

# Family Handbook 2024-2025



**Fernwood**  
**Montessori School**

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LEARNING FOR LIFE

10100 Old Georgetown Road  
Bethesda, MD 20814  
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# THE PROGRAM

## INTRODUCTION

### Mission Statement

At Fernwood Montessori, we promote equity and celebrate diversity to empower every child's unique potential by fostering resilience, confidence, independence, and joy through Montessori education.

### Vision Statement

Inspired and guided by Montessori principles, at Fernwood, we strive to guide children's growth as unique human beings through careful observation, persistent collaboration, and organized child-specific work within our inclusive and diverse community.

### Portrait of the Graduate

Our Graduates are:

- Intrinsically motivated learners
- Compassionate citizens of the world
- Critical and creative thinkers

### American Montessori Society Accreditation

FMS aims to achieve accreditation by the American Montessori Society. This is the culmination of a multi-year collaborative process of professional reflection and assessment and is an incredible accomplishment. We are delighted to offer an outstanding, authentic, and accredited Montessori experience to the families of our entire community as an AMS Accreditation Candidate School.

*Fernwood Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national and/or ethnic origin, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in the admission of students, the employment of staff or in the administration of its policies.*

## MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) was an Italian physician who designed a method of education by observing young children and how they learn. Her extensive early childhood research, which is supported by modern research, revealed that children experience sensitive periods for learning during their early years. They easily learn particular skills during the corresponding sensitive periods, more so than at any other time in the child's life. Dr. Montessori's method encourages the natural development of the whole child from birth through maturity. Out of this research-based foundation, the Montessori "Method of Education" emerged.

Maria Montessori's focus on the whole child led her to develop a school very different from the traditional adult-centered classroom. To emphasize this difference, she named her first school the "Casa de Bambini", or the Children's House. Her words are profound; the Montessori classroom is not the domain of the adults in charge, but rather a carefully-prepared environment designed to facilitate the development of the children's independence and sense of personal empowerment.

Fernwood Montessori School is a true community of children. They move freely within the classroom, selecting work that captures their interest. Even very young children assist in the care of the environment: When they are hungry, they prepare their own snack and drink. When something spills, they help each other carefully clean things up. Parents are often amazed to see small children in Montessori classrooms cut raw fruits and vegetables, sweep and dust, carry pitchers of water, and pour liquids with barely a drop spilled. The children go about their work so calmly and purposefully that it is clear to even the casual observer that this is, in fact, their own environment.

If you have never been to a Montessori classroom, even as an adult, you have missed a great treat. The Montessori classroom is an intricate, fascinating place for children to unfold and discover. The Montessori ideal is that a child's own awakened love of discovery and learning will fuel his or her own education. From dazzling displays of bright, multicolored counting beads, to various blocks of specific wood and fabric textures that engage greater sensory development, the Montessori method stimulates childhood learning with countless, practical educational tools that children love.

At Fernwood Montessori, each child is educated at his or her own rate of development. Following the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, we believe that within each child is the seed of unlimited potential that guides the child into adulthood. Our focus is to help every child self-construct through an enriched environment with activities that promote experimentation at every developmental level. We also actively foster the innate desire to be independent through everyday activities in our classroom.

The Montessori child develops their individual gifts by choosing their own work after receiving quality lessons. The children have the freedom to shape it and follow it to completion. Defined limits and expectations are set through curriculum standards as well as through student codes of conduct and discipline. We treat each child with dignity and respect and expect that they will treat others with the same respect. In our classrooms,

each child learns to balance personal freedom with a sense of responsibility to themselves, to others and to the community. These concepts are at the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy of education.

To support the personalized education of the child, Dr. Montessori emphasized mixed-age groups. Within our classrooms, the child can be enriched both cognitively and socially at the level that is appropriate for their own stage of development. Classrooms are divided into three communities:

- Toddler (2-3 year olds)
- Primary (3-6 year olds)
- Elementary (6-12 year olds)

Each community has its own physical, social, psychological and cognitive goals. These goals overlap because human development does not completely follow a sequential pattern, nor does it proceed at the same rate for each child. A child may well move into the next foundation level during a school year and the necessary curriculum changes will be met. One of the hallmarks of a Montessori education is that it naturally accommodates the changing academic, social and emotional needs of the child, rather than forcing the child to adapt to a fixed system.

## THE MONTESSORI APPROACH

### The Montessori Classroom

Perhaps the biggest difference in Montessori education from a traditional program is that the Montessori curriculum emphasizes the development of children as independent people. The child moves freely around the room, makes his/her choice, and independently takes that work off the shelf. The child completes the work and replaces it in the same place (often again and again, as children choose certain work over and over to gain mastery of it). Instead of waiting for an adult to choose for him, the child learns to think, "What do I want to do?" and takes the initiative on this repeatedly, day after day.

Because an adult is not standing over the student at every moment, praising or disciplining, a child becomes focused on his own work and behavior. Thus, ideally, a Montessori child is able to develop his own sense of concentration as well as a greater sense of confidence, character, and self-esteem. So, if a child drops or breaks something, the teacher is there to make sure the child is unharmed, and encourages the child to recover so that the child will clean up her own mess, again affirming to the child that she is capable of handling her own errors.

### Six Characteristics of our Montessori Program

#### Specialized Montessori Materials

Dr. Montessori began her career as an educator of young children by working with a group of fifty children aged three to five years old. She had a few developmental materials, which she had previously developed to help learning-impaired children and were designed to help with sensory perceptions. She discovered that

once these materials were introduced, the children worked spontaneously and repeatedly with them in total concentration. Being a scientist, Dr. Montessori observed and responded to this phenomenon by perfecting those materials little by little, through the experimental process of trial and error, which resulted in the creation of highly specialized materials that aided in skill development of children. Over a century later, Montessori materials continue to be used by children all over the world in response to their inner drives to learn.

### A “Well-Prepared Environment” for Children

As children form and develop, they take from the environment what is needed for self-construction; children clearly show an inner need to learn about and to know themselves and their world. They want to develop their intelligence and become independent and responsible. When adults prepare and provide these specialized environments, children can experience the fulfillment of their potential.

Each Montessori classroom is a well-prepared environment designed to support the child’s need for learning and growth. It is a “child’s house” where there are many carefully-designed materials to meet the child’s natural interests. The atmosphere is positive, supportive, and noncompetitive. The classroom has six distinct areas (practical life, language, sensorial, math, social studies, and science – more on those later) to encourage a child’s natural budding interest, with the main objective of providing creative and stimulating developmental experiences for the young child.

### Multi-Age Groups of Children

In a Montessori classroom children grow as their interests lead them from one level of skill to another. Having children of different age groups together provides models for younger children to imitate and gives the older ones an opportunity to reinforce their knowledge by helping the younger ones.

### Specially-Trained Teachers

Montessori teachers are specially-trained in child development and in the Montessori approach. The teacher’s task is to observe children “at work”, keeping a record of the child’s work with the materials. The teacher will note periods of readiness and may redirect a child who chooses materials that are beyond his or her current abilities, while at other times the teacher might encourage a child to try a new, more difficult task. Whenever a child makes an error, the teacher allows the child to discover his or her own mistake through further manipulation of the self-correcting material. The Montessori teacher tries to be sensitive to the needs of the child and values the process over the product. By letting children work toward their own goals, teachers are able to encourage children’s natural enthusiasm for learning.

### An Integrated Approach

In addition to the Montessori materials and specialized areas of the classroom, quality Montessori programs include a full complement of before and after care. Children have daily opportunities to use their large motor skills during outdoor play and enjoy creative dramatics, art, music, food exploration, and special classes that offer them many opportunities for self-expression. Such integration provides children the ability to make a smooth transition to other educational settings.

### A Life-Long Approach to Learning

Dr. Montessori once wrote, “It is true, we cannot make a genius; we can only give each individual the chance to fulfill his or her potential possibilities to become an independent, secure, and balanced human being.” Montessori classrooms provide children with a solid foundation on which to build later learning experiences. Children who are encouraged to be creative, independent, and responsible during early childhood grow into competent, happy adults.

## THE TODDLER PROGRAM

*For Children Ages 24 to 36 months*

### **Educational Goals**

The environment for our growing two-year-old children is professionally designed to help them feel secure and comfortable in their home-away-from-home. Our curriculum centers on age-appropriate materials and activities that develop control, order, concentration, and independence. These skills develop through the daily practice of caring for self and environment, language exploration, fine and gross motor activities, and observing/learning from other toddlers.

### **The Classroom**

From low shelving and toddler-sized furniture to materials especially designed to entice each child’s individual developmental needs, the toddler community is carefully created to be warm and inviting. All materials are placed neatly in trays or little baskets to help define the child’s space. Each material (or “work” as it is most commonly called) has an objective. These materials help to create a sense of order, build concentration, draw attention to details, develop eye-hand coordination, strengthen fine and gross motor skills, instill pride in accomplishing a task, and foster the child’s self-esteem and independence.

### Practical Life

The children participate in activities of Practical Life to promote autonomy by caring for the indoor and outdoor environment, with a great emphasis on self-care, grace, and courtesy. The materials presented cultivate the development and refinement of motor skills, enhancing eye-hand coordination as well as concentration through repetition of purposeful work.

### Language

Language is acquired in all areas of work and there is also a designated language area filled with objects, nomenclature cards, and books. The teacher applies the three-period lesson which consists of introducing the objects, recognizing the object, and finally naming the object.

### Dressing and Undressing

Your child will participate in dressing and undressing himself/herself as independently as possible. All children will always be helped as needed; young children are capable and love to care for themselves. You can help your child be successful in this by offering two sets of clothing and allowing him/her to make the final decision on what he/she would like to wear.

## THE PRIMARY PROGRAM

### *Preschool & Kindergarten\**

*\*Child must be age 5 by September 1<sup>st</sup> to be enrolled as a kindergartener.*

### **Educational Goals**

The Montessori curriculum is designed to accommodate various stages of development that occur in roughly three-year cycles. While the child is three to six years of age, he or she is progressing through a stage in which repetition and manipulation of the environment is critical to the development of concentration, coordination, independence, and a sense of order. The child learns skills for everyday living such as sorting, grading, and classifying - all of which contribute to the development of a mind that is skilled in writing, reading, and math. Under the guidance of a certified Montessori teacher, learning is individualized and self-paced. Our beautiful, well-equipped Montessori classrooms are spacious and comfortable. Each classroom provides a stimulating environment for children ranging from two and a half to six years of age. Emphasis is placed on task analysis and development of a logical and ordered thought process. Each classroom activity is executed from beginning to end with careful attention to the accuracy of sequence and process.

### **The Classroom**

The classroom contains six interrelated sets of learning areas. The following information gives a brief description of the objectives in each area:

#### Practical Life

*"The first essential tool for the child's development is concentration. The child who concentrates is immensely happy." - Maria Montessori*

The child develops an independent approach to personal care and care of his/her surroundings while increasing small motor coordination. Various exercises involving buttons, brushes, pitchers, water, and other objects that the child might recognize from home help the child feel comfortable and successful. The child also learns to pay attention to detail as he or she follows a sequence of actions. Practical Life prepares the child for all other areas of the room, including reading and writing. The emphasis on task completion and continuity encourages good working habits.



## Language

*"Written language can be acquired more easily by children of four years than by those of six. While children of six usually need at least two years to learn how to write, children of four years learn this second language within a few months." - Maria Montessori*

Oral communication is encouraged as children learn to communicate with each other in small group or whole group situations. Children are given names for everything in the environment. Letters are introduced using individual sounds along with the tactile reinforcement of tracing the sandpaper letters. After acquiring the ability to recognize several sounds, the child uses a moveable alphabet to make words. Miniature objects or pictures are used to represent the word, and each sound in the word is found in the moveable alphabet box and placed, in order, next to the object. While the child is acquiring a solid foundation in phonics, sight words are introduced. A variety of reading series awaits the child who has learned to decode the written language. Emergent readers can progress independently through a reading series designed to increase both decoding skills and comprehension. Word study and parts of speech are all addressed through manipulative activities designed to help the child acquire beginning grammatical concepts. The reading and writing connection is fostered through countless classroom opportunities as the child begins to use handwriting as a learning tool and an avenue of creative self-expression.

## Sensorial

*"The senses, being explorers of the world, open the way to knowledge." - Maria Montessori*

A young child meets the world around him through the constant use of his or her senses. This is an ideal time to give the child equipment that will sharpen the senses and enable the child to understand the many sensorial impressions found in the environment. Visual, auditory, and tactile activities sharpen the child's discriminatory skills. To help the child organize sensorial impressions, each piece of classroom equipment is carefully designed to define only one quality such as color, weight, size, or sound. As the child uses and manipulates the sensorial impressions, he or she begins to discover the multi-dimensional interrelationships found among the various pieces of classroom equipment. Further exploration leads to delight as the child progresses through a wide array of extension activities, more discoveries, and keener perceptions about the surrounding environment.

## Mathematics

*"Sometimes very small children in a proper environment develop a skill and exactness in their work that can only surprise us." - Maria Montessori*

If a child has access to concrete mathematical materials, he or she can easily assimilate the many facts and skills of arithmetic. Montessori mathematical materials help the child acquire conceptual understanding through repetition, manipulation, and mastery of skills. Enticed by inviting activities, the child is introduced to the concepts of counting, place value, and finally, the basic operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division.

### Social Studies

*"The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child." - Maria Montessori*

With geography tools such as globes, puzzle maps, and the atlas, the child begins to develop a spatial sense of the world around him/her. The passage of time is a concept presented through seasonal and daily time lines, while the various land and water forms are illustrated through actual models the child fills with water. Picture files, objects, and an extensive library collection bring life to the different aspects of cultures, traditions, and celebrations from around the world.

### Science

*"The secret of good teaching is to regard the child's intelligence as a fertile field in which seeds may be sown, to grow under the heat of flaming imagination." - Maria Montessori*

The objective of the science program is to make the child aware of the world around him/her. It builds on the child's natural curiosity and helps the child to ask and answer "Why?" Plenty of opportunities are provided for the child to manipulate, classify, predict, and experiment.

## THE ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

*For children in first through sixth grade*

Maria Montessori viewed the education of children between the ages of 6 and 12 as "education for life." During this point in a child's life, they have become conscious of their own learning process and desire a variety of learning experiences.

Our Elementary program inspires academic excellence and encourages each child's curiosity and creativity. Elementary aged children use reason and imagination to visualize the interconnections of life. They use their imagination to explore and construct the abstract world. The Elementary student has the mark of a philosopher; wonder and excitement is intrinsic to their learning. They are taught to do research, analyze what they have found, and come to conclusions based on what they discover.

Children of this age are social beings, desiring to be with their friends as much as possible. The Elementary classroom provides countless opportunities for collaboration among students. Under the guidance of their AMS-trained teacher, students work together to establish the core values, expectations, and rules for their classroom community. In this mixed-age classroom, older students are given leadership opportunities, as they serve as role models for their younger classmates.

The Elementary curriculum provides instruction in all traditional subjects: reading, writing, language studies, math, geometry, history, geography, art, and environmental studies. The children are also encouraged to care for their environment and practice their practical life skills.

## ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS

### Physical Education

Kindergarten-age students in our Primary program and our elementary students each participate in a weekly Physical Education class.

#### Kindergarten

Physical education (PE) for five year olds aims to develop gross motor skills, knowledge and behaviors for physical fitness and activity, and community collaboration and communication.

Some milestones and skills developed include: walking, running, jogging, jumping, skipping, leaping, or galloping. Students will also demonstrate an understanding of movement concepts such as personal space, twisting and turning, and spatial relationships with themselves and objects.

#### Elementary

Students in the elementary classroom will continue to develop and expand the motor skills learned in kindergarten. Elementary students may develop skills used in team sports such as soccer and baseball as well.

### Nature Program

The elementary program has a Naturalist who comes to the school every month to instill and develop environmental awareness. Our Naturalist works with the children in small groups to learn about the creation of a field guide, local flora and fauna identification, botanical printing, journaling and other simple skills. The students continue the work that is taught with the Naturalist during their daily work cycle.

## EXTENDED CARE

Students enrolled in extended care (before and/or after school) will have age and developmentally appropriate activities planned for each day.

The extended care staff may not be able to answer questions about the child's day during classroom hours as the staff are not assigned to specific classrooms. However, if they have noticed something positive or have information to provide you, they will be sure to relay that information promptly. Any information that occurred outside of their care (i.e., during the school day when they were not supervising your child), will need to be received from your child's classroom teacher.

**Before Care**                      7:30 am – 8:30 am

Mornings are important - they set the tone for the entire day. A quiet and comforting arrival time allows children to start the day at their own pace and make the necessary mental preparations for school. Children enjoy story time and playing games before beginning their classroom work.

### After Care 3:00 pm – 6:00 pm

A carefully thought-out balance of activities provides age-appropriate times for active indoor and outdoor play and a choice of open-ended experiences in our classrooms. The daily schedule will be modified for daylight savings and inclement weather.

### DROP-IN EXTENDED CARE PROCEDURES

Drop-in Extended Care is available if space permits, in before care or after-care. The fee is **\$15.00 per hour or any portion of an hour used**. *Same-day accommodations are unlikely - because these programs are very popular; please contact the school at least 24 hours in advance to see if space is available.*

Extra hours are billed through FACTS and payment is due upon receipt.

### AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fernwood Montessori offers a few programs after school for enrichment opportunities. In the past, we have offered programs through experienced vendors for activities such as soccer, JumpBunch, Zumba, Spanish, and music. However, each year is dependent on student and family interest and availability from our local vendors. The administrative team will communicate all after-school enrichment opportunities via email or flyers sent home with the children.

### SCHOOL DAY PROGRAMS

All students participate in Montessori Mornings from 8:30 am - 12:00pm. Here is an approximation of our school hours:

Before Care:	7:30am – 8:30am
Half Day:	8:30am – 12:00pm
Full Day*:	8:30am – 3:00pm
After Care:	3:00pm – 6:00pm

*\*Children under age 4 nap in the afternoon.*

*\*Kindergarten and Elementary children must select the full-day Montessori program.*

Morning arrival begins at 8:30am. Classroom instruction for all programs begins promptly at 8:45am every morning. We strongly encourage all children to arrive as close to their arrival time as possible, so they have time to hang up their belongings, change their shoes, and socialize briefly before getting settled in the classroom at 8:45am.

Students who stay for a full day will participate in one of the following:

### **Nap Time**

We encourage the children to nap by playing soft music, lowering the lights, and giving back rubs. If your child will be napping, please bring a small blanket, small pillow or roll-up nap material. On Fridays, all nap items will be sent home in the child's nap bag for laundering. Parents are asked to return all laundered items to school on Mondays.

### **Montessori Afternoons**

Montessori afternoons provide additional opportunities for children ages 4 and older to explore and develop in the Montessori environment. These students must exhibit the readiness and maturity to take on additional challenges in the Montessori classroom. Children in the afternoon class are able to work independently and in small groups and show the concentration needed to complete a second Montessori work cycle. Montessori afternoons include a mix of classroom work time, outdoor play, and school grounds explorations.

#### **Typical Daily Toddler Schedule**

8:30am	Arrival
8:45am	Morning work cycle begins
10:30am	Snack
11:00am	Recess on the Playground
12:00pm	Lunch for full-day children; half-day dismissal
12:30pm	Lunch clean up and nap begins
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

#### **Typical Daily Primary Schedule**

8:30am-8:45am	Arrival
8:45am-12:00pm	Morning Work cycle
12:00pm-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30pm-1:15pm	Recess on the Playground
1:15pm-2:30pm	Nap ( <i>for children 3-4 years old</i> )
1:15pm-3:00pm	Afternoon Work cycle (PE once per week)
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

#### **Typical Daily Elementary Schedule**

8:30am-8:45am	Arrival
8:45am-12:00pm	Morning Work cycle
12:00pm-12:30pm	Lunch

12:30pm-1:15pm	Recess in the upper field
1:15pm-3:00pm	Afternoon Work Cycle (Naturalist and PE once per week)
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

## POLICIES & PROCEDURES

### FERNWOOD CONTACT INFORMATION

#### SCHOOL ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBERS

Physical Address	Phone Numbers	
10100 Old Georgetown Road	(301) 469-4888	Main Office
Bethesda, MD, 20814	(301) 897-5300	Extended Care

#### EMAIL CONTACTS

Name	Role	email
Kim Torres	Head of School	director@fernwoodmontessori.com
Shaheen Somji	Assistant Head of School	admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com
Marjorie Arriola	Lead Guide- YCC	toddler@fernwoodmontessori.com
Walaa Agha	Lead Guide- Primary 1	primary1@fernwoodmontessori.com
Anne Simon	Lead Guide- Primary 2	primary2@fernwoodmontessori.com
Lisa Ruas	Lead Guide- Elementary	elementary@fernwoodmontessori.com

#### SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great tool for sharing events at school and in our community. Join us on social media and help us broaden our online community.

- Website: [www.fernwoodmontessori.com](http://www.fernwoodmontessori.com)
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fernwoodmontessorimd>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/fernwood-montessori-school/>
- Instagram: [https://www.instagram.com/fernwoodmontessori\\_school](https://www.instagram.com/fernwoodmontessori_school)
- Great Schools: <https://www.greatschools.org/maryland/bethesda/4154-Fernwood-Montessori-School/>

#### WHOM DO I CONTACT?

Please call the office at (301) 469-4888 or email the Assistant Head of School, [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com), for any of the following reasons:

- If your child will be absent
- If there is any change in the person who will be picking up your child
- Enrollment or tuition questions
- Changes to your child's schedule, including requests for drop-in before or after care (these requests must be made with at least 24-hour notice and are accommodated when there is space)

If you have any questions related to your child's day, the classroom environment or Montessori pedagogy, your child's teacher should be your first point of contact. Please understand that our teachers are with their students for most of the day and are unable to respond immediately. Please give them 48 hours to respond to an email or return a phone call. For issues or concerns that need to be addressed immediately, please call the Head of School.

At any point, you should feel free to approach the Head of School, with any feedback, questions, or concerns, or if you believe that an issue has not been sufficiently addressed by your child's teacher. The Head of School can be reached via email at [director@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:director@fernwoodmontessori.com) or by calling the office at (301) 469-4888.

## ARRIVALS AND DISMISSALS

Morning drop-offs for before care students will be at the Johnson Hall door (farthest door on the left side of the building) between 7:30 am and 8:25 am.

The arrival window closes at 8:45am, and staff is needed in the classrooms at that time. If you arrive late, please ring the bell at the far entrance (the Elementary Door) and someone will come to escort your child to class.

For your child to get the most benefit from our program, prompt and regular attendance is essential. If your child will be absent, please call the office, or send an email to [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com) by 9:15am.

## PARKING LOT SAFETY AND CARPOOL LANE PROCEDURES

School day drop-offs will be at the center arrivals door with the ramp. Please review the information below to abide by the safest procedures during this critical time.

There is nothing more important than the safety of our students, parents, and staff. Please make sure to drive slowly and carefully in our parking lot. For our families' convenience, we offer a carpool drop-off and pick-up during morning arrivals (8:30-8:45) and afternoon dismissal (3:00-3:15) for all students.

If you choose to use the carpool lane, you will pull up to the center entrance, following the direction of traffic, and a staff member will take your child from the car. **Please remain in your car, and don't let your children hop out independently, even if you are in a rush.** This is for the safety of your children. Additional staff members will be waiting inside the lobby to help the children go downstairs to the classrooms.

If you'd prefer to help your child exit the vehicle, please park in the second or third row in the parking lot. Avoid parking in the first row, to allow the flow of traffic to continue and to keep walking families safe.

At all other times (before care, mid-day pickups, late arrivals and after care) please park in the parking spots. DO NOT PARK IN THE CARPOOL LANE or leave your vehicle unattended along the yellow-painted curb. Police officers patrol the area and will hand out tickets, as it is a fire lane. Additionally, parking along the sidewalk blocks the cars of other parents when they are picking up their children.

## DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

Part of a child's journey toward independence begins at the door of a Montessori classroom. This may include: hanging up one's coat, putting away a lunch box or extra clothes, and putting on a coat and gathering belongings at the end of the day. As much as possible, allow your child to do these tasks on their own (for example, allow them to change their own shoes, no matter how long it takes!).

Parents typically do not enter the classroom environment during school hours, unless a visit is scheduled. In order to support the efforts of our students, we ask that you remain outside the classroom during these transitions.

It is common for children to experience anxiety when it is time to part with you in the morning. Establish a brief ritual for saying goodbye and be consistent. It is important to help children get quickly engaged in work, allowing them to settle and become oriented.

## PICK-UP PROCEDURES

For safety and security reasons, children can only be dismissed into the care of those designated on the pick-up and emergency lists (i.e., caregiver, foster parent, biological parent, grandparent). When a child is going home with a friend or another adult, please inform the school in advance and send written permission for them to do so. Staff members will request a photo ID to verify identification before releasing the child. If an unauthorized adult comes to the school to pick up your child, they will not be allowed to pick up your child until your written or verbal permission is given to an administrator.

Half-day students:

- Students are dismissed at 12:00pm. A staff member brings the children up to the arrivals/dismissal door. After 12:15, there is a late fee.



Full-day students:

- Students are dismissed at 3:00pm. A staff member brings the children up to the arrivals/dismissal door. After 3:15pm, your child will be brought to join After Care. After 3:15, there is a late fee. **If you know that you are going to be late, please alert the office.**
- A staff member will bring your child to you at the door or to the car; due to legal restrictions, staff members are not permitted to buckle your child into the car. If your child is unable to buckle their own seatbelt/car seat, please make sure to do so after you have pulled out of the carpool lane.

## LATE PICK-UP

We understand that occasionally, emergencies arise and there is just no way to avoid a late pickup. However, Fernwood Montessori School is only licensed between 7:30am - 6:00pm. It is important that you pick up your child promptly at the end of the school day. Please make alternate arrangements for pick up if you cannot arrive by 6:00pm, and plan for traffic and weather delays in your calculations. Late fees incur starting at 12:15pm and 3:15pm.

Late pick-ups are subject to the following penalties:

For half day and full day students scheduled to be picked up at 12:00pm and 3:00 pm:

- 12:15pm/3:15pm or later \$5 for the first five minutes
- \$2 for each additional minute

After 6:00pm pick-up:

- \$10.00 for the first five minutes
- \$5.00 for each additional minute

**Excessive incidence of late pick-up can be grounds for termination of your child's enrollment.**

## AFTER CARE DISMISSAL

To pick your child up from After Care, please come to the playground gate closest to Old Georgetown Road. A staff member will bring your child to you. If it is dark already when you come to pick up your child or if there is inclement weather, please call our **After care number (301) 897-5300** and someone will bring your child to the far door closest to Lone Oak Rd (also called the Elementary Door).

Please pick your child up no later than 6:00pm, as we are not licensed to operate past 6:00pm. There is a significant late fee for any child picked up later than 6:00pm.

Please call the office at (301) 469-4888 during school hours to inform us of a change in pick-up.

## INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

Inclement weather can affect the safe operation of Fernwood Montessori School. At times (typically due to winter weather), the condition of roads and the school grounds render the operation of the school impractical. Please be aware of local forecasts to anticipate possible school closings.

The inclement weather decisions made by the Montgomery County Public Schools will be highly persuasive. However, the ultimate decision to remain open or close will be made by the FMS administration, taking into account the safety of travel to school for both **children and staff**. *The decision to follow MCPS can be frustrating at times, particularly when the roads around our school seem safe.* We will implement a distance learning plan if the school is closed for over three days.

In the event of a school closure, FMS will notify families via Transparent Classroom or email by 6:30 am. If delayed opening is necessary, there will be no Before Care and FMS will open for ALL students at 10:30 am.

When road conditions become unsafe in the afternoon (when students are already at school), please take the extra time to be at school by 5:50pm to avoid incurring considerable late fees. If road conditions indicate that closing school early is necessary, FMS will notify parents via Transparent Classroom or email when school will close. Please make every effort to pick up your child by this time and consider the safety of families and staff.

## CLOTHING

Independence is one of the most important goals of the Montessori environment. When purchasing a piece of clothing, look for obstacles your child might face, including buttons, zippers, snaps, and clasps on overalls, suspenders, belts, leotards, and onesies. Practice taking new clothing off and putting it on with your child, before debuting it at school.

Please ensure that the clothing you select allows your child to move, run, and sit easily, and is appropriate for messy projects and active outdoor play. Please label all clothing items with the child's first and last name, including sweaters, coats, shoes, boots, hats and jackets!

- Pair skirts or dresses with shorts or leggings underneath
- Consider pants with elastic waists, particularly for younger children
- Avoid costumes, costume-like clothing, or shoes with lights or distracting decorations and any clothing with characters
- Send children in with closed-toed shoes that are secure on their feet so they can run and climb safely when playing outdoors
- **VERY IMPORTANT!** Please bring in **two (2) changes of clothing**, labeled with your child's first and last name, in a labeled Ziploc bag for your child. This set should include a shirt, shorts or

pants, socks and underwear. This spare set of clothes should be updated seasonally as the weather calls for warmer or cooler clothing. The children's work sometimes gets messy, so it's best to be prepared. If your child has only recently become toilet-trained, please send in 2-3 extra sets of clothes!

As the weather changes, we will also send out a request for weather-appropriate outdoor gear, including rain boots and rain jackets, as well as winter items. We try to get the children outside as much as possible, weather permitting.

Each child is given a cubby where extra clothing is stored. When more clothing is needed, a note will be sent home with your child requesting the needed items. If any Fernwood spare clothing is sent home, please launder and return it the following day.

### **Indoor Shoes/Slippers**

All children are required to have a pair of indoor slippers to keep at school for use each day. These should be easy for your child to get on and off independently. Shoes should be roomy enough to be worn with socks and have a sturdy sole to prevent slipping; they should also not be distracting to others. Indoor slippers provide comfort and added cleanliness to our classroom environment. Your child will change into these shoes each day prior to beginning work in the classroom.

PLEASE LABEL ALL BELONGINGS!

## **TOILET LEARNING**

### **Toddlers**

The work towards independence begins from the moment the child enters the Toddler community. They will be invited to use the bathroom throughout the day to promote success.

You can support the toilet learning experience at home by continuing the process of independently dressing and undressing. Utilizing thick cotton underwear rather than diapers or pull-ups during the day will allow your child to feel when they are wet, encouraging the use of the toilet. It is also beneficial to change soiled underwear or pull-ups standing up.

It is important to remember that accidents are a part of the toileting process; remain calm and neutral when there is urine on the floor and reiterate that the urine must be cleaned. Do not reproach your child for wetting themselves. Participate in your child's joy after using the toilet; avoid rewarding your child for success, whether that is to sit on the toilet or urinate in the toilet.

Thus said, make sitting on the toilet part of your daily routine. For instance, invite your child to sit on the toilet as soon as they wake up, before bedtime, before all meals and snacks, and periodically throughout the day.

For children working on self toileting, 3-4 sets of extra clothes are required. Toddler families are required to provide pull-ups and wipes. We will work with each child and family to complete the process of toilet learning. Our goal is to work cooperatively with parents to begin the steps of toilet learning once a child demonstrates readiness and interest:

Please use this checklist to ensure your child is ready to begin the process.

- ✓ Consistently stays dry for 2-3 hour stretches
- ✓ Stays dry during naps
- ✓ Has regular, well-formed bowel movements at relatively predictable times
- ✓ Can pull down and pull up pants independently
- ✓ Is consistently interested in sitting on the toilet during a diaper change
- ✓ Has words to indicate urine and stool
- ✓ Gives a verbal or physical sign when urinating or having a bowel movement
- ✓ Can follow 2-step directions
- ✓ Seems uncomfortable in a soiled diaper

If your child does not yet show these signs, revisit this list in 3-4 weeks to check again. If your child is ready to begin toilet training, let's take the following steps:

- 1) At home, allow easy access to a training toilet and let your child spend time naked or in cotton underwear (with no pants).
- 2) When out of the house, dress your child in a pull-up. Send your child to school in a pull-up.
- 3) When we observe that your child's pull-up is consistently dry and your child is toileting successfully 10 days in a row (2 weeks), we will recommend a change to cotton underwear.
- 4) When in cotton underwear, be sure to stock your child's cubby with 5 pairs of underwear and pants.

### Primary

We expect that all Primary children use the bathroom independently. However, we realize that some of our very youngest students may still need occasional assistance with toileting at the start of the school year. Please let your guide know of any struggles your child might have with toileting so we may support them in their efforts. Multiple sets of extra clothes may be needed by the younger children as they adjust to the first few weeks of school.

## OUTDOOR PLAY

The children go outside daily, with the exception of heavy rain or extreme weather. The clean, fresh air is wonderful after a morning of being inside. If a child is well enough to go to school, then they are well enough to go outside.

## Understand the Weather

### Wind-Chill



- 30° is *chilly* and generally uncomfortable
- 15° to 30° is *cold*
- 0° to 15° is *very cold*
- -20° to 0° is *bitter cold* with significant risk of *frostbite*
- -20° to -60° is *extreme cold* and *frostbite* is likely
- -60° is *frigid* and exposed *skin will freeze* in 1 minute

### Heat Index



- 80° or below is considered *comfortable*
- 90° beginning to feel *uncomfortable*
- 100° *uncomfortable* and may be *hazardous*
- 110° considered *dangerous*

All temperatures are in degrees Fahrenheit

# Child Care Weather Watch

Wind-Chill Factor Chart (in Fahrenheit)										
		Wind Speed in mph								
		Calm	5	10	15	20	25	30	35	40
Air Temperature	40	40	36	34	32	30	29	28	28	27
	30	30	25	21	19	17	16	15	14	13
	20	20	13	9	6	4	3	1	0	-1
	10	10	1	-4	-7	-9	-11	-12	-14	-15
	0	0	-11	-16	-19	-22	-24	-26	-27	-29
	-10	-10	-22	-28	-32	-35	-37	-39	-41	-43



Comfortable for out door play



Caution



Danger

Heat Index Chart (in Fahrenheit %)														
		Relative Humidity (Percent)												
		40	45	50	55	60	65	70	75	80	85	90	95	100
Air Temperature (F)	80	80	80	81	81	82	82	83	84	84	85	86	86	87
	84	83	84	85	86	88	89	90	92	94	96	98	100	103
	90	91	93	95	97	100	103	105	109	113	117	122	127	132
	94	97	100	103	106	110	114	119	124	129	135			
	100	109	114	118	124	129	130							
104	119	124	131	137										

Please ensure that your child is prepared for all weather conditions as we go outside in rain or shine, except in extreme inclement weather.

We will not go outside with a wind chill of 9 or below, or a heat index of 110 or above. All other wind chills below 32 will be limited by 1 minute per degree of wind chill. Heat indexes above 90 will be subtracted from 110 for the time frame. For example, 110 - 90 = 20, so with a 90-degree heat index, the children may be outside for 20 minutes.

In the event of inclement weather, opportunities for gross motor play will be made available indoors. To ensure your child enjoys the time outside, please be sure he or she is "geared-up" for the weather with the following:

**Rainy days:** rain coat with a hood and rain boots

**Snowy days:** warm, waterproof coat with hood, snow boots, hat, scarf, and mittens\*.

**Warm, sunny days:** supportive athletic close-toed shoes – No flip-flops/open-toed shoes or clogs!

**Water days\*\*:** a complete change of clothing, labeled towel, water shoes, swimwear

\*Mittens are far easier for children ages 2 to 6 than regular five-fingered gloves.

*\*\*Water days are typically only during summer camp and advanced notice is given to families.*

## FOOD

**Allergy Statement:** Fernwood Montessori School is a nut-free school, so please do not send in any food items that contain nuts; some of our students have life-threatening nut allergies. This includes peanut and almond butters. This applies to snack, lunch, and any celebrations.

### Lunch

Children who stay all day will be eating lunch in their classrooms. Lunch is a fun and important social time. The children are excited by the opportunity to each lunch at school with friends! Children should bring their food in a clearly labeled container.

- Please provide a cold pack or hot thermos, as we cannot refrigerate or heat meals.
- As mentioned above, please refrain from sending peanut-related food.
- Please do not send sippy-cups.
- While keeping food preferences in mind, please send your child to school with a nutritious and appropriate lunch packed in containers that they can access independently. We recommend that children practice opening/closing lunch containers before bringing them to school.
- NO CANDY PLEASE.

Packing lunches with small portions of a few choices is great for the children. Fruits, vegetables and protein are recommended. Please leave food with high sugar and fat content such as chips, cookies, candy, soda, etc. as a treat for home. The presence of these items makes it more difficult for your child to make healthy eating choices on their own.

- Children will be asked to return uneaten food to their lunch boxes, so you have an idea about how much they're eating, or if there are items they are no longer enjoying.
- Please pack silverware for your child along with a cloth napkin
- Filtered water will be available for your child to have with his or her lunch each day. Please do not send in juice with your child. Children should bring a water bottle, labeled, to school each day.

### Snack(s)

All students must bring a healthy snack to school on a daily basis, to be eaten at a time of their own choosing prior to lunch. Students who stay in after care will need a second snack packed to eat during after care. Please pack snacks separately from the lunch items so that the children can move their snacks into the snack bins as needed.

## CLASSROOM

### Prized Possessions

Nothing treasured should be sent to school with your child. Toys, stuffed animals, and umbrellas should be left at home. It's natural that sometimes a special toy or other item may accompany your child on the way to school. However, it's best if these things wait patiently in the car for your child's return, rather than coming into the classroom, where they can be a distraction or may get lost. Items found at school will be kept discreetly in a safe place until the end of the day when they can go home with the child.

### Transportation

FMS does not provide daily transportation to and from school. If transportation is required for a field trip, parents will be notified in advance and be required to provide their own transportation. Staff are not permitted to transport students to and from school. The exception to this is our walking strips, when staff walk with the children on school grounds, to the library, or in the neighborhood.

### Birthday Celebrations and Invitations

Birthdays are important events! Our Montessori classes have a special birthday ritual, a Sun Celebration. Parents are invited to attend and participate (usually 15 to 30 minutes) at the time specified by your child's teacher. Please contact your teacher to arrange your child's sun celebration at school.

The teacher will provide a biography form for you to complete for your child and return with printed photos. Please plan to return this completed form at least one day before your child's celebration.

Summer Birthdays may be celebrated on your child's half birthday during the school year, or at the end of the school year, and should be coordinated with your child's teacher.

Please notify teachers of any special circumstances regarding your child's birth or birthday that may require sensitive handling.

To help ensure there are no hurt feelings and in fairness to all, please do not send invitations, gifts, or thank you notes to school unless there is one for every child in the class. You may also email invitations home using our student directory.

### Holidays

Throughout the year, we plan events to recognize the many and varied celebrations of life. Parents will be notified of holiday celebrations through emails and monthly calendars. FMS is proud of its multi-cultural student body, and we encourage our families to share their cultural traditions. If you have a special holiday that you would like to celebrate at school, please contact the child's lead teacher.

### Screen Time Policy

Because we care about the health and well-being of the children in our care, we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on screen time during school hours:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children ages 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at childcare, and less than 2 hours per day total.

TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with others, encouraging learning and healthy physical and social development. Therefore, we will restrict screen time by:

- Allowing a maximum of 30 minutes total per week of educational and age-appropriate screen time (television, video, and DVD).
- Allowing no more than 15 minutes of educational computer time per day.
- Not allowing any screen time during meals and snacks.
- Having zero screen time (TV, video, and computer) for children under the age of two.

However, Fernwood recognizes that students at the elementary level will need to learn important technological skills. Elementary students may use a computer to type reports, learn typing on a designated program, or learn digital citizenship at the discretion of their Elementary Guide. Technology is a large part of our society and students will be learning to use it properly.

## NAP

If your child rests at school, they will need the following LABELED items:

*Note: Children who are under 4 years old at the start of the school year will rest at school for that school year.*

- Blanket and small pillow with crib sheet or
- Roll-up nap mat

On Fridays, your child's nap materials will be sent home for laundering. Return all laundered nap items to school on Monday morning.

## STUDENT RECORDS

### Confidentiality Policy

Our school is a very personal and friendly environment. Sensitive issues arise occasionally and it is critical that all parents and employees respect the privacy of all families. The following confidentiality rules must be followed so that we can maintain the trust and confidence of all families and staff. Violation of these rules may result in disciplinary action, up to and including exclusion from our program.



### Confidentiality Rules:

- Do not discuss children or their families in common or open areas. This includes inside and outside of the school.
- Only discuss a child or parent situation with the child's parents/family or school administration.
- If you are a parent and a staff member, please do not discuss information you receive as a staff member with other parents.
- All records, files, conversations, and conferences are held for the benefit of the child and are strictly confidential.

### **Child Abuse & Neglect Policy**

It is the legal responsibility of any parent or worker with children to report suspected child abuse. If an employee suspects that a child is being abused (as per the legal definition of abuse), the employee is directed to consult with Administration immediately. The Administration will report the situation as they understand it to the authorities empowered to investigate such cases.

### **Student Records**

Personal, family, enrollment, and academic information are strictly confidential. Each child's school records will be kept for at least three years after he or she leaves Fernwood Montessori School. Automatic access will be permitted for teachers and administrators, but written permission signed by a parent, guardian, or the Court must be presented prior to access by anyone else to ensure privacy. For tracking purposes, FMS will keep a log recording the person, organization, date, time, and signature of anyone who accesses each child's record. A parent/guardian may submit a written request for a performance report of their child to be sent to other persons or institutions. FMS will mail the requested report wherever designated. This report will be withheld if accounts are not paid in full. Parents/guardians have the right to review their child's record or comments if requested in writing. A cumulative record form will be maintained during the time that a child is enrolled.

## **PARENT OBSERVATION**

Observations are highly encouraged once or twice a year in both the Primary and Elementary programs. This is an opportunity to come and observe a dynamic picture of what your child's experience is like in their Montessori "home." Please observe the appropriate guidelines as expected. The Head of School or Assistant Head of School can provide you with a parent observation form to guide what to look for in the classroom.

### **Guidelines for Observation**

To support the concentration and purposeful activity of our students, we ask you to please follow these guidelines:

- Remain seated in the observation chair during your 30-minute observation. If you would like to move the chair to another area of the classroom, please alert the lead teacher.

- Students may approach you during your observation. Quietly introduce yourself with a handshake and let students know that you are here to “watch them work.” Do not attempt to give students a lesson on any classroom materials.
- If you are observing your child, they may want to stay with you or sit in your lap. We encourage you to support their independence as best as possible. Perhaps your child can place a work mat by you or work at a nearby table.
- Teachers may not be available to speak with you during your observation. Feel free to take notes and follow up with a phone call or email - we would love to talk with you about your observation.
- Some elements of the classroom to note during your observation include:
  - Teachers as Guides – watch how the teachers support the students
  - Individual, Pair, and Group Work
  - Student-Directed Choice of Activity
  - Student Concentration, Coordination, Independence, and Order
  - The Classroom Environment - sound, movement, and organization

Any parent's behavior that disrupts our learning environment, or threatens the safety or emotional well-being of our students or teachers, is grounds for immediate dismissal from school.

## PARENT AND SCHOOL COMMUNICATION

At Fernwood Montessori School, we feel it is important for Parents and Teachers to build a partnership regarding the care and education of the child, and his or her progress and experience in the classroom. Small changes for a child can have a big effect in the classroom. Please keep us informed of any changes at home, such as a parent's business trip, grandparents visiting or leaving, a new sibling on the way, or an extended vacation.

### Office Hours

You may contact the school by calling during normal school hours (8:30am – 3:00pm) or sending an email. For classroom-related topics, you are encouraged to email teachers directly during the school day, and they will respond when they are able.

### Transparent Classroom

Fernwood Montessori School administrators and teachers use Transparent Classroom to centralize communications. It is easy to use and helps you connect with your classroom at FMS. The Transparent Classroom desktop version and app allow you to access classroom photos and the FMS directory. Transparent Classroom is also our way to contact you in case of emergency or inclement weather delays/closings.

New families will receive an email invitation to join Transparent Classroom at the start of the school year. They can use the link to join Transparent Classroom, create a profile, and add their cell phone number and phone provider so we may send text messages for emergency announcements.

### **Classroom Communications**

Classroom teachers will provide families with a classroom email detailing some of the highlights from the class (e.g., new lessons, songs, books, general reminders). Teachers are accessible by email ([toddler@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:toddler@fernwoodmontessori.com), [primary1@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:primary1@fernwoodmontessori.com), [primary2@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:primary2@fernwoodmontessori.com), and [elementary@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:elementary@fernwoodmontessori.com)) and will respond to questions/concerns within 24-48 hours. Teachers will also reach out throughout the year to schedule check-in meetings as a way to discuss children's growth and development within their Montessori environment. Regular communication is important to our team, as we value a strong partnership between home and school.

### **Family Communication**

You may contact the guides by leaving a written note, calling the office at (301) 469-4888 during normal school hours, or sending an email, either directly to the guide or through the office. Guides are typically able to return calls between 8:00am and 8:30am and between 3:15pm and 4:00pm.

Normally, if you leave a message for your child's guide, they will be back in touch with you within 48 hours. Guides are in the classroom all day long, and are not able to check email, or typically able to return calls during the school day, unless in an emergency. Please contact the Head of School with any emergency that needs to be immediately addressed.

Arrival and dismissal are not a good time to share important updates about your child, or to ask your child's guide questions. The guides, assistants, and administrators are supervising or working with the children at this point and need to keep their focus on the children in their care.

### **Annual Conferences & Progress Reports**

Formal conferences will be held in the fall and spring. Please feel free to schedule a meeting with your child's guide between conferences if you'd like more information about what your child has been experiencing at school. You can schedule a meeting by contacting the school at (301) 469-4888 or email your guide directly.

Families will receive progress reports in the fall, spring, and end of year reports. Each set of reports will be accessible via Transparent Classroom for easy, digital access, and in your child's physical permanent file.

### **Take Home Folders**

Each child may receive a plastic envelope at the beginning of the school year. Official information from the school or your child's guide will be sent home in these envelopes. Please return the envelope to school promptly the following day.

## STUDENT DIRECTORY POLICY

We ask that you respect the privacy of the parents listed in the Student Directory and use these numbers only for school-related purposes, children's social events and carpool arrangements. Names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of students and their parents may not be released for commercial purposes and must remain confidential to the school.

## FAMILY EVENTS

### Classroom Ambassadors

Classroom ambassadors (or room parents) are adult volunteers who serve as a liaison between the classroom and other families. This interaction allows everyone to remain connected to the classroom through active participation in all planned events. In fact, you (or other family members) may have skills that we would find especially useful, including sewing for material making, gardening, and shopping.

Duties include:

- Occasionally communicating information about key events from your child's classroom
- Recruiting volunteers for school events
- Acting as resource for families new to the school or the class
- Assist in planning future events
- Coordinate classroom gifts

### Parent Education Events

Here at Fernwood Montessori, we want parents to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing parent education events throughout the school year.

In addition to formal events, parents are encouraged to reach out to their child's guide or to the Head of School for additional support material. Here are just a few resources we recommend:

- [“What Your Child's Teachers Would Like You to Know.”](#) *AMS Montessori Life*, Spring 2019
- *The Montessori Toddler* by Simone Davies
- *The Absorbent Mind* by Maria Montessori
- *Montessori from the Start* by Paula Polk Lillard and Lyn Lillard Jessen
- *Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom* by Jane Nelsen and Chip DeLorenzo
- [“Your Child's Development”](#) by AMI-USA (a description of the four planes of development)
- [“AMI/USA JEDI Series: Neurodiversity and Disability through the Montessori Lens”](#) by AMI-USA

# TUITION AND FEES

Tuition for Fernwood Montessori School is annual and payable through 10 monthly installments. All tuition payments are made online through FACTS Tuition Management. Details about payment are included in your enrollment agreement and are available from the office. Tuition obligations are effective for the entire school year - *Tuition credit cannot be given for absences due to illness, vacations, or other personal plans or inclement weather.*

## WITHDRAWAL

In consideration for the timely payment of the annual tuition, all fees, and compliance with the policies of Fernwood Montessori School as explained in the school handbook, the student may withdraw from school and terminate this agreement under the following conditions:

1. A written letter of intent to withdraw is submitted to Fernwood Montessori School accompanied by a non-refundable withdrawal fee of \$500. The letter shall be effective on the first day of the calendar month following the date of submission ("the Effective Date").
2. Sixty (60) days from the Effective Date, the student shall be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from Fernwood Montessori School ("the Withdrawal Date").
3. Any payments due after the Withdrawal Date shall be canceled, except any outstanding balances accrued up to the Withdrawal Date.
4. After the Withdrawal Date, annual, semester and installment payments as well as any prepayments shall be refunded to the extent they exceed any tuition due under this contract.
5. All fees, including the annual student fees are non-refundable.

## MANDATORY WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Fernwood Montessori School may temporarily exclude or permanently terminate a child's enrollment as follows:

Withdrawal with two weeks' notice may result for the following reasons:

- Parental failure to abide by school policies and Enrollment Contract
- School's program is not meeting developmental or special needs of the child as determined by the Head of School

Immediate withdrawal without prior warning may result for the following reasons:

- Conduct of parent, guardian or child that the school administration or owner of the school, in his or her sole and absolute discretion, determines is threatening to the well-being, safety or stability of the children or staff
- An account that is past due for fifteen days and/or disregard of tuition policies
- A pattern of late pick-up as determined by the administration
- Health or behavioral reasons on the part of the child

### **Annual Non-refundable Fee**

At the time of acceptance or re-enrollment, the non-refundable Annual Enrollment Fee is due to reserve your child's place. If you choose to remove your child from our program, either before the start of school, or during school, this fee is non-refundable.

### **Tuition Payments**

New students and students enrolling as a first time elementary student pay a non-refundable tuition deposit of \$1,200. This is applied to the tuition payments. Tuition payments are paid in monthly installments through FACTS, our tuition management vendor.

### **Notice of Cancellation**

The space for your child is reserved for the entire year. Therefore, a tuition refund cannot be given, nor tuition credits given for absences due to illness, vacations or other personal plans, or inclement weather. You agree to assume full responsibility for the tuition due unless written cancellation of the enrollment contract is received by Fernwood Montessori School's office within two weeks of signing the enrollment contract. You also understand that, in the event of cancellation, the Annual Enrollment/Re-enrollment Fee will not be refunded. Paid tuition will only be refunded as per our withdrawal policy.

### **Period of Enrollment**

The signed enrollment contract is a request that the school reserve a place for your child for the next school year. Upon acceptance of the Enrollment Contract by Fernwood Montessori School, you understand that your obligation to pay the tuition and fees for the program selected is unconditional and that no portion of tuition or fees paid will be refunded or canceled in the event of absence, illness, or failure to attend the school. School records will not be released until all financial obligations have been met.

### **Late Payments**

A \$25 late payment fee will be posted to your account after any payment is five days past due. In the event that any payment shall be more than fifteen days late, Fernwood Montessori School has the right to withhold any and all services for the child and/or parent. Fernwood Montessori School will require immediate payment of the full amount of the tuition and any other costs which have not been paid, including accelerating any payment plans selected in this contract. You agree to reimburse Fernwood Montessori School for all costs and expenses incurred enforcing this contract. You agree to be responsible for all fees if this matter is turned over to any collection agency or attorney.

### **Program Change Requests**

Requests to change your child's schedule are considered on a space available basis. Program changes will be confirmed in writing. There is a \$40 fee to change calendar and/or hours. Payment is due at the time of the change.

## Sibling Discounts

Fernwood Montessori offers a sibling discount to families when two or more siblings are enrolled concurrently. The sibling with the least expensive program receives a discount of 5%. Annual student fees are not subject to discount.

## SAFETY PROCEDURES

### Safety Drills

The safety of your child and family is our top priority at FMS. To ensure the safety of our students and staff we engage in three different types of safety drills:

- Fire Drills: Students practice evacuating the school within 2 minutes each month.
- Shelter in place: Students practice remaining in their classroom and taking shelter.
- Lockdown: Teachers and administrators practice securing the space and locking all doors.

Should there be an actual emergency, you will be contacted via Transparent Classroom (text message AND email) with directions. Our emergency evacuation site is Ashburton Elementary School nearby.

### Traveling Off-Site

For trips, walks around the block, and visits to the Davis Library, students will walk off-site with teachers. To ensure your child's safety we use the following procedures:

- Teachers must bring an emergency first aid backpack including contact information for all students, a roster of all students in attendance, a walkie-talkie, and a cell phone.
- Teachers lead all students on "donuts" (a rope with individual rings) when they are within 5 feet of a road.
- Three teachers must accompany a group. Any group larger than 30 students requires 4 adults.
- Attendance is taken 4 times: Prior to leaving the building, once students have arrived at the destination, before leaving the destination, and upon returning to school.

## HEALTH POLICIES

Please remember that school days are very busy and full of activities that require energy and concentration. If your child is overtired, lethargic, or just not feeling well, a busy day at school may not be in your child's best interest. **Please support our policy – and us – by making the healthiest decision for your child.** Let us know if your child is sick. It is important you notify the school of communicable diseases such as strep throat, head lice, chicken pox or conjunctivitis (pink eye).

Should your child show symptoms of a known or suspected communicable disease, please notify us within 24 hours so that we can alert our staff members and parents. The name of the child and family are kept confidential.

## Wellness Policy

Parents will be called to pick up their child if they are suffering from any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4° F or higher (taken by an ear thermometer)
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Head or body lice
- Vomiting or Diarrhea (2 loose stools in 3 hours)
- Open sores from a contagious disease (such as Chicken Pox)
- Unexplained rash (can be a sign of a potentially contagious disease such as Fifth's Disease, Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease or Scarlet Fever)

If we call requesting pick-up of a sick child, please make arrangements for pick-up within one hour. If you are called to pick up a sick child and you are not here **within one hour**, the school will call the next person on your emergency contact list. Likewise, if we leave a voicemail or send an email and you do not contact us within twenty minutes, we will call the next person on your emergency contact list. Please understand that the health and safety of all children in our care (sick and healthy) are a priority.

**Your child may return to school 24 hours after symptoms have subsided, or you must provide a doctor's note verifying that the symptoms are not contagious.** This means that if your child is sent home from school with a fever, for example, they may not return to school for at least one full school day. They must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school. If your child requires an antibiotic or other medication for a contagious illness, he/she must take the prescribed medication for 24 hours before returning to school.

## Infectious and Communicable Disease

Per licensing regulations, should your child show symptoms of a known or suspected communicable disease, please notify us within 24 hours so that we can alert our teachers and parents. The name of the child and family are kept confidential within FMS to the best of our ability. FMS shall immediately transmit to the health officer a report of the name and address of a child or a staff member who appears to be infected with a reportable communicable disease, or who has been exposed to a reportable communicable disease.

## Medication Policy

In order to administer any medication, we must have a signed and up-to-date Medication Authorization Form on file. Once we have your child's form and medication, the medication is available in the school medicine cabinet. All medications must be kept locked in this cabinet and must be labeled clearly with the child's name and original prescription information. OTC medication must be in its original packaging.

## Medical Emergency Policy

If an emergency situation should require immediate medical action, we will call 911 and your child will be transported to the nearest healthcare facility. While parents are contacted, a certified FMS Employee will



administer CPR, if necessary, until EMS arrives. If nonemergency attention is needed, parents will be called to arrange medical treatment.

#### **Order of Contact in case of a life-threatening medical emergency:**

1. CPR first if needed.
2. EMS is contacted.
3. Parent is contacted.
4. Parent arranges and determines medical treatment.

#### **Severe Allergy Medications**

Children with a history of anaphylactic allergic reaction may be prescribed intramuscular epinephrine (Epi-Pen). If your child has an Epi-Pen, please bring it to school labeled with your child's full name and accompanied by your doctor's prescription for its use. Unless otherwise instructed, FMS Staff will administer Epi-Pen immediately upon exposure or suspected exposure to the allergen. If IM epinephrine Epi-pen is administered, the following procedure will be followed:

1. Exposure to allergen observed or suspected. Epi-Pen is administered.
2. Parent is contacted.
3. EMS is contacted.
4. Licensing personnel are contacted.

## **ACCIDENT REPORTS**

Occasionally accidents occur at school. Outlined below is our procedure for handling accidents:

- Each time an accident occurs, parents receive an accident report. We make one copy for the injured child's parents and one for the office. Sometimes the accident seems very small, but it is our policy to be cautious.
- If the injury is to the neck, head or face, or any kind of bite, the parents will be immediately notified via phone call. A voice mail will be left if the parent is not available to answer.
- Fernwood Montessori School will not mention the name of any child who hits, pushes or bites. While a child may, the guides will not.
- If another child causes the accident/incident, we notify the parents of both children involved. We document the name of the child who hit, bit, or pushed, for our records.
- We keep track of the aggressor to enable us to take the necessary steps and precautions in ensuring the safety of all children in our care.
- If there is a pattern of aggressive behavior, the Head of School will initiate a meeting with the parents of the child exhibiting such behavior.
- If the behavior continues, recommendations might be made to seek assistance from an outside professional to help the child to deal with the specific behavior. We will follow up with parents personally.

## DISCIPLINE POLICY

Appropriate behavior is elicited in a positive and kind manner. We do not use corporal punishment or punitive measures that instill fear. A child who demonstrates inappropriate behavior is gently reminded how to behave. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the child is removed from the group to a nearby area from which the child can observe all activities in the room but can no longer participate. After a short period, the child is asked if he/she is ready to return to the group.

Should the discipline continue to be a problem for any child, parents may be asked to come to school for an observation period, which is followed by a conference with the child's teacher.

### **Positive discipline and reinforcement**

Fernwood Montessori will follow the positive discipline strategies for all behavioral concerns. For more information about positive discipline in the Montessori environment, we highly recommend Jane Nelson and Chip Delorenzo's book, *Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom*. The goal of positive discipline remains that it is a "well-thought-out, researched, and practiced approach to discipline rooted in the fundamental idea that children should be treated with dignity and respect," (Nelson and Delorenzo, p. 11) and that there are roots of misbehavior, and often behaviors have one of four mistaken goals.

Here is the mistaken goals chart that explains children's behavior and how to respond: <https://www.positivediscipline.com/sites/default/files/mistakengoalchart.pdf>.

**Positive reinforcement and logical consequences are the methods of behavior modification and discipline used at our school. We DO NOT use "time out" as punishment.**

Research has repeatedly shown that positive reinforcement is much more effective than negative reinforcement or punishment. While negative reinforcement may stop the behavior, it does not teach the child the correct behavior. Furthermore, negative reinforcement can create a mood of hostility and can destroy the child's self-esteem. Positive reinforcement tends to increase the occurrence of a desirable behavior, enhances the child's self-concept, and gives the child a feeling of independence and accomplishment. Positive reinforcement should not be used to bribe or manipulate children. However, when used effectively, positive reinforcement will help children see the relationship between their behavior and consequences so they can learn to make good choices and develop self-control.

**A Positive Reinforcement Tip:** Patience, persistence, and consistency are the keys to making positive reinforcement work for you. Try to ignore inappropriate behavior as much as possible and "catch them being good". Also, be clear and specifically state the desirable and "good" behavior. For example, "Good boy!" and "Good girl!" mean little to children. "I like the way you put away the crayons!" or "Thank you for sharing the ball!" are much more effective. Above all, praise should always be sincere, meaningful, specific, and deserved.

## MISCHIEF OR MISCONDUCT

Learning appropriate behavior and self-control is an important aspect of our program. This process is varied and gradual; positive reinforcement of desirable behavior is most successful. When mischief becomes misconduct, a child demonstrating inappropriate behavior is gently and consistently reminded how to behave. Montessori methods also use Grace and Courtesy lessons as a way to ensure children know how to behave in situations before those situations even arise.

When actions warrant a consequence, the staff makes sure that those consequences are logical. In this way, unacceptable behavior is used as an opportunity to instruct rather than punish. If a child continues to have difficulty behaving or suddenly exhibits a change in behavior, a telephone call to a parent is usually made. This ensures that both parents and staff are aware of the situation and working jointly toward correcting or modifying the inappropriate behavior.

Should we at Fernwood Montessori School determine for any reason at our sole discretion that a child should be withdrawn, the parent will be given a minimum of a two-week notice.

## BITING POLICY

Biting is a very common behavior among children under three years of age. Biting is a form of communication and is almost always done in response to a child's needs not being met or coping with a challenge or stressor. At FMS we believe by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can proactively prevent many biting behaviors in the peaceful and nurturing environment we create for our students.

We understand that children biting other children are one of the most common and most difficult behaviors to deal with in group child care settings. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and provoke strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the caregivers involved.

For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want and influence others: they are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not and quickly discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause other children to respond.

For other children biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power.

In order to alleviate some triggers for biting, FMS has many practices in place that help prevent incidence of biting:

- **Quality relationships:** Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and get to know each other individually.

- **Environmental influences:** Children are given opportunities to work in both small and larger groups; there is a variety of work and children are taught how to take turns. The environment in a Montessori classroom is often quiet and productive which is very soothing to the children. Additionally, staff is very aware of and willing to help a child who is feeling overwhelmed.
- **Social Emotional supports:** Students have a predictable daily routine with consistent expectations and staff support. Children learn how to navigate the classroom in a way that helps them build self-confidence and alleviate stress. Staff talk to children and care for each individual child in ways that support emotional awareness and regulation.

If or when a bite occurs, FMS staff will use the following plan of action:

#### **For the biter:**

1. The biter is immediately removed without emotion, using words such as “biting is not okay – it hurts.” Staff will avoid any response that reinforces the biting by calling attention to the biter. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.
2. The biter will not be allowed to return to work/play and will be talked to on a level with he/she can understand. “I see you want that truck, but I can’t let you hurt another child. We do not put our teeth on people.”
3. The child will be given a “chewlrey”.
4. The child will be redirected to other work/play.
5. The lead teacher will complete an incident report and email the family of the biter before the end of the school day.

#### **For the victim:**

1. Staff will separate the child who was bitten from the biter.
2. Special attention will be given to comfort the child.
3. Staff will wash the bite with mild soap and warm water, pat the area dry, and apply a Band-Aid if the skin was broken. The victim will also be offered an ice pack to reduce swelling and inflammation.
4. The lead teacher will complete an unlucky duck for the victim. If the bite occurs on the face or breaks the skin anywhere on the body, the lead teacher will call the family before the end of the school day.

For each occurrence staff shall confer to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. If changes in supervision or the environment are warranted, then those changes will be implemented.

#### **If biting continues:**

1. Staff will chart occurrences including attempted bites, indicating location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
2. Staff will “shadow” a child who demonstrates a tendency to bite in order to discourage biting situations before they occur and teach non-biting responses to stressful situations.
3. Staff will work with parents to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.

4. As a last resort, if it is deemed in the best interested of the child, classroom, and other students, the biter's enrollment at FMS may be terminated with an advance written warning to the parents.

*At all times, FMS staff will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been bitten or has bit another child.*

## ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

All students have the right to be free from bullying, harassment, or intimidation. FMS is committed to providing a safe, productive, and inclusive learning environment. Bullying problems are symptomatic of relationship problems best addressed holistically by students, schools, parents/caregivers, and the entire community. FMS should be a place where students are surrounded by caring adults who encourage students to treat others with kindness and empathy, while helping to build a relationship-focused, welcoming, supportive school environment fostering academic and personal growth for every student.

## GRIEVANCE POLICY

Should any parent disagree with a policy, action or decision made by Fernwood Montessori School, a conference may be arranged with the Head of School and/or appropriate staff member to discuss the nature of the disagreement. Every reasonable attempt will be made in a timely manner to reach a satisfactory solution for all parties involved.