bandage. If there is suspicion of a contagious infection or disease process, the child/member of staff will be sent home and prohibited from returning to school for 48 hours. The individual may return to school after 24 hours if they are symptom free or sooner if accompanied by a doctor's note stating they are "clear" to return to school on "Date\_\_\_\_\_".

## Emergency Care

In the event of a medical situation that requires immediate attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. **Please remember to keep your emergency contact information up to date.** We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

## Medication Protocol

Only under extraordinary conditions do we administer medication at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child, including: Tylenol, topical creams, cough medicine, or other over the counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions. Our instructional and administrative teams are prohibited from providing or administering any over the counter medication except as authorized in writing by your child's physician.

When in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary to administer medication during school hours, please adhere to the following procedure:

- ✓ Complete an **Authorization to Administer Medication** form for each medication to be administered. This form is available on our school's website and in the office.
- ✓ A parent/guardian must present any prescription medication in its original bottle - clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, time and amount of dosage - to the school office or Health Care Coordinator.
- ✓ As parent or guardian, you are responsible for administering the first dosage of any new medication at home.
- ✓ Collect all unused/discontinued medication within five (5) school days from our school office.

## **Privacy of Student Files**

Student files are confidential and protected from unauthorized access. Parents have a right to inspect and review a student's educational records. Parents/guardians may have access to their child's files by submitting a written request to the Principal identifying the records they wish to inspect. The Principal will make arrangements for access to records. The parents have a right to request an amendment of an educational record they believe is inaccurate or misleading.

## **Outside Agency Requests for Contact**

Law enforcement and/or social service agency initiated student interviews may be permitted consistent with the established interview guidelines and as required Florida Law. Prior to conducting a student interview the principal or designee shall be notified. When law enforcement or social service requests access to a student on school grounds, or at a school sponsored event for non-school related incidents, the official shall contact the principal or designee and advise him/her of the need to speak with the student. The principal or designee will make a reasonable effort to notify a parent/guardian before allowing social service staff members to interview a child at school unless prohibited by law. Reasonable effort is defined as contact by telephone at home or place of employment. Law enforcement and/or social service personnel may, in the exercise of their authority to do so, exclude school personnel from the interview. Law enforcement and social service personnel, including liaison officers who have initiated a formal interview, should remain as inconspicuous as possible and shall interview students in a private setting designated by the principal or designee to avoid embarrassing and/or stereotyping the student.

## **Interview Guidelines**

The following guidelines are to be used by administrators when law enforcement and/or social service personnel interview students in school during regular school hours. These guidelines do not apply to interviews conducted by district professional staff.

1. The principal or designee shall be notified prior to all student interviews conducted on school premises. The following considerations should be given before an interview shall take place at school: the age of the student, the purpose of the interview, the subject matter of the interview, whether the conduct occurred on school grounds, and the seriousness of the conduct at issue.



2. Interviews should be coordinated with the student's schedule in order to minimize disruption.
3. Interviews should not be conducted during an exam, except in an emergency.
4. The principal or designee should summon the student from his/her class, unless law enforcement and school administration feel the situation warrants personal contact by the officer.
5. The principal or designee will make a reasonable effort to notify a parent/guardian before law enforcement or social service staff members to interview a child at school unless prohibited by law.
6. Interviews should be conducted in a closed setting, in order to allow confidentiality.
7. No employees shall disclose any information regarding the contact between law enforcement or social services and a student to anyone except a superior, or under appropriate circumstances, to a parent or legal guardian. No information will be shared with a parent or guardian in cases related to child abuse or neglect referrals.

The principal or designee shall be allowed to be present at any interview unless barred by law or excused by the student.

## Home-to-School Connection

### **Communication**

The May Sands Montessori School recognizes the importance of communication. The Principal and all classroom guides are available by appointment to address parent needs.

Please address all classroom and curriculum questions to your child's instructor. The most effective way to communicate with the instructors is by electronic message or by leaving a voice message at the instructor's extension. Messages will usually be addressed within the day. During school hours, it is the priority of the instructors to attend to students' needs; instructors are not available to discuss issues during the hours of 8:00 - 3:30.

Telephone messages concerning absences or late arrivals should be made to 305-293-1400 ext. 53418 between 7:45 and 8:15 a.m.

During the school year, we will send home newsletters, announcements, notes and flyers. Electronic correspondence is our general method of weekly communication; thank you for

regularly checking electronic mail. Check and remove all papers from your child's folder and return it promptly to school. In addition, class meetings are scheduled throughout the year to provide parents with pertinent information regarding curriculum, philosophy and other important topics relating to education. The school is part of the Monroe County School District Connect-Ed system. In the event of school closures or emergency situations, you will receive a phone notification via a recorded message.

### **Office Hours**

The Charter School office is open from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. on school days, and 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. Tuesday – Thursday during summer break. The office is closed during winter break, spring break and on holidays. The school telephone number is 305.293.1400, ext. 53418

### **Conferences**

Formal Parent/Guide conferences are held at least twice a year – October, and February. Student progress in our program is discussed at these conferences. Parents are required to attend these two formal conferences.

### **Progress Reports**

In the elementary program, formal progress reports are presented two times a year. The Guides base these reports on student observations and student work. Emphasis is not placed on achieving a "grade", rather, students' progress toward understanding of concepts. Additionally, each student will create a portfolio collection of his or her best and favorite work from the school year into a permanent portfolio binder. Students in the final year of Upper Elementary and all Secondary program students will receive formal grades based on proficiency in curricular studies.

### **Observations**

A parent may make an appointment with the Administrative Team for observation in the classroom. The best time to observe is during the morning Work Cycle. You will want to see the class in its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence. Therefore when you visit, please sit in the designated Visitor's Chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of the children at work. A follow-up conference should be scheduled after an observation.

During the first sensitive month of the school year, students are establishing their routines and familiarizing themselves with the learning environment. The Guide and students are building their community of learners. For this reason, we ask that parents avoid class observations during the first month of school.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor nametag from the office upon arrival.

Thank you for remembering to silence your cell phone before entering any classroom.

## **Responsibilities of a Parent/Legal Guardian**

Agree to honor the Family School Commitment, by:

- Ⓢ Attending all scheduled parent/classroom guide conferences per year.
- Ⓢ Attending at least two of the three scheduled all-school community meetings.
- Ⓢ Checking your child's Communication folder every week.
- Ⓢ Accepting and abiding by the rules and regulations set by the board of directors which are designed for smooth operation.
- Ⓢ Giving 25 hours of volunteer service, per school year. Such service may include classroom time, field-trips, grounds maintenance, prep for parties, and/or participation in any of the following committees:
  - Fundraising
  - House & Grounds
  - Hospitality/Social
  - Planning & Development
  - Public Relations/Publicity
  - Facilities

**Service hours may not be converted to monetary donations.** It is understood that all families must perform the required service to the school, and must provide record of their service to the school. Forms may be obtained in the school office.

## **Contract of Commitment**

This contract is an agreement between the school and the family stating the terms of the family's commitment to be fully involved in their child's education at the school. Such involvement will include, but not be limited to, volunteer hours, parent education, etc.

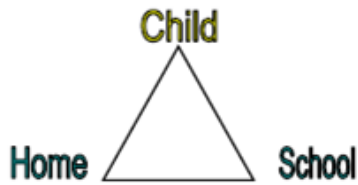
Families of eligible children must be willing to make an extraordinary commitment to their child's education. Commitment to the May Sands Montessori School mission and educational philosophy manifests itself in the signing of the Family School Commitment.

It is necessary for parents and educators to unite together to create a healthy, enriching and stimulating environment for children. Without this drive to promote the child's development and to encourage him/her to reach his/her full potential, alternative public schools such as the May Sands Montessori School and other special school programs would not exist; nor would the genius of the work of Dr. Montessori herself. When schools and families work together in this endeavor, goals are manifested and reached. It is the joint ambition of May Sands Montessori School and of the parents to give each child the best education possible. Education of this caliber takes true dedication on the part of the school as well as the family. Because of this ambition, we must make our expectations and promises clear and understood. Upon application, the school asks the families of our children to read and accept the terms of our Family School Commitment.

### **Enforceability**

Consistent with F.S. 1002.33(10)(e)5, the parent volunteer contract is enforceable under Florida law, and failure of a parent or legal guardian to uphold or fulfill their responsibilities under said contract would be sufficient grounds for denial of admission to the school the following year. As a public school of choice, the May Sands Montessori School relies on a strong home-to-school connection for the success of its program. Failure on the part of the family to uphold the contract of commitment jeopardizes not only the school's overall performance, but may affect the child's educational potential as well. Families will be notified in writing of the consequence for non-fulfillment of the Contract of Commitment, which is placement of his/her child/children in the lottery drawing, to determine enrollment for the coming school year. A parent or legal guardian may request benevolence from the Charter Board of Directors, who will address cases of hardship on a case-by-case basis.

# May Sands Montessori School Family-School Commitment Form



## Student Responsibilities:

1. To be a positive, contributing member of the class by acting with integrity, respect, and responsibility.
2. To work hard, use time wisely, and complete assigned work on time.
3. To participate in school outings with vigor, enthusiasm, respect, and a positive attitude.
4. To demonstrate required level of competence in the designated areas of study.
5. To ask for assistance when needed.
6. To complete homework prior to school start time on the day it is due.
7. To have all necessary supplies for school.
8. To arrive at school on time.
9. To attend school events.

## Teacher Responsibilities:

1. To create a prepared environment for learning to occur.
2. To facilitate the students in their learning.
3. To serve as a positive model for the students, acting with integrity, respect and responsibility.
4. To offer the students opportunities for challenging and meaningful work.
5. To meet with each student regularly to review progress and discuss any concerns.
6. To be available for students who need help with their work at a pre-arranged time.
7. To provide two conferences with parents each year, and additional ones as needed.
8. To communicate with parents regularly regarding the progress of their child in our program.
9. To make the time to attend All-School Meetings and school events.

## Parent Responsibilities:

1. To be aware of the attendance policy and ensure my child arrives to school on time.
2. To support my child's participation in service learning and school outings.
3. To communicate with the teacher regarding questions/concerns about my child.
4. To review, dialogue, and sign my child's weekly work plans/records as applicable.
5. To provide a time and place at home conducive to completing homework on a daily basis.
6. To provide access to resources and materials for independent study projects.
7. To attend all scheduled classroom conferences and meetings.
8. To attend at least 2 out of 3 All-School Meetings and to make the time to attend school events.
9. To complete at least 25 service hours to the school, 5 of which are served in supporting the school fundraising, two weeks prior to the May All-School Meeting.

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Student

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Parent(s)

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Teacher

Date Received: \_\_\_\_\_

## Parent/Guardian & Student Acknowledgement

Please sign this form and return it to school. Your signature(s) indicate that you have read the handbook for the May Sands Montessori School and understand its policies and procedures.

This handbook contains the policies and procedures of the May Sands Montessori School. It is only meant to serve as a reference guide. The Charter Board and Principal reserve the unilateral right to add, delete, or amend these policies and benefits provided for in this handbook. Families of students enrolled in the May Sands Montessori School should feel free to contact the Principal with questions concerning the contents of this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Name: (Please Print)

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Parent/Guardian Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_