



# **Parent Handbook**

## **2022/2023**

Dear Families,

Welcome to Montessori of Alameda. We are glad that you have chosen our school for your child. Caring for your child is a responsibility that we take very seriously and are honored to be a part of this important time in your child's life.

Montessori of Alameda is committed to providing a loving, safe, and enriching Montessori environment for children while implementing AMS curriculum so their early childhood journey is enriching and full of opportunity.

At MOA, we believe that open communication between parents and staff is essential. Being acquainted with parents and families enhances our teachers' abilities to meet your child's unique needs. We ask that you share suggestions, concerns and kudos, so we can partner to provide an experience that helps children thrive.

This handbook was prepared to provide you with information on our policies, practices, and programming. We encourage you to fully review it and reach out with questions so we can ensure you have a clear understanding of how we operate.

Please feel free to stop by anytime you have a question, or just to say hello. We appreciate the trust you have in our school and value our partnership as we work together to provide the best care and education for your child. We look forward to getting to know your family and welcome you to the Montessori of Alameda community!

Sincerely,

Bozena Struk  
School Leader

[bozena@montessoriofalameda.com](mailto:bozena@montessoriofalameda.com)

## Statement of Philosophy

A gardener nurtures her young plants by providing those things that improve their growth. She meticulously watches over them and responds to their every need. Some flowers require extra sun, others more water. The gardener quickly spots these exceptional needs and helps the plants blossom to their brightest.

Every child is special and unique. Helping them to discover their special qualities and blossom within their uniqueness is the aim of Montessori of Alameda. Beautiful personalities unfold before your eyes when children are embraced with unconditional love and acceptance and find independence within a prepared environment.

A self-confident child with strong, positive self-esteem is free to see the wonder of the world around them and experience the joy of discovery. It is our desire to provide the rich, nurturing soil from which little beings can grow. Following the Montessori approach our programs emphasize the experiences each child has, each day.

We believe that parents are the most important people in a child's life. The educational professionals at Montessori of Alameda would like to join with you in providing the best for your children. We will be your partner and truly value the strong relationship that will grow as your journey continues at MOA.

## Registration and Enrollment Procedure

### Wait list and Deposit

There is a \$100 non-refundable fee for joining the waitlist. This fee will be applied to your initial enrollment balance upon acceptance of a space. Once a space has been offered, a registration fee and tuition deposit are required to hold the space. The tuition deposit can be applied when you give 60 days' written notice of withdrawal from MOA. **Please plan for this and inform the administration prior to paying full tuition for your final month.** There will be no refunds of unused prepaid tuition. (See "Notification of Withdrawal") and no proration of your final month's tuition.

### Admissions

No child shall be denied admission on the basis of race, color, religious belief, national origin, or sex. However, we do require that all enrolled children meet the health requirements of the State and of our Center. MOA requires all enrolled children to be fully immunized as required by state regulations. We accept only medical exemptions. Non-medical (previously known as religious) exemptions are not allowed. The following paperwork must be completed prior to admission:

1. A signed authorization form
2. A current immunization report
3. An emergency medical release form
4. A signed enrollment agreement
5. A signed release form
6. All other forms included in the registration packet

### Advance Tuition

The full tuition amount for your first month of care is due at the time of enrollment along with your registration fee and tuition deposit.

## **Registration Fee**

A one-time registration fee of \$260 per child will be added to the initial enrollment invoice. This fee must be paid prior to a child's start date and is non-refundable.

## **Tuition and Payment Policies**

Montessori of Alameda operates from a budget based on projected annual tuition rates broken into 12 monthly payments. We strive to provide the highest quality programs derived from a budget of the lowest possible monthly rate. Salary, training, continuing education, and medical/dental benefits are all part of our employee policies and must be funded from monthly tuition. In our attempt to balance affordability and quality, we are unable to give tuition credits for your child's absences. Tuition is due and payable even though your child may be away from school.

### **Fees Due Prior to First Day of Enrollment**

First month's tuition

Registration Fee

Deposit

Annual Re-Enrollment Fee (if applicable at time of enrollment)

### **Annual Re-Enrollment Fee**

This annual fee supports planning for the upcoming school year and is charged each spring within the re-enrollment cycle. The fee will be added to your monthly tuition account upon confirmation of re-enrollment. If your child is enrolled after the fee has been collected for the year, you will not be charged until the following re-enrollment cycle. This charge is not refundable. Once re-enrollment closes, any available spaces will be offered to students on our waiting list.

### **Monthly Tuition**

Tuition payments are due on the 1st of the month unless special arrangements have been made with the School Leader. (Please see the "Tuition Payment Plan") A \$50 rebilling fee will be assessed when payment is received after the 5th of the month.

For security reasons, we cannot accept cash payments. We accept payment through automatic withdrawal using ACH or credit/debit cards. There is a 2% processing fee for all credit/debit card charges.

### **Tuition Payment Plan**

To accommodate families needing alternative payment arrangements we ask that you contact administration to create a monthly payment plan.

### **Returned Payments**

There will be a \$30 fee charged to your account when payments are declined, or checks are returned from the bank without payment. If payment is returned on a second payment an alternative payment method will be required.

## **Department of Human Services Tuition Assistance Program**

Montessori of Alameda is committed to providing quality education to all children and is proud to accept DHS subsidy payments for those families who qualify through the State of Oregon Department of Human Services. To ensure that operational costs for the education environment is being met, any tuition amount over the monthly DHS payment must be paid in full by the parent. Please see and sign “Agency Subsidy Agreement” Form in your children’s registration packet. Please note that the co-payment parents may have, goes towards the tuition balance but may not cover the full remainder that parents are responsible for.

### **Receipts**

Each month you will receive a standard customer statement which includes our tax ID number as well as your child’s name and the amount of tuition being billed. If you need additional receipt information please contact administration. Charge/credit summaries will be provided at the end of the year for tax purposes.

### **Withdrawal Policy and Schedule Changes**

Montessori of Alameda requires a 60-day written notice of withdrawal to ensure adequate time to fill the vacancy. Written notice can be sent directly to the School Leader. Tuition will continue to be charged for the full 60-day withdrawal period, regardless of attendance. It is the parents’ responsibility to pay the full tuition amount, minus any deposits that may qualify, for the 60-day period following the withdrawal notice. With adequate 60-day notice of withdrawal, the initial tuition deposit will be applied toward the final tuition invoice. With less than 60-day notice of withdrawal, the tuition deposit will be forfeited. Withdrawal must align with the end of the month, prorated tuition will not be offered if the student leaves before the end of the month. .

We also ask for 30 days’ notice of schedule changes, such as adding/dropping Before or After Care. Adding either of these programs will be dependent on space availability. Please note, if either program is relinquished, reinstating them will be subject to availability and not guaranteed.

We reserve the right to terminate services for reasons of delinquency in payment of fees or inability of the child or parent to comply with the center’s policies and procedures.

### **Drop In Attendance**

Children not enrolled in Before Care or After Care may add to these programs if space is available. Advanced notice is needed. You will be charged the “Drop in” rate on the following month’s statement.

## **Hours of Operation and Holidays**

Montessori of Alameda is open from 7:30am to 5:30pm, Monday—Friday, twelve months a year except for specified “Center Closure Days”:

New Year’s Day

Martin Luther King Jr. Day

President’s Day

Spring Break: please see annual calendar

Memorial Day and the Friday before

Independence Day

Juneteenth

Fall Planning Break: please see annual calendar

Labor Day

Thanksgiving Break: Thursday and Friday of Thanksgiving week

2 week Winter Break: please see annual calendar (camp is available for one week of this closure)

Please refer to the calendar that is sent out each year for specific dates.

Should the traditional holiday fall on a weekend or be rescheduled for a long weekend, we will observe the holiday in accordance with the National Monday Holiday Bill. Occasionally, if a major holiday falls on a Thursday, Montessori of Alameda may decide to close the Friday after. All closure dates will be decided early in the year and parents will be alerted to any closure day changes.

### **Teacher Workshop and In-service Days**

The center will be closed on **President's Day** for teacher in-service. Teachers are required to participate in continuing education each year and this provides an opportunity for them to help satisfy the requirement without having to take evening or weekend classes.

The **Friday before Memorial Day** the center will be closed for maintenance and spring cleaning. This allows us to attend to maintenance needs that require more time than just a weekend can provide.

The school is closed **the week before Labor Day** to allow teachers to reorganize classrooms and work on curriculum planning in preparation of the new school year. This is an extremely important opportunity that enhances the work environment and creates more cohesive programming for your children.

### **Vacations**

Montessori of Alameda does not give tuition credit towards vacations.

### **Inclement Weather**

Montessori of Alameda attempts to remain open unless the travel or environmental conditions are too dangerous for staff to report to work. In the event we need to **open late or not at all**, we will inform parents by leaving a **message on our voice mail, sending an email, and sending a text alert** indicating our plans for the day. If the school remains open during inclement weather, please be advised that we can accept only as many students as we staff to support licensing ratio requirements. You may be asked to wait with your child until staff members can safely arrive.

Weather conditions in Oregon change rapidly during the day and we may need to close early occasionally. If there is any question regarding an **early closure**, please call the center. Occasionally we may announce an **Early Pick-Up Request**. This is a request for parents that can come in early to please do so. Many of our staff commute from a distance or utilize public transportation so we may need to allow for more transportation time for a safe commute. We will contact parents via phone, email, and/or text on early closure days, but please call the school for more information.

**Reminder: As always, we request that you call, send a message, or email the school in the morning if your child will not be attending that day. You may leave a voice message stating your child's first and last name and classroom.**

Montessori of Alameda does not issue credits or reductions in tuition fees for any school closure days.

## **State Licensing**

### **Oregon Child Care Division**

Montessori of Alameda is licensed by The State of Oregon. The Office of Child Care (OCC) establishes standards relating to our facility, staff, child-to-staff ratios, record keeping, nutrition, health, and safety procedures. We partner with OCC in the licensing process and employ rigid enforcement of standards because it is in the best interest of the children. Concurrent with OCC regulations, representatives of all agencies involved in certification and custodial parents have access to the school during hours of operation. All OCC required information is available in the School office for custodial parents' inspection. The current license is posted in the lobby vestibule for viewing. All parents must sign a declaration of viewing upon enrollment.

### **Compliance with Regulations**

It is our goal at Montessori of Alameda to partner with parents. We find that it is important to discuss solutions to any issues early and often before they become problems. The administrative team maintains an "open door" policy and encourages parents to voice their concerns as they arise. However, if a situation should occur that you feel we have not responded to and puts us in non-compliance with OCC regulations, you may call one of the OCC offices.

Multnomah County Child Care Division  
Amber Bayker  
503-669-7112 x 357

## **Center Culture and Policies**

### **Daily Arrival and Departure**

Our responsibility begins when you place your child in the care of our staff members. All children must be walked into the school by an adult. Accompanying your child to their teacher provides for a smooth transition and allows you to share information on your child's experiences. We want you to leave the school feeling comfortable every morning and ask that you drop your child at the entrance to his/her classroom. This is a great time to build a good-bye routine with your child as they move from their home-life to their Montessori classroom-life. Children are encouraged to walk and carry their belongings on their way into school for the day, which gives them the ability to take ownership of their entrance to their work day and classroom environment. Teachers and Assistants will greet families at the classroom door where good-byes can be exchanged. The classroom is the child's workspace and we ask for preservation of uninterrupted work cycles.

Drop off for Before Care begins at 7:30 for approved families. Classrooms are open at 8am for the school day. If you need to drop-into Before Care, please email [admin@montessoriofalameda.com](mailto:admin@montessoriofalameda.com) to make your request at least 48 hours in advance.

The work cycle for most classrooms begins promptly at 8am, so the earlier children can arrive for the day the easier they are able to begin this important part of their day. Drop off is available after 9am. Any later drop

offs must occur at the front door with an administrator. Thank you for your patience as we meet you for late drop offs, as we are often occupied during this time.

The school day is over at 3:30. Children who remain for aftercare, 3:30-5:30, may combine with other classrooms and will have different teachers during this period.

The afternoon departure time provides a perfect opportunity to learn about your child's day. Daily schedules or lesson plans will be posted in every classroom. Teachers are always happy to briefly answer any questions you may have. Learning about your child's day is the best tool for encouraging conversations about their experiences. If you are interested in having a short conversation with your child's teacher, please plan on arriving before pick up time (3:30 or 5:30) by 10-15 minutes, to allow for the classroom to maintain its routine promptly. Children picked up after 5:30 will meet you at the front door. If you have a concern or question that requires more time or confidentiality than is afforded in the daily routine, the teacher will be happy to schedule a conference either by phone or in person.

Due to limited floor space and to satisfy the Fire Marshal, we ask that parents **not leave their car seats or strollers around the school during the day.**

We can only release a child to the parent who enrolled the child or to someone they have specifically authorized in writing. Please keep your authorization form in our office up to date. Snapshots of those authorized to pick up your child would be a helpful addition to the file.

Persons will be asked for proper identification if the staff have not met them previously and we will run their ID through our Raptor Technologies Scanner. If for some reason you are unable to pick up your child at the usual time, please call and let us know so that we can reassure and explain to your child that you are on your way. **Fines for late pick up are charged. There is a \$2 per minute charge for all late pick ups. This applies to both School Day and Full Day schedules.**

### **School Communication**

Your child has both a cubby and a folder ("mailbox") in his/her classroom. The cubby space is to store extra clothes, blankets, personal items, etc. The folder is for communication from the school. In it you will find memos from the school, artwork your child has created, tuition invoices and statements if requested, and other important items. Classroom teachers will send folder information home for your review.

Montessori of Alameda utilizes an online email system for the bulk of parent communication, as well as messages through a secure online communication platform. Your email address(es) will be added to our online system when you enroll. You will find an email sheet in your enrollment packet. If you do not find this sheet, please be sure to provide us with your email address so that we can make sure to keep you up to date on activities and information. Please check your email spam settings, and promotions tab, to make sure our emails are getting to your inbox. As with any partnership, communication is key. Here at MOA we strive to have transparent lines of communication with all of our families. Please feel free to communicate with us over whatever method is comfortable for you. If you feel like our communication is not reaching you, please let us know so that we can work to address and correct.

### **Parking at MOA**

As with any urban school, parking can be limited at MOA.



10 minute parking is located in front of our building along Going st. and 42nd Ave. Additionally, free street parking can be found surrounding the building on side streets. Please do not park in lots of other businesses or in the bike lanes along Going st. Please be mindful of our neighbors and ensure you are following all traffic rules and regulations. Please do not park opposite of traffic (facing the ‘wrong way’).

### **Front Door Policy and Authorized Pick Ups (Non-Parent)**

Montessori of Alameda is a secured access building. To ensure that we know each person who walks through our door, we use the following “Door Protocol”:

**Door code/Fob:** only parents and staff are given access to our door codes/fobs. **We ask that parents not give out their door code to friends or family.**

**Authorized pick-ups:** besides custodial parents, each family can authorize other individuals who may occasionally pick up from MOA. To authorize someone, parents must either list them on the authorized pick up log in person or call or email the school to verbally authorize.

**All visitors**, including authorized pickups, must ring the doorbell, sign in and out of the visitor log, and wear a “Visitor” badge. We will check the photo ID of any authorized pick up before allowing them entry into the school. All authorized (non-parent) pickups must come to the front door and someone from the administration will ask for their ID, run it through our Raptor Technologies scanner, print them out a visitor badge, and walk them to the appropriate classroom. **All non-parent visitors or pickups must check in with administration. Children will not be released to any non-parent pick up who has not checked in without a phone call to parents first.**

### **Privacy**

At Montessori of Alameda, we work diligently to maintain appropriate privacy standards for both our families and our staff members. You will undoubtedly become close to your child’s teachers and we hope you feel comfortable sharing information with them about your child and their experience at home. Please understand that our staff members may not feel comfortable sharing their personal information with you. The following Social Media Policy and Babysitting Policy are in place to protect our staff members’ privacy, as well as the privacy of our families. We ask that you read and abide by these policies.

#### **Social Media Policy**

In a rapidly increasing world of technology, most of our staff members and parents have accounts with social media sites like Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter. While these sites allow for an increased amount of connectivity, they also blur the line between personal and professional. The amount of personal information shared on these sites is significant and as it is not always known how this information will be used. We have created a policy for our staff members stating that in order to protect their privacy, they are not to be “friends” on Facebook or other sites with our enrolled families.

Because of the uncomfortable position that this can create, we ask that you respect this important policy by not sending “friend requests” to our staff members.

#### **Babysitting Policy**

Parents with children enrolled at Montessori of Alameda are expressly not allowed to use school staff for “babysitting” purposes outside of the school hours. Parents agree not to solicit or hire staff for any sort of in-home childcare. Please understand that it is against our Employee Policies for staff to babysit for enrolled children and asking them to do so puts them in a difficult situation that may jeopardize their employment.

## **Emails**

The administrative and lead teams of MOA have designated work email addresses and will respond to most emails within 24 hours (excluding weekends and holidays). Other staff members may not have company email addresses. If you would like to communicate with your child’s teacher you may use your classroom assigned email or Procure Engage. You can send messages to your child’s teacher from the Procure app on your phone or computer. To protect your privacy and the privacy of our staff, please do not ask for their personal email addresses.

## **General Programming Information**

### **Outdoor Play**

We believe that children need fresh air and exercise daily. We are very proud of our private, fenced, outdoor play area, gardens, and sports court. Our playground equipment has been specially selected for the physical development of children. Soft surfaces cover a portion of the playground where conditions allow, while hard surfaced areas are provided for riding toys and the multitude of games children enjoy. Please send appropriate seasonal outdoor wear with your child daily.

### Courtyard Policy

#### *Children*

- Be gentle and kind with the teachers
- Bark chips are not thrown.
- Loud voices are okay, but please no screaming.
- Be gentle and kind with others and their work.
- Be gentle with all living things including plant and animal life.
- No rough play such as wrestling or pushing.
- Shoes need to be safe (no shoes without backs. Closed toe shoes are encouraged).
- Keep gates clear.
- Slides must be used feet first.
- One child at a time on climbing walls, poles and monkey bars.

#### *Parents*

- For safety, children who are wearing these types of footwear will be asked to not play on the play structure: clogs, cowboy boots, flip-flops, rain boots or crocs. Please send children to school in safe footwear.
- Always be aware of the gates and what is happening close to them. Please walk with your child out of the gates, handle our gates gently, and be sure to close them securely. Notify us immediately if you notice a gate that needs to be adjusted or fixed.
- We ask that parents support MOA's policy of no cell phones in the classrooms by refraining from using cell phones in the courtyards. We request this so that parents stay focused on their child. Giving your child your attention will show respect and help to further build your relationship.

- During community events the children are allowed to play on the play-structures as long as a parent is supervising them.
- When parents arrive to pick children up from school please remember that the play-structures are for classroom use. We ask families not to use them after they have picked up their children.
- When waiting in our courtyards we ask that parents sit on the benches of the picnic tables and not on the top. This will provide a good model of what we are teaching the children.

### *Teachers*

- State regulated ratios must be followed.
- **This is not a time to rest or visit with parents or co-teachers.**
- Staff responsibility is supervision and the safety of the children.
- Children can help care for the environment by picking up trash, weeding or raking the garden, or sweeping bark chips.
- Materials in the courtyard should be used and respected as materials in the classroom (not thrown or abused), replaced on the shelf when the child has finished, and kept in beautiful, as-new condition. ● Shoes are required to be worn at all times in the courtyard. The shoe policy is for the safety of the children.
- Children are expected to use the play-structure safely and as intended.
  - Slides are for sliding down and only climbing up when safe.
  - Monkey bars are for hanging and only for sitting on top if children can get up unassisted and are supervised closely
  - Climbing wall is for children to reach the top but never to go over it
  - Handrails are for holding on to. Please refrain from climbing on
  - Bark chips are a cushion for our feet and body and are not to be thrown. If they are played with, ensure they are returned to the bark chip area.
- A staff member must be standing beside the monkey bars and paying attention to the child using the monkey bars. The staff member must be alert and ready to help guide the child gently to the ground if he or she is having difficulty. If a staff member is not present at the monkey bars, they must be closed.
- Children may use the play structure during the day but not after it has become dark outside.
- For safety, below are some ground rules:
  - Always be aware of the gates and what is happening close to them.
  - Rotate around the courtyard while the children are at play. There are some hidden spots so look everywhere.
  - Class clipboard (contains the sign in sheets and the class contact info) should be brought in the courtyard as well.

### **Clothing**

Ready for action! That's our dress code. Your child's clothing should be comfortable and easy for them to manage. Their clothing should not display popular characters, which can be distracting during our work day. We provide smocks for our sensory and art activities. If your child changes their clothes during the day, they will be sent home in a provided wet bag or plastic bag.

Each child must always have 1-3 complete changes of clothing left at school. Make sure your child's clothing is clearly labeled. These should include:

- Pants, shirt, underwear socks
- Indoor shoes or slippers

- Outdoor shoes or boots

During toilet learning, we may ask for even more extra clothes to be brought to school to support your child's process successfully.

For safety reasons, we ask that all children **wear closed toed shoes at all times for outdoor use**. Flip flops and other sandals can provide slip and injury hazard and can be difficult for children to participate in large motor movement. For children who are new walkers, soft bottom shoes are best, such as leather slippers.

Being mindful of weather in Oregon means being prepared for anything! Please make sure your child has appropriate winter items for changing temperatures. We recommend a warm coat, hat, gloves and boots. A raincoat/rain boots or a rainsuit is advised during our rainy season.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips provide the opportunity to explore the world around us and are a lot of fun. Dates, costs and destinations will be announced in advance and parents are encouraged to join in. A signed "Field Trip Authorization Form" must be completed prior to any excursions. Emergency medical release forms for each child are carried with us on each trip. A parent may elect not to have a child participate in any field trip. In this case, the child will remain at school with another class if staffing permits. Please let us know if you would like to accompany us on a field trip. \*\* Please note that some field trips are space-limited and not all parents will be able to attend. Sign up to be a chaperone early if interested.

### **Personal Belongings**

As a rule, items from home that are not clothing items or essential daily items should remain at home. Items such as toys, books or other things are difficult for children to keep track of and are easily lost or damaged. Each classroom has individual guidance around what items are needed daily for your child's care. Security items for rest time are allowed for children 1 and older. Primary students may be invited to bring specific items to share during circle time, but that are collected upon entry and kept in a safe spot. As with clothing, items which are approved must not include characters.

## **Health and Safety at Montessori of Alameda**

### **Illness**

At MOA, precautions are taken to safeguard your child against illness. However, young children are very susceptible to infections, especially if it is their first school experience. It is impractical to keep a child home every time they have a runny nose, however a cough or cold that interferes with your child's disposition or performance at school, needs attention at home. **All children must be free of fever and/or symptoms (including diarrhea and vomiting), without the aid of medications such as Tylenol, for at least 24 hours before returning to school.** Children need to be able to participate in the normal day's activities, which include outdoor play. For your convenience, we have included an illness policy in your enrollment packet. Please ensure you review it and have it on hand for your reference.

The administration and your child's lead teacher will help determine if your child is too ill to remain at school and will call you to pick up your child if necessary. This includes a child that has more than one incident of diarrhea in a single day. In a childcare center, contagious diarrhea can be very problematic. Upon registering

your child at Montessori of Alameda, we ask that you spend some time making provisions for backup childcare for those days when your child must remain at home and you cannot. **When you are called to pick up a sick child, please do so within 30 minutes to minimize exposure of other children.**

If we are aware that your child has been exposed to an infectious disease while in the classroom, we will notify you promptly. In return, we request that you report to us when your child is exposed outside of the school. For lice infestations, we have a “No Nit” policy. Your child must be nit-free before returning to school.

At the suggestion of our state licenser, **we will not be able to administer prescribed medication to your child except in rare circumstances.** If your child needs medication during the day, we ask that you arrange to give it to them when you drop them off and pick them up, and come to the school to administer it if needed during the day. Why do we do this? Many children struggle when asked to take medication and the experience can be traumatic, for both the child and the teacher. The opportunity for higher or lower than necessary doses to be administered also exists. There are, of course, special circumstances. If your child requires medication, please speak to the School Leader. All medication will be stored out of the classroom and only administered by a School Leader.

## **Emergencies**

We do everything possible to minimize accidents through safety programs, close supervision, attentive facility maintenance, and consistent guidance. In the event of an accident that requires more than a hug and reassurance, we have established emergency procedures. All our staff are required to obtain child and infant CPR and First Aid certifications, along with a Food Handler’s Card, Recognizing and Reporting Child Abuse and Neglect Certification, Introduction to Health and Safety, and Safe Sleep for Infants.

In the case of accident or injury we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent. If we deem it necessary, we will also call Emergency First Responders. Until the arrival of a parent, ambulance, or paramedic, the acting Person In-Charge will make all decisions about the care of the child. You will be expected to assume responsibility for any resulting expense. It is necessary that you keep the school up to date on phone numbers, emergency numbers, and any other pertinent information. Please notify the administration of any changes.

## **Birthdays**

All children enjoy birthday celebrations! If a parent wishes to bring a special birthday snack, arrangements must be made with the School Leader or classroom teacher. All items must be store bought and in its original packaging as required by the Office of Child Care (OCC). All produce must be prepped in a commercial kitchen or brought to the classroom and we will prep it on-site. We require that birthday treats are in line with our nutritional philosophy. Please do not bring candy, sugary baked goods, soda, etc. The following are some of our most popular birthday treats:

No sugar added popsicles (No artificial sweeteners, please)

Mini muffins (no nuts, please)

Fruit and yogurt parfaits

Fresh fruit with whipped cream

Make your own mini pizzas

Pirates Booty

Fruit Leathers

## **Nutrition Policy and Snacks**

Morning Snack consisting of a dry good and fresh produce item is served daily. Afternoon snack is served for children attending Aftercare. Lunch is to be provided from home. Please see below for details. All meals are served in the classroom. During this time, we work with children on learning about nutrition and expectations for meal times.

### **Nutrition Policy**

Proper nutrition is essential in order for children to succeed at school. There is much research that shows that an organic, sugar free, unprocessed diet leads to better academic achievement.

We understand that labels can be confusing. In order to help our families be more successful at reading labels we have put this list together. **Please keep in mind that we are a nut-free school.**

#### **Foods recommended by Montessori of Alameda:**

- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Unprocessed meats or substitute protein - soy, tempeh, seitan, tofu, beans, hummus, soy butter  
(Read labels carefully as often the first ingredients are sugar and salt)
- Seeds - sesame, sunflower and soy
- Eggs
- Whole grains
- Pourable milk or milk substitute

In order to help your child be successful at lunch we also ask that you remove all commercial packaging such as plastic coverings and place food in an easy to open container.

**Please note: Candy, nuts, and gum are not allowed in Montessori of Alameda classrooms.**

**Milk and Alternatives**—Licensing regulations require that children drink milk at lunch. Please pack a thermos of milk for your child. We will help them serve milk from their thermos into a cup. For those students who do not consume cow's milk you may provide an acceptable non-nut alternative. Popular alternatives include soy, hemp, oat, rice, coconut and goat's milk. If milk is not provided we will serve your child cow's milk or soy milk. Please complete the Milk Authorization Form found in your enrollment pack. **Please note that nut milks are not acceptable due to allergies.**

**We are a nut free school. Please be aware of this when bringing food from home for any reason.**

### **Parent Involvement**

We believe that exceptional child care consists of a partnership between families and their childcare providers. The concept of wrap-around care is all about open and honest communication and trust.

You as parents are the most important adults in your child's life. At Montessori of Alameda, our goals are to be supportive of your parenting role and supplemental in the development of your child. The decision to leave your child at a school is not always an easy one. We have created a safe, loving, and conscious environment for your child that you can feel good about. If you feel anxious, your child is bound to sense this and have a harder

time adjusting. We are committed to doing everything we can to ease this transition and ask for your assistance. When you emphasize the fun, this will help them make new friends and join in our activities. Your child will share in your excitement. Taking time to share your child's daily experiences and feelings also serve to strengthen the parental bond and lessen separation anxiety.

If your child has an upsetting experience, such as a death of a pet or an illness in the family, please let us know. We want to help your child work through these difficulties with art, play, or sympathetic conversation. Your child's total development is important to us all.

### **Communication at Montessori of Alameda is important to us and it is a two-way street.**

The administrators make every effort to return emails and calls swiftly. Please know that there are days that there may be delays in communication because the focus needs to be making sure our programs are at their best and our staff are trained and effective. Please be sure to call the school, send an email, or send a ProCare Engage message to make an appointment if you have any concerns or comments. We value your input and observations so never hesitate to stop by and chat. We are all here to partner with you!

### **Parent Conferences**

The teachers at MOA are always happy to answer any questions or briefly discuss your concerns when you drop off or pick up your child. However, the classroom is the child's space and it is important that we respect their morning work cycle. Please do not interrupt a child's work by entering the classroom. If you would like to have a conversation that requires more time or requires more confidentiality than is afforded in the daily routine your child's lead guide will be happy to schedule a conference at your request. Parent-Teacher conferences are scheduled at regular intervals during the school year. Please refer to the annual calendar.

### **Volunteering**

#### **General Guidelines for Volunteering**

- Sign up and coordinate a time to volunteer in your child's classroom. You are welcome to suggest an idea or ask your child's teacher for a project.
- When in the classroom, use a quiet voice and slow movements at all times.
- Rules in the classroom are: walking feet, quiet voices, use of grace and courtesy and respect for others.
- Please do not disturb a child who is focused and concentrating.
- Please tell the children what they can do using positive statements.
- Please defer classroom management to the MOA staff.
- If unsure about a policy please wait for a time when the teachers are not working with a child and use face to face quiet communication.
- It is important to note that we welcome parents to volunteer in the classroom as long as it does not adversely affect your child's behavior.
- Please talk with your child and let them know you are coming to volunteer and the expectation is that they will continue to engage with the community of children while you assist the teachers and other children.
- If your child is upset by your presence, let them know that you will need to leave and try again another day.

**Thank you for volunteering!**

## **Room Parents**

Each classroom has room parents that volunteer to be the coordinators for teacher appreciation projects and other needs of the classroom. If you are interested in learning more about being a room parent please reach out to your School Leader. Room parents have contact lists for all the families in their classroom and use this to communicate upcoming events or to coordinate activities. The Room Parent program is designed to help parents coordinate gifts and treats for teacher appreciation but should not be used to collect cash to be given directly to the teachers. Participation in any room event or program is optional.

## **Student Behavior Policy Positive Behavior Intervention System (PBIS)**

Our mission is to unleash students' potential so that they thrive. When we view students' behavior with this goal in mind, we view challenging behavior as opportunities to teach. We want to unleash students' intrinsic motivation to do what is right so that they thrive as ethical citizens. We want to unleash students' self-regulation so that they thrive in relationships and in completing tasks. We want to unleash students' self-awareness so that they thrive as mentally healthy people who can name and manage their emotions. When we encounter difficult behavior in our classrooms we can view these moments as problems (disruption to our class flow, disrespect to our authority) or as opportunities (to teach students' a better way and to identify how we can improve our relational approach, curriculum and/or learning environment to support the student). At Endeavor, we acknowledge the many emotions we may feel when we encounter difficult behavior in our classrooms. We also choose to focus on the opportunities to teach and to learn ourselves.

## **Montessori of Alameda's Behavior Policy**

We seek to keep disciplinary issues minimized and to help students manage their own behavior (self-regulation). Our educators are expected to present and model age-appropriate behavioral guidelines and use reflective communication to encourage students to convey their emotions. Our educators encourage self-control, self-direction, accountability, and cooperation. Consequences that are practical, safe, logical, and natural are utilized when necessary.

MOA Educators as a part of Endeavor Schools receive ongoing training in positive guidance (Mindfulness, Positive Discipline, Conscious Discipline, Approaching Behavior through the Lens of Development etc.). Positive guidance focuses on pointing students to what they should do (as opposed to focusing on what they should not do). An example of this would be: "Walk inside the classroom." vs. "No running!" Depending on the age of the student, kind words, hugs, words of encouragement and specific praise ('You walked carefully while carrying that jug' vs 'Good job carrying the jug') are used so the student will identify their positive choices and want to repeat them. We never use physical discipline and will not use it, even at a parent's request. We also will not use physical rewards to manage children's behavior. Such rewards undermine the student's development of intrinsic motivation. Intrinsic motivation is the desire to do what is good and right for its own sake rather than out of fear of punishment or expectation of reward. Natural rewards should be highlighted. For example, 'You tidied up the classroom so quickly! Now we have more time to play outside'. Or, 'Look at her face! You shared the truck with her and now she looks so happy!' This philosophy of positive guidance is in accordance with our belief that students learn best in an environment where love, constructive feedback and encouragement promote the development of self-esteem and that the best learning happens in the context of responsive and trusting relationships.



Physically aggressive behavior (fighting, biting, etc.) including, but not limited to, aggression toward other children or a staff member, offensive language, destructive behavior toward property, disruption of activities for the entire class, etc. is unacceptable. In such instances, our Educators will intervene immediately to protect others in the learning community, to thwart further aggressive behavior, and to encourage more appropriate and positive behavior.

Students in our care will be shown positive alternatives rather than simply being told “no”. If certain difficult behaviors occur frequently, teachers will engage in guided observation of the student, seeking to identify contexts in which the student is successful. Instead of asking, ‘Why can’t this student focus?’ we will ask ‘When, where and with whom can this student focus?’ Instead of asking ‘Why can’t this child be gentle?’ we will ask ‘When, where and with whom can this child be gentle?’ These observations will be used by the teacher and a school leader to identify the student’s strengths and to determine what changes to the environment, curriculum and relational approach can be made to more consistently set the student up for success.

A conference with families may be requested at any time to discuss behavioral concerns and further explore the options available to facilitate supporting the student’s positive behavior, which may include an individualized behavioral plan. If a child’s behavior is deemed uncontrollable, extremely disruptive, and/or harmful to self or others, communication between home and school is considered the key to effective discipline. If the behaviors continue after the conference, age appropriate intervention will be utilized (see the 3 Tier process below). The hope is that families, educators and, at times external specialists, can work together to remove barriers to the student’s successful participation in the learning community. On rare occasions, a student may be sent home for a set period of time to give the teaching team and parents time to identify a plan to better support the child in the classroom. The School Leader and Regional Leader must both be consulted prior to sending a child home for this reason.

It is essential to the success of the student that families and educators collaborate in removing barriers to students successful behavior. If a parent meeting is requested and parents fail to meet with teachers and/or school leaders in a timely manner or repeatedly cancel or repeatedly fail to show up for a scheduled meeting, the school may disenroll the student, giving families 1 week notice.

We will never subject a child to physical disciplinary punishment such as shaking, biting, pinching, grabbing, pulling by the arm, picking up or setting down harshly or any other physically intimidating behavior. Humiliation and verbal abuse will never be used by Endeavor educators. Young children will not be disciplined for sleep habits, toileting accidents, food consumption, or lack of participation in scheduled activities. On a case-by-case basis, the age, intellectual development, emotional makeup, past experiences, and any diagnosis of special needs will be considered in all disciplinary matters. Any violation of the school’s discipline policy should be brought to the attention of a school leader immediately.

### **Three Tier Process for Students’ facing Barriers to Successful Participation in the Learning Community**

To support students' social and emotional development we work to create a routine and curriculum that is developmentally appropriate for children. When we observe students who are having a difficult time being successful in our setting we have the following goals:

1. To create an educational environment where all students and families can receive the support they need for their child to thrive now and in the future.

2. To offer families support and referrals for further assessment of their student's development
3. To create an environment of partnership where both families and staff are working to address challenging behavior

We highly value our partnership with parents and we have developed the following tiers to communicate with parents about their student's social and emotional development in our program and to outline the expectations for partnership with parents. It is our goal to provide social and emotional skill training and know that there will be challenging behaviors from students based on their own temperament, age, development, and exposure to challenging behaviors. Behavior that is consistent and is an outlier for what can be considered typical will be addressed through the Three Tier process below. It is our goal to ensure that all the students in our care have their needs met. Through this process we expect to identify barriers to students' positive behavior and to work with students and families to remove those barriers while also maintaining the integrity of the classroom for all students and staff.

**Tier 1:** -We expect 90% of our students to be served through Tier 1 – where we use behavior strategies that are effective for most developmentally-appropriate behaviors, such as a positive narration, discussing empathy for those we have injured, and giving students clear expectations/directions. Challenging behaviors exist at each level of development. Anecdotal notes will be completed and shared with parents /regularly to ensure children are moving forward in their development and able to function successfully in the group setting. Our focus is on supporting students' social and emotional development and partnering with parents.

**Tier 2:** -Tier 2 begins with guided observations. Using the Tier 2 observation guide, teachers seek to identify the student's strengths and the contexts in which the student is most successful (when, where, with whom). These observations<sup>1</sup>, along with identified barriers to student's successful participation are reviewed by teachers and a member of the school leadership to develop a wholistic picture of the student's strengths and support needs. If, through our data collection, we have significant evidence that a student needs additional support, we will work with the student's family and teachers to create a Tier 2 behavior plan. The plan will seek to set the student up for success by making needed changes to the environment, curriculum and relational approach to ensure that the student is working within his or her ideal context based on the strengths identified. Specific interventions will also be included as necessary (such as carefully selected sensory materials, check ins before transitions, picture cards, social stories, student goal setting etc.). We would expect to have 10% of our enrolled students in Tier 2 during a school year. These specific interventions will be provided as long as needed to ensure all students are able to fully function in the classroom.

**Tier 3:** If, after 1 month of utilizing a Tier 2 behavior plan, a student continues to face barriers to successful

<sup>1</sup> These observation notes are private and confidential as they may include the names of other students. These notes will not be shared with parents, but a verbal or written summary of the notes will be offered to the individual student's parents. interactions in the learning community, we will work with the student's family and teachers to create a Tier 3 behavior plan with a specific set of interventions that include assessment provided by outside professionals<sup>2</sup>. This plan will also include a set time frame in which evaluations and recommendations will be attained by outside professionals. Once the assessment has been completed and recommendations have been documented, parents, teachers and support personnel at the school will develop a Tier 3 behavior plan that includes when and how the recommendations will be carried out as well as a date when parents, teachers and support personnel will meet again to discuss the student's progress.

We consider every child in our care to be an important member of our learning community. We will do absolutely everything we can to support the student's success in our program. In some cases, our ability to support a student will depend on the assessment and recommendations of licensed specialists outside of our program. We understand that seeking professional assessment is the decision of each parent for their child,

however if we have completed our internal process and determine we need additional information only a specialist can provide we will require a completed assessment as well as recommendations completed within a timeline that we agree upon. Parent partnership is critical at every stage of education and we need parent support to do our best work with your children. If a parent decides not to seek assessment and /or chooses not to provide the needed resources to support the child's success in our environment, the family will receive a two week notice prior to dis-enrollment. Any decision to disenroll will be made by the school leader in collaboration with teachers. The Regional Director of Operations must be notified and consulted prior to disenrolling a child.

If parents are unwilling to consult with specialists for assessment and intervention recommendations, we may ask the family to disenroll their student on the grounds that we cannot adequately serve their child without the information specialists provide. If a student's parents fail to agree to collaborate with specialists or fail to schedule and complete an evaluation by a specialist within the timeline agreed to during the Tier 3 meeting, the school may disenroll the student with one week's notice to the parents. Supporting children well requires that the child receive all the services and supports identified by specialists during the assessment and recommendation process. These supports may include working with therapists. In some cases, the student will work with therapists off site. In other cases, the therapists will want to work with the student in our classrooms (any adult working with students in a classroom will need to meet state licensing requirements, including a background check). We are keen to support students by partnering with therapists as needed. If, however, a student's parents choose not to pursue the support recommended by specialists, we may not be able to offer the student the support they need and may ask parents to disenroll the student with 2 weeks' notice. We hope that we never need to disenroll a student whose parents have cooperated fully with our 3-tier process. In the rare occurrence when a student requires support that cannot be offered in the context of our program (even with the collaboration of specialists), parents will be provided a two weeks' notice prior to disenrollment.

## **Behavior Concerns for Children Under the Age of 6**

The vast majority of behavior concerns observed in our youngest learners are temporary and developmentally appropriate. Young children's impulse control is not yet established in these early years. It is developing. Young children may not be able to articulate their needs, desires and emotions in words. In the absence of words, children often use their bodies to communicate. It is important that every adult in our learning community has developmentally appropriate expectations for each child and addresses young children's behavior in developmentally appropriate ways. Hurtful behavior will be addressed swiftly and firmly with an aim to help the child understand that such behavior is hurtful and to protect others in the learning community. If challenging behavior persists, it will be addressed utilizing the 3 Tier process described above. For our youngest children, a shortened day may be recommended under Tier 3 as some young children will benefit from 3-5 hours in a group context but will find 6-10 hours to be taxing and unmanageable. As the child grows and develops, the child will likely be ready for a progressively longer day at school.

### ***Biting***

Biting is, perhaps, the most prevalent behavior concern for toddlers. The prevalence of biting as an issue for toddlers, is evidence that a toddler who bites is not outside of the norm of typical development. There are many reasons why infants and toddlers bite. The list below is not exhaustive but includes some common reasons why toddlers bite:

1. Infants and young toddlers use their mouths as a 'research tool'. It is one way they try to understand things that they encounter in their environment.
2. Due to teething or sensory seeking, biting can feel really good for infants and toddlers. Biting may offer relief from oral discomfort due to teething or as a way to soothe a child.
3. When toddler's do not have the words to communicate their needs or desires, they may bite in frustration.
4. When a toddler's attempt to use words or gestures to communicate with a peer fail and the peer acts in a

way that the toddler finds upsetting, he or she may bite in anger.

5. Toddlers may bite to show affection. They may not know the difference between kissing and biting.
6. Sometimes, toddlers even bite because they are excited and do not know another way to release their positive energy.
7. If parents use their mouths in playful ways with toddlers (mawing, blowing raspberries, nuzzling), children may seek to engage their peers in such play without appreciating the subtle difference between using teeth vs lips (in these cases, parents may want to hold off on such play until the biting phase passes).

*When toddlers bite we will take the following steps:*

1. FIRMLY tell the child who bit, 'Stop!' A young child can absorb one word per year of age when under duress. So saying "Henry, STOP!" would suffice for a young toddler. The child's name should be used so there is absolutely no confusion among the children as to who should stop.
2. Comfort the child who has been bitten.
3. Support the child who did the biting in calming down as needed. This step should include reading the child's positive intent and naming emotions. 'You were using the block and she took it. You felt angry.'
4. Support the child who did the biting in identifying strategies to manage the emotion. A young toddler may be taught to say the word 'help' while learning the sign for 'help', or a simple phrase such as 'walk away' to deal with a friend who is invading space or property. Older toddlers and preschoolers may find it helpful to consider more ideas such as, 'When you feel angry you can stomp your feet.' 'When you feel angry you can ask for help'. 'When you feel angry you can breathe.'
5. Depending on the situation, developmentally appropriate coaching will be offered to the child who bit regarding safe alternatives or what they can do in a similar situation. "When someone tries to take something you are using you can say 'Stop!'"
6. Ensure that the child is told, "biting hurts, she does not like that". Then offer the child the choice of helping to comfort the child who has been bitten (if that child agrees).
7. Teachers will document the bite as required by the program. Both children's parents will be notified of the incident. For children under the age of 3 years old, further conversation about the incident at home is not likely to be helpful unless the child brings it up on their own (for toddlers, the event is in the distant past and may not be readily recalled). It is helpful for families to utilize similar language and response strategies as those used at school ('Stop! Biting hurts', calming strategies, helping the child use words instead of their body to communicate). For children ages 3 to 5 years old, reinforcement at home of the ideas communicated by teachers at school could be helpful.

*When biting happens frequently*

Some children bite often. In these cases, we will utilize Tier 2, seeking to understand if there is a pattern to the biting that we can identify and address. If the trigger for biting is strong emotions, families and teachers can work together to develop shared language and strategies to help the child identify emotions and develop ways to manage them. For children 3.5 to 5 years old who engage in frequent biting, Tier 3 will be utilized as the child may benefit from the support of a specialist.

*Responses to Biting that are Unhelpful*

Certain responses to biting are unhelpful. These responses are discouraged at home and will not be used while children are in our care, even at the request of parents.

1. Biting a child back so that they know how it feels - This response is confusing for children as it communicates that violence is an acceptable way to solve problems.
2. Referring to a child as a 'bully' or a 'biter' – Such labels communicate that the child cannot change and do not affirm the potential of the child.
3. Shaming, threatening or shouting – Children will struggle to develop self-regulation when they are

afraid.

4. Blaming parents – Biting is a common toddler behavior. Parents support their children best when they are approached with empathy and encouragement from staff and other parents.

### ***Sexual Behavior in Young Children***

Young children are new to the world. An important job for young children is to explore this world they are now a part of. They do this by using their senses to explore and understand the things around them, including their bodies and the bodies of other people. The main ways young children seek to understand their bodies and how the bodies of peers, siblings and adults are the same and different is by touching, rubbing, pulling and looking at their body and, in some cases, the bodies of others. These explorations are normal, and we can help children gain the information they seek while also teaching them about ‘private’ vs ‘public’ behavior and the difference between ‘good touch’ and ‘bad touch’. 3 to 5 is the usual developmental period for these conversations because children are ready to distinguish between ‘private’ vs ‘public’ and ‘good touch’ vs ‘bad touch’ while also curious about external human anatomy. Since every child is different, there is not cause for alarm if a 2-year-old or a 6-year-old exhibits the sexual behavior described below as ‘normal’.

#### *Response to normal sexual behavior in young children*

Some typical sexual behavior for children under the age of 6 include:

- Touching & masturbating
- Trying to see other people naked
- Showing genitals to others
- Comments involving genitals

When a young child engages in such behavior, we will take one or more of the following actions depending on the context of the situation.

- We will remind the child that in our culture, the parts of our body covered by our underpants or diaper and our breasts are private areas. We can touch them when we are alone at home. School is not a private place, lots of people are here together. Parents will be told of the incident so that they can think about guidelines for such exploration at home (in the bathtub for example). Parents should not punish children for sexual behavior. It can send confusing messages to children. We do not want children to think of their genitals as ‘bad’ or ‘dirty’. These are important parts of a healthy body. We simply want to help children learn that some parts of our bodies are private.
- If appropriate, we will reinforce that because genitals are private, only the child’s doctor, a parent or the child should touch them. If a friend or an adult, other than their parents or their doctor (with a parent present) touches their private areas, this is a bad touch. They should tell a parent or a teacher right away. Any time a child communicates that they have been touched inappropriately, it is important to remain calm and thank the child for telling us. Parents will be notified if a child is touched inappropriately at school or if their child touches another child’s genitals.
- We will review ‘good touches’, talking about the places on the body that are okay to touch (back, arms, shoulder). We will also talk about how many people like to be asked before they are touched (i.e. ‘May I hug you?’).

### **Things to Remember**

This handbook contains a lot of important information you need to know regarding our policies and procedures. And it can be overwhelming! We have created this “short list” of things we would like parents to remember. You may want to keep this sheet easily accessible!

- Please inform us if your child is sick or will be absent for any reason. You can call the center, send a ProCare Engage message, or send an email.
- Please keep us informed of anything happening in your child’s life that may affect their behavior or daily

experience.

- Please let us know right away if there may be a change in your child's schedule. We require 30 days advance notice of schedule changes and they are based on availability.
- Please inform the office of any new phone numbers (work, home, emergency contacts, etc.)
- Please notify us of any immunizations your child receives throughout the year.
- Please make a point to read emailed newsletters and notices in your child's folder, lobby, and classroom bulletin boards.
- Please check your child's cubby, backpack, and classroom postings every day.
- Please dress your child in clothing that is easy to remove to assist:
  - Teachers changing diapers
  - Children potty training and working on self-help skill
  - All children need 1-3 complete changes of clothing (more if potty training)
- Please label EVERYTHING!!!
- Your child can bring a small pillow, blanket or small stuffed toy for nap that will fit completely in their cubby and take them home for laundering on weekends.
- Please do not bring toys from home except on planned sharing days—home toys will be kept in a box until sharing time (PRIMARY ONLY).
- Please be aware that our policies do not allow for candy, sweets, nuts or gum to be brought into the center.
- Please be respectful of the privacy of our staff and be aware that our policy does not allow our staff to babysit for enrolled children. Please also be aware of our social media policy and please respect the personal time of our staff members.
- Please don't hesitate to let us know if you have questions or concerns—the Administration always has an open door and values your input!
- We are a **NUT FREE** school. Please be aware when sending any food from home or bringing in birthday treats.

### **Tips for a Smooth Transition**

Starting childcare or school for the first time can sometimes be daunting. We're here to help you through this transition and have provided some tips and tidbits about the wide world of childcare.

- **Prepare your child in advance.** If your child has never been in group care before, the first few weeks might have some bumps. It is normal to expect a few bumpy drop offs, but we do our best to make sure children are engaged as soon as they are signed into the classroom and it won't be long before your little one is happily moving about the room and working with new friends. If your child is old enough, talking to them about the new school is a good idea. For all new students, it is very helpful to get them accustomed to our daily eating and napping schedule. You might consider transitioning your child to their classroom schedule a few weeks into your start at MOA.
- **Prepare yourself!** Have a drop off and pick up plan and try to stick to it. Your child will feel more secure knowing the morning and afternoon routine. We find that drop offs are smoother when they are the same every day. Please speak to your child's teacher during your orientation to help prepare for this routine.
- **Have a backup plan.** Your child will be exposed to new environments, teachers, and students, and we expect that they will catch colds occasionally. Typically, children new to childcare tend to get sick more in the first few months. It is important to become familiar with our illness policy and have a backup plan in place for those days when it is necessary for your child to remain at home. It is a good idea to prepare friends and family who might be able to help when your child is ill.
- **Ask questions. A lot .** Our staff is very knowledgeable and happy to help. If you have a question about our program or your child's development, please feel free to speak to classroom teachers or the leadership team. Every parent comes to us with different perspectives and we don't always know

what you know. Communicating with us and asking clarifying questions is a great way to ensure we are providing your child with the best care.

- **Bumps, Bruises, and Bites, Oh My!** Your children are charged with the very important task of learning and growing. It is their job to explore their environment and learn to interact with their classmates appropriately. Occasionally, your child might come home with a bump or bruise as they learn to be confident on their feet and safe in their environment. Your child's teacher will write an accident report when such an incident occurs. For our younger students, nonverbal communication can sometimes be in the form of undesirable behavior and biting. Biting is age-appropriate and not unexpected, but we work very hard to maintain the safety of all our students. If your child experiments with biting, or is bitten in the classroom, your teachers will speak with you about it and how we can work together to minimize the biting. It is important that you work with your child at home so that they clearly understand the rules. If they experiment with biting or rough physical contact at home, it is important to let them know it is not acceptable.
- **Mealtimes.** Mealtimes provide great learning opportunities for our students. Whether it is learning to use utensils, or learning to serve themselves, mealtimes are important times in the classroom. You can help prepare your child for mealtimes at school by making sure they have appropriate self-feeding skills before they enter our program (for students older than 1 year). It is a good idea to introduce your child to new foods and help them learn to feed themselves. Asking them to wash their hands before and after meals will also prepare them for our sanitation guidelines. Setting a routine and consistent eating schedule at home will also help students transition to our structured meal times at school.

Thank you and we are so excited to partner with you!