

The Montessori Infant & Toddler School (MITS)



Parent Handbook

Established: 3/3/2017

Welcome to The Montessori Infant & Toddler School

A New Beginning for Excellence in Education

Welcome to the Montessori Infant & Toddler School (MITS). The Board of Directors, staff, and faculty warmly welcome you and your child to our school. We believe you have made a wonderful decision for your child, and we encourage you to participate fully in all MITS has to offer your family.

Please read these guidelines carefully. They are presented to enhance your understanding of our program, as well as the procedures by which our school operates. Bear in mind that these guidelines will be continually reviewed and evaluated. As children “learn by doing,” so do our faculty and administration. We always hope to strengthen our program by being active participants in these experiences.

Since children’s basic needs are diverse, effective programs must be comprehensive in scope. All phases of life for the developing child move simultaneously, each affecting and being affected by all the others. A Montessori program is primarily child-centered, offering protective and supportive services to the child and to his or her family. This parent handbook is meant to serve as a reference, providing you with information that will be useful to you and your child during the school year. Please keep it in an accessible place and refer to it as needed. Of course, you are always welcome to ask questions or make constructive suggestions.

We are pleased to serve your family, and are privileged that you have chosen us to care for your child. Thank you for allowing us to share in the academic and intellectual development of your child, and to be one of the first educators in their life.

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Mission Statement

The mission of the Montessori Infant & Toddler School (MITS) is to provide young children with a safe, prepared environment in which they can observe, absorb, and explore their environment at their own pace and develop movement, language, and social skills to prepare them for the next steps in their education.

Goals and Objectives

The main objective of The Montessori Infant & Toddler School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop foundational habits, attitudes, skills, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend our school are as follows:

- Develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
- Develop a sense of high self-esteem.
- Build habits of initiative, persistence, and independence.
- Foster inner discipline and a sense of order.
- Develop socially acceptable behavior.
- Acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning.
- Help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations.

How Montessori Children Learn

“Scientific observation then has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment.”
Dr. Maria Montessori, Education for a New World

Learning is facilitated in our comfortable, home-like setting which is attentively filled with developmentally appropriate materials that contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent children. Each class contains a range of ages and abilities; more experienced children share what they have learned with younger children, who in turn enjoy the daily stimulation of older role models. In helping others, these peer teachers reinforce their own skills and experiences through the responsibilities of leadership. Children care for each other in a warm atmosphere of acceptance and joy; adults consciously and delicately nurture the development through their caring and compassionate characters.

Each class operates on the principle of “freedom within limits.” Children are free to work at their own pace, alone or with others. We encourage a balance of active, self-directed learning with small group collaboration and peer teaching, so that children will problem solve, see natural connections in knowledge, and create new ideas. Children in this environment learn to make decisions at an early age, to reason, cooperate, negotiate, reflect, and understand. Through direct experience and the process of discovery and investigation, children learn most effectively - and attitudes toward learning remain positive and enthusiastic, not overwhelming.

Philosophy of Education

Montessori education is a philosophy with the fundamental tenet that a child learns best within a social environment that supports each child’s unique development.

Maria Montessori, M.D., the founder and developer of what is called “The Montessori Method of Education,” based this new education on her scientific observations of young children’s behavior. As the first woman physician to graduate from the University of Rome, Dr. Montessori became involved with education as a doctor treating children. Then in 1907, she was invited to open a childcare center for the children of desperately poor families in the San Lorenzo slums of Rome. She called it “a children’s house,” and based the program on her observations that young children learn best in a home-like setting filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences contributing to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.

Dr. Montessori’s dynamic theories included such revolutionary premises as:

- Children are to be distinctly respected as individuals that differ from one another.
- Children create themselves through purposeful activity.
- The most important years for learning are from birth to age six.
- Children possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from their environment, which includes people as well as materials.

Dr. Montessori carried her training throughout the world, including the United States, as early as 1912. After an enthusiastic first response, interest in the U.S. waned until a reintroduction of the method in the mid-1950's.

The basic premise in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom: a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. The world of the child is full of sights and sounds that at first appear chaotic. From this chaos, children must gradually create order, learn to distinguish among the impressions that assail their senses and slowly but surely, gain mastery of themselves and their environment.

Dr. Montessori developed what she called the "prepared environment," which possesses a certain order and allows children to learn at their own pace in a non-competitive atmosphere. She also recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child; children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the environment, directs the activity, and offers the child stimulation, but it is the child who learns and is motivated through the work itself to persist in a given task. If Montessori children are free to learn, it is because they have acquired an "inner discipline" from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Social adjustment, though a necessary condition of learning in a traditional classroom, is not the purpose of education.

The years between birth and six are the crucial years in which children learn the rules of human behavior most easily. These years can be constructively devoted to teaching the child good manners and habits, so that they may take their place in society as a productive and responsible citizen.

Patterns of concentration, established in early childhood, produce a confident, competent learner in later years. The Montessori teaching method teaches children to observe, think, and judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social disciplines go hand-in-hand.

About Montessori Infant & Toddler School

The parent school, Montessori Schools of Central Texas, was founded in 1982, by Drs. Jerry and Sherry O'Donnell, as a private nondenominational Christian school for young children. In 1990, the school was moved to what is now the current location at 1302 S. 27th Street in Temple, into a beautiful Victorian-era house. This change allowed the school to open enrollment for three classes with three different age groups, in order to offer educational opportunities to children ages 3 to 12. In late 2016, the O'Donnells decided to add a new building to the Temple property and open a school for infants and toddlers. Construction is scheduled to begin in March 2017 and the Montessori Infant & Toddler School (MITS) will open its doors in August of 2017. Between MSCT and MITS, the Temple location will offer educational programs for children from 6 weeks to 6 years old. A sister campus is located in Killeen, Texas, and offers two primary classes for children ages 3 to 6 years of age.

MITS will have its beginning from a strong foundation as MSCT will celebrate 35 years of excellence starting in the 2017-2018 school year. It is an incorporated, nonprofit, tax-exempt school licensed by the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (TDFPS) and is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. Our approach to education focuses on the Montessori teaching method and encompasses the very best practices of current infant and toddler educational theory.

Board of Directors

The Board of Directors ensures that the school operations are consistent with Montessori philosophy and are in the best interest of its students, parents, and teachers. The Board reviews the annual operating budget, conducts all fundraising activities for the school, and promotes the school among the community. It is the duty of the Board to approve a long-range plan for the school, as well as set and evaluate annual goals for the School. All matters of grievance or conflict are handled through the policies set forth in this handbook.

School Headmaster

The school's leadership carries out the broad educational policies established by the Board of Directors. The leadership determines the methods for carrying out Board policies, creates operational policies and procedures, and oversees the business operations. The leadership also develops and evaluates student programs and services, provides administrative and professional leadership for faculty and staff, orchestrates external relations, oversees the maintenance and repair of the facility and grounds, and has overall responsibility for day-to-day operations of the school and its programs. The leadership is responsible for developing and maintaining a supportive and respectful relationship among all staff and parents, as well as open and complete communication with all.

Staff

At MITS, the classrooms will be overseen by a certified, experienced teacher, and will also possess two qualified assistants for each program. The lead teacher is Montessori certified specifically for the infant and toddler age groups. Occasionally, the need will arise to use a Montessori intern until certified. Assistants have on-the-job training or have been certified

through the AMS Assistants' Workshop, and have received other training at MITS with the lead teacher.

TDFPS Licensing

Located in the school office for your review is a copy of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services *Minimum Standards* under which we are licensed. Posted in the hallway is a copy of our most recent licensing, fire, gas line, and health inspections. You may contact our TDFPS licensing representative for the Temple Campus, Sharron Pender, at 254-742-3884. TDFPS website is located at www.dfps.state.tx.us. The Child Abuse Hotline can be reached at 800-252-5400.

Classroom Environments

At MITS, the children are provided with environments that are clean, child-sized, and beautiful. The children feel a sense of order around them whether on the school grounds or in the classroom. Each activity is an inviting object that calls to be used. It is our gift of beauty to the children that helps foster respect and pride for their surroundings and provides a peaceful, responsible attitude at school. This important attention to the classroom environment is the first sign that the children entering the community will be respected. In our rooms you will find classic works of art, not cartoons. You will see wooden furniture instead of plastic chairs and tables in loud colors. At lunch or snack time, the children set the tables with place mats, plates, and glasses. With these opportunities to use real objects and not toys, the children feel important and confident and treat these materials with a spontaneous respect that awes most parents observing the children for the first time.

The Infant Care Environment

The *Nido* (Italian for “nest”) environment provides quality care for a maximum of twelve infants, ages six weeks to eighteen months. The carefully prepared Montessori environment presents a home-like setting in which the children are assisted in their developmental process by stimulation of the five senses, encouragement of gross and fine motor control, and introduction of self-help skills at an individual pace.

The Nido area consists of a large learning environment with a floor of wood, tile, and carpet. This room is partitioned into two areas to accommodate those children that are crawling and walking, and those that need more “bed” time. The activity area is furnished with multi-level furnishings that promote movement and activity, while the sleeping area has a floor bed for each child, a changing room with a large sink, a nursing area, a restroom, and a combination kitchen/dining area. Materials found in the Nido learning environment are mirrors, a couch and a rocking chair, kiosks, shelve units with baskets of materials, and floor beds for children that crawl and/or walk. Children that can walk are permitted to visit outdoors with the toddler class for short periods of time as the weather permits. The Nido is lovingly nurtured by a trained and certified Montessori teacher and two assistants.

The Toddler Community Environment

Children leave the Nido and enter the Toddler Community at approximately eighteen months of age or when they are securely walking (space permitting). As in the Nido, the Montessori environment is carefully prepared to aid the toddler in achieving independence, interacting socially with other children, developing language skills. Cooking, music, and movement activities are also stressed. Additionally, Montessori rules are taught and enforced in preparation for moving to the Primary environment (ages 3-6 years) in order to move more rapidly into academic-rich routine.

The toddler environment consists of a large room area, a movement area, a bathroom for toilet learning, a water fountain, a sink for hand washing, and a kitchen for cooking, a dining area, a storage area for personal items, and an area for sleeping cot storage. The floor is hardwood and carpet to enhance the tactile sense and facilitate a clean and sanitary environment. Outside the learning environment, there is a toddler-sized playground with a rubber mulch drop area, along with a garden area where the children plant and tend seeds, and play. The toddler community has one Montessori certified teacher and two assistants in a maximum class size of fourteen children.

Class Size

Classes are varied to allow each age group a number of peers and to reinforce the need and ability of the child to become self-reliant and independent. The classroom is truly a community in which the teacher is neither the center of attention nor the sole source of learning. The teacher is there to ensure that each child is exposed to all areas of learning and that he/she is given those lessons at the right time. Class size for the infant program will have a maximum of 12 children, and for the toddlers, 14 children, and the staff-to-child ratio will adhere to the State's *Minimum Standards*.

The Infant Class - Nido (6 weeks to 18 months)

The very youngest children have been part of the Montessori learning community from the beginning, when visionary Italian physician Maria Montessori first made her observations about children's development. Today, neurological research on early learning confirms the accuracy and relevance of Dr. Montessori's teaching method. Some frequently asked questions about the Nido program are listed below:

- *What is the Montessori approach to guiding very young children?* Dr. Montessori describes the ability of even the youngest children to soak up the new, revel in sensory experiences, experiment with movement, practice language, and find their places within their learning environment. We welcome infants beginning at 6 weeks, which is very early in their lives. As each infant is treated as an individual, the infant program gently nurtures these children who are just a few weeks old through 18 months. At heart, the Montessori approach to educating the youngest learners is based on respect for the child. The adult caregiver is there to assist, not teach. During these early months of life, when the foundations of the personality are laid down, Montessori teachers educate by showing and modeling, not correcting.
- *How are Montessori learning environments organized for infants?* At first glance, a Montessori infant care environment will not look at all like a traditional nursery or preschool. You will immediately notice less noise, a muted environment, and a lot of natural light in the activity area, while the sleeping area has dimmed lighting to simulate the mother's womb. The environment is safe, healthy, and stimulating. The focus is on fostering a basic trust in the child. Foremost in the environment is the adult, whose caring, respectful response to the infant's needs – physical, psychological, emotional, social, and spiritual – conveys a message of unconditional love and acceptance.

Montessori infant communities follow the natural rhythms of young children through a predictable day. Your infant's sleeping and eating patterns will be observed and honored. Your child, when old enough, will crawl and eventually learn to walk on a both a hardwood floor and a carpeted area, reach for mobiles, and enjoy supervised "tummy time" to strengthen muscles. Your infant will experience different textures and objects to touch, feel, and watch.

This approach supports neurological development by providing freedom of movement and choice. In a Montessori environment, children are not restricted to infant equipment or high chairs. They are allowed freedom, within limits, always in the presence of an adult. Safety is paramount.

- *How do children spend their time in a Montessori infant learning environment?* Children that are not yet crawling spend most of their time on their individual floor bed being nurtured and attended to. These children need their diapers changed, they need feeding, and they need mental stimulation through sight and sound. Through gentle touch and voice, the infant builds trust in the caregiver that lasts throughout their time in the infant and toddler program phases.

Once your child can crawl, he will learn through direct experience, choosing his own activities within a carefully prepared learning environment. Infants intuitively discover concepts, learn language, solve simple problems, develop muscle control, and learn self-care skills as they

explore specifically designed materials. Infants that can securely walk learn to appreciate the larger world through safe outdoor activities and exploring objects from nature.

The Montessori approach recognizes that small children learn best through movement and exploration, following intrinsic motivation, and that they experience “sensitive periods” – times when they are particularly attuned to discovering and mastering skills. A carefully prepared Montessori environment, planned down to the smallest detail, guides children to tools for learning new things just at the moment they are ready for them. Furniture and learning materials are child-size. Everything needed to complete tasks and achieve success is easily accessible.

- *What do children learn in a Montessori infant program?* A central tenant of the Montessori approach is that children have the innate ability to explore and learn on their own. At the right moment of time, they learn to use the toilet and to wash and dry their hands. They learn by interacting with self-correcting materials, by moving, and by observing other children and teaching other children themselves. These children are building confidence and becoming independent.

Visitors are often struck by the orderliness and peacefulness of a Montessori learning environment. Adults move slowly and calmly, speak softly, and seek to embody two Montessori watchwords: grace and courtesy. The approach is based on the premise that a child’s earliest experiences help him or her become a peaceful, caring, sensitive, and healthy person.

In our infant program children learn to trust themselves and the world and to recognize their own competence. They learn to make decisions and to understand that their behavior affects others who have needs and wants, too. They learn to appreciate nature, to care for their bodily needs, and to persist. They develop a love of learning and experience the satisfaction of success.

The Toddler Program (18 months to 3 years)

The toddler program operates from 8:30 a.m. to 2:30 p.m. The community has a maximum of 14 children with a lead teacher and two assistants. The environment has many opportunities to fulfill the following needs: freedom of movement, independence, language development, caring for one’s self, caring for the environment, and mastery of the toileting process.

Toddlers need not only love and emotional nurturance and a healthy physical environment, but also an environment that promotes their very real need to learn. The Montessori teaching method provides a basis for individualized learning activities, appropriate for even the earliest stages of a child’s development.

The purpose of the toddler program is to encourage, assist, and protect the normal development of each child. Children in this program flourish in prepared environments that respect, support, and respond to their basic needs for independence, exploration and the building of trust and self-esteem.

This program works with cooperation between the caregivers and the parents. Parental involvement is stressed; parents know their child better than anyone else. Therefore, parents and caregivers must feel comfortable in exchanging knowledge and experiences about the child.

During the early years of life, Dr. Montessori felt that “the first thing the child’s education demands is the provision of an environment in which he or she can develop the powers given by nature.” Quite literally, the school environment is the curriculum.

The structure of the curriculum is based on five development areas: Sensory and Perception, Physical and Motor, Self-help Skills, Language, and Social and Emotional. Dr. Montessori emphasized the need for a rich environment and noted the speed at which children can develop: “If our own adult ability be compared with the child’s, we should need sixty years of hard work to do what he or she does in three.” While providing a structured, and thus familiar environment, the needs of the individual child are met.

Sensory and Perception - The young child absorbs the world around him or her through the five senses, and a rich environment should cater to the child’s senses.

Physical and Motor - Along with the mind, both fine and gross motor skills develop rapidly from three months to three years. Attention to these needs support balanced development. Physical activity in the young child is an important part of environmental involvement, and thus education.

Self-help Skills - The focus is on helping the child enjoy independence; each individual must depend on himself or herself for education.

Language - The construction of vocabulary is a part of every aspect of the classroom from snack time to group activities.

Social and Emotional - A well-rounded and happy child, whose balanced development and happiness have been supported by responsive individual attention, reacts positively with the environment, copes with frustration, and learns easily.

School Policies and Procedures

Registration

The Montessori Infant & Toddler School admits students of any economic and social class, racial and ethnic heritage, and religious beliefs. Children who are between 6 weeks and 18 months of age by their start date will be considered for our Infant program. Students who are between the ages of 18 months and 3 years of age by their start date will be considered for our Toddler program.

The following is a list of the steps in our admission process:

1. Interested parents will need to make an appointment for a tour at our school by calling 254-771-1116 or emailing frontdesk@templemontessori.com. School tours are scheduled Monday-Thursday at either 9:00 or 9:30 a.m. During your visit, we will explain about our school programs in more detail and answer any questions you may have. Tours usually last approximately thirty minutes.
2. As an option, we accommodate observations of our classrooms as a scheduled appointment. Scheduling should be made through the school office. Observation times are individual to each classroom and are scheduled during the morning.
3. When you decide to apply for admission, complete the application form and return it with a non-refundable \$100 application fee. Applications will be considered on a first-come, first-served basis as long as spaces are available. Upon receipt of the application, you will receive an enrollment packet with registration paperwork to be completed and returned. Toddlers will also need to participate in two one-hour class visits that must be completed before the planned start date.
4. The registration forms should be submitted as soon as possible, preferably at the time of the first visit (for toddlers only), along with the \$350 supply fee.
5. Following our collection of the paperwork and fees, parents of toddlers* will be given an enrollment contract, which will need to be initialed, signed, and returned. The headmaster will sign the contract, the yellow copy will be returned to you, and your child will be enrolled and may begin class on the agreed upon start date.

*Parents of infants will not need to sign a contract.

Waiting List – If placement is not immediately available for enrollment, your child may be placed on our waiting list. To be placed on the wait list, the application must be submitted and the application fee paid. In order to provide a smooth transition for new students and the existing classes, open enrollment is available June through August and during mid-term in January.

Children who are on the waiting list for the current year must reapply for acceptance the following year. The application fee will transfer to the following year if we are unable to provide a space for your child due to a full class.

Hours of Operation

The Montessori Infant & Toddler School is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday, and the office is open from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Toddlers may arrive upon opening, but not later than 8:30 a.m. and may be picked up from 2:30 p.m., when class ends, to 6:00 p.m. Infants may arrive any time after 7:00 a.m. and be picked up at any time before 6:00 p.m.

Late Pick-up - Parents that pick up their child after closing, based upon our school clock, will be assessed a late pick up fee of **\$1.00 per minute late**. You will be billed for the late fee, and payments are due within 24 hours.

To ensure adequate staffing at all times and to comply with *Minimum Standards*, drop-in service is not available.

Tuition and Fees

Tuition and fees are based on an annual rate established by the School Board. There are three payment options: annual, bi-semester, and monthly. The monthly payment plan will only be processed through the ACH monthly draft. The toddler program runs for five days per week, according to the published school calendar. The toddler program will run for a 10-month school term (August – May), with optional summer camps in June and July. The infant program will run year-round, from August to the following July. Tuition and fees will remain the same for the entire program selected. There will be no reduction of tuition or fees for absences, holidays, withdrawal, or disenrollment. Tuition and fees are not prorated irrespective of the start or drop date during the month.

Late Payment - Monthly payments are through bank drafts (EFT) on the 2nd of each month. Late payment accounts will be charged at a rate of 10% of the monthly payment.

Insufficient Funds - Checks or bank drafts returned for insufficient funds will be charged \$30.00 per return, in addition to the late payment fee. Returned bank drafts and checks will be automatically resubmitted for collection. Bank drafts and checks returned a second time must be redeemed in cash within 24 hours to maintain enrollment.

Withdrawal Procedure

Parents are financially responsible for the entire contract period in which they have enrolled their child. The following steps will be taken to withdraw your child from the school:

1. Submit a 30-day written notice to the headmaster, along with a forwarding address if moving.
2. A statement of your account will be mailed to your forwarding address reflecting payments due.
3. Parents have ten (10) days to settle their account.
4. After account closure, a final statement will be mailed to the parents.
5. Accounts with outstanding balances will be referred to the Small Claims Court for resolution.

Disenrollment

We reserve the right to disenroll any child if the Board of Directors determines that disenrollment is in the best interest of the school. We also reserve the right to disenroll any child for non-payment of tuition or fees. *The Montessori method of education is not always appropriate for every child; therefore, we accept each child on a 30-day trial basis. The terms and conditions of the enrollment contract apply regarding tuition and fees.*

Classroom Policies

Transitions

At each level of transition within our school, children are moved according to four determining factors: age, physical changes, social readiness, and cognitive abilities. When a child transitions, he or she should be ready in these areas, as determined on a case-by-case basis.

From Infant to Toddler - Transitions are made only in June or August. There are no mid-term promotions. Set transition months allow for new children to have early group lessons with other new children.

Transition Process – The headmaster is involved in the class placement process, and the teacher discusses transition candidates with the headmaster to determine which children are ready to move up. The child visits the toddler classroom multiple times to prepare for the transition.

Adjustment Period

All parents should be aware that young children beginning school are just starting to develop social skills, and that our approach assists children in this developmental process. While we aim for peaceful environments each day, some instances of disruptive behavior do take place. This is considered normal since children of this age are just learning to interact with others in a social environment. However, when a child has had several instances of aggressive behavior, the teacher will notify the parents and together they will make a plan to better support the child's needs. If the situation persists, a meeting will be scheduled between the teacher, parents, and headmaster. At this time, a request may be made for further help in the form of outside assessments and/or a shorter day for the child, and a timeline for improvement will be set. If progress is not made within the given timeline, it may be in the best interest of the child for the parents to seek a more structured environment where the child can be more successful.

Safe Environment Policy

There are many ways to foster children's development as they work through the process of forming their personal identities. The focus of our effort is to provide students with the experience of true community involvement, and to help them recognize how to assert their individuality while working in a community based on common Montessori values and principles. The school's environment allows significant space and resources for the children to work out this balance for themselves. Some issues affecting the community as a whole are handled through group meetings, monitored and directed by the teacher and led by the children.

Our school does provide clear boundaries to help children as they develop this balance and to shield children in the community from threatening situations. As part of our safe environment, MITS will ensure that the teacher provides an environment that enables and encourages children to report threatening behavior. Our community is not able to grow properly with emotional, verbal, or physical threats present.

A safe environment includes:

- An environment that enables the child to report threatening behavior
- An environment where the child knows how to report threatening behavior
- An environment where MITS investigates and reports to the family should a child tell only their parent

Threatening behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Physical aggression
- Verbal abuse

In the toddler environment, a child exhibiting threatening behavior will be immediately corrected, and they will remain with the teacher until they are able to return to work. If the behavior is exhibited three times that day, the child will be removed from the classroom to the office. The child will be allowed to return to the community after it is clear that he/she understands how his/her behavior needs to change to function within the community. This may include a meeting with the headmaster. The parent will be notified. If the behavior occurs again, the parent will be contacted and the child will need to leave the school for the day. Bullying will not be allowed under any circumstance.

If a child brings an implement to school that could harm another child, the implement will be confiscated and the parents will be called immediately. If that same child returns with another tool that is harmful, the implement will be confiscated, the parents will be called and the child will go home for the day. A meeting to discuss and correct the situation will be arranged between the teacher, the parent, the child, and the headmaster.

Infant Safe Sleep Policy

Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS) cannot be completely prevented, but there are some things that parents and caregivers can do to reduce the risk of SIDS. The Montessori Infant and Toddler School (MITS) adopt the following Infant Safe Sleep Policy as a beneficial means to prevent SIDS while your child is in our care:

1. Babies will always be put to sleep on their backs.
2. An approved waiver from Child Care Licensing (CCL) must be obtained before a child may be put to sleep in a way that conflicts with the current minimum standard requirement. A physician's order is required that explains the medical reason why the baby must be placed to sleep differently, instructions how the child must be placed to sleep, and a time frame that the instructions are to be followed. A child requiring this waiver will not be accepted in MITS until the waiver from CCL is in place.
3. Only safety-approved floor beds and firm mattresses will be used for bedding purposes.
4. Bibs and hoods will be removed before the child is placed in the floor bed.
5. Pacifiers will not be used as a means to aid sleeping or to prevent crying. Pacifiers are not part of the Montessori infant care program.
6. Floor beds will be free of toys, stuffed animals, and extra bedding at all times.
7. Each baby will be assigned their own floor bed for the entire time in MITS.

8. The room temperature will be kept comfortable as for a lightly clothed adult.
9. Wedges and/or infant positioners will not be used in floor beds or support in chairs.
10. MITS is a smoke-free environment at all times.
11. Infants who are awake may enjoy supervised “tummy-time” daily.
12. All staff members of MITS are knowledgeable about safe sleep policies and practices and are required to obtain a minimum of 24-clock hours of annual training.

You will be required to sign a separate form in the registration packet acknowledging that you have read, understand, and agree to the safe sleep policy as written without any modifications, additions, or deletions.

Classroom Entrance and Exit Procedures

Students learn more when the environment is free from distractions. Please take note of the entrance and exit procedures to ensure additional safety, as well as limit classroom distractions. To help minimize distractions, tardy students should be brought to the administrative office and an office person will escort the child to the classroom. Cell phone usage is very distracting; therefore, please turn off your cell phone before entering the building, or leave it in your car.

Main Building:

Parents of enrolled students will be issued a code to unlock the entrance door for the office. Visitors to our campus will use the doorbell. Tardy students will get a tardy slip from the office **before** they enter the classroom. As a reminder, students are allowed three (3) unexcused tardies per semester before suspension. Medical and dental appointments are the only excused absences. Students enter and exit the classroom independently.

Security codes will occasionally change and be emailed to parents of currently enrolled students. In order to continue our safe environment, parents are required to keep the code secret from anyone who is not on the authorized pick-up list, including students.

MITS Building:

Parents of students enrolled in MITS will pick up their child through the MITS office. The teacher inside the classroom will answer the door. Authorized pick-up persons will identify themselves and the teacher will lead the toddler to the door for dismissal. Infants may be picked up by a parent or authorized person in the classroom. The door to the classroom will be locked as soon as the school program begins each day. Tardy students will get a tardy slip from the office **before** they enter the classroom. As a reminder, students are allowed three (3) unexcused tardies per semester before suspension. Medical and dental appointments are the only excused absences. Students enter and exit the classroom independently.

All Classes:

As previously mentioned, students learn more with fewer distractions. Therefore, parents should say their “goodbyes” at the door and let toddlers enter the classroom independently. Communication is important; however, child supervision is that much more important! Teachers have a planning period daily to answer questions. If your communication cannot wait until the afternoon, you may contact the office and we will send your message as soon as possible.

Toddlers need to finish the school portion of each day in order to limit distractions. If your child has a doctor's appointment or other necessity before school has ended for the day, come to the office and a staff member will quietly bring your child to the office for dismissal.

Discipline Policy (TDFPS)

The definition of discipline is teaching or learning; it has no positive or negative meaning itself. The voice of challenging behavior speaks through the child's actions, their behavior. We begin to help children by listening carefully to what they tell us with their actions. Discipline must be individualized and consistent for each child, appropriate to the child's level of understanding, and directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.

MITS uses only positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourages self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include the following: 1) using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior, 2) reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements, 3) redirecting behavior using positive statements, and 4) using brief supervised separation from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited in duration.

There will be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. Staff members are prohibited from using these types of discipline:

- Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment
- Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training
- Pinching, shaking, or biting a child
- Hitting a child with a hand or instrument
- Putting anything in or on a child's mouth
- Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child
- Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language
- Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed
- Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age (Texas Administrative Code, Title 40).

Incident Reports

A report will be presented to you for your signature if your child was injured, or if behavior modification is needed. We enlist the support of our parents to help correct misbehaviors, in order to allow the safest environment possible. Incident reports are kept in each child's file for documentation purposes.

Repeated Misbehaviors

If a child continues to injure themselves, others, or the environment, or damage or destroy materials, and MITS has diligently tried to correct a child's misbehaviors, as well as enlisted the support of the parents, a meeting will be called with the parents to establish a timeline for behavior modification. Should the behavior continue, MITS will have no choice but to suspend the child each time the behavior is exhibited. Parents will be required to pick up their child within thirty minutes of being called. Suspensions will depend upon the seriousness of the behavior and the agreement between the Director and the parents to modify the behavior.

Damaged or Destroyed Materials

If a child damages or destroys classroom materials or furniture due to misbehavior, the parent will be notified and a request for reimbursement will be given to the parent for prompt payment.

Attendance Policy for Toddlers

Attendance is extremely important to your child's total development. Parents should notify the school office by 9:00 a.m. if their child is unable to attend school. If a student must be away for any length of time for reasons other than illness, parents should contact the school in advance to discuss the situation.

If a child's absence is due to a contagious disease or illness, the parent must immediately contact the school advising us of the condition and situation. This is a licensing regulation, as well as a safety precaution, for all children and staff.

Tardy Policy for Toddlers

Emergencies are understandable; however, it is imperative that children arrive at school no later than 8:30 a.m. Promptness in a child's life is very important. Children who arrive late and/or are picked up late feel awkward and uncomfortable. Tardiness is disruptive to the teachers and classes in session; therefore, *we can only accept children after 8:30 a.m. with a doctor's note, or by previously calling the headmaster to advise us of your emergency situation.* Students arriving after 8:30 a.m. must obtain a tardy slip before they enter the classroom. Students are allowed only three excused tardies per semester; after this time, parents are asked to bring their child to school the next day.

Electronic Devices Policy

Cell phones, MP3 players, iPods, cameras, and other electronic devices are not permitted at school. All other items of value should remain at home, as the school and other students will not be responsible for lost or damaged goods.

Dress Policy for Toddlers

The Montessori classroom is a prepared environment. The materials, the furniture, the pictures and posters, the books, and the music have all been selected to create a space which is conducive to concentration, higher-level thinking, and creative expression. Our intention is to always incorporate only the finest and most enduring manifestations of our culture. The clothing worn by the children becomes a part of the environment and can have an effect on the children. Just as we would not hang posters on the wall of popular movies, TV, or video themes, we also ask that you reserve shoes or clothing with such depictions for use outside of the school. We prefer plain T-shirts, but those depicting elements of nature, flora or fauna, the arts, sports, or travel are acceptable. We are confident that the child will not be deprived of fads and pop culture by their exclusion from the classroom.

Comfortable clothing should be worn at all times. Often children want to wear slip-on shoes to school. These shoes can hinder a child's participation in running and climbing activities that are important for their fitness and play. It is recommended that the children wear tennis shoes whenever possible. Children who are unable to tie should wear Velcro style shoes. Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season. Fall and winter clothing should be layered to accommodate the daily temperature changes.

Extra Clothing – Each child should have ONE COMPLETE CHANGE OF CLOTHING in his or her cubby at all times to allow for wetting or other accidents (food or paint spills). If an accident should occur, a replacement set of clothes must be brought to school the next day. Extra sets of underclothes are always necessary.

Please label all clothing!

Indoor Shoes - Children need to leave at school a pair of slip-on style indoor shoes for use in the classroom. Suggestions include Velcro tennis shoes, ballet slippers, crocs, etc. House shoes, flip-flops, and slippers are not allowed. MITS is not financially responsible for misplaced or lost shoes.

Toddlers - It is recommended that your child wear simple play clothes to school. Jeans, pants, and shorts allow children the freedom to run and climb on the playground and sit cross legged on the floor in the classroom. Students should wear shorts under dresses and skirts to help prevent embarrassing situations. Clothing with suggestive or inappropriate slogans, and superhero depictions are not permitted. Halter-style tops or spaghetti string tops may be worn with a shirt over or under this style.

Students are required to wear or keep a pair of Velcro style tennis shoes (slip on or backless styles are not permitted) and socks for daily physical education activities. Cowboy boots, jelly shoes, flip-flops, and clogs do not stay on feet at all times, especially when running, nor do they provide enough traction on steps or ladders; therefore, they are not permitted on the playground or in the classroom.

Hair - The length of hair for boys should not fall below the top of the collar of the shirt when loose. Hair paint, colored extensions, permanent colors not of natural-born colors, or distractive styles, such as a Mohawk, should not be worn to school.

All Students - It is our desire to create a distraction free environment for your child; therefore, the following items are not permitted at school:

- | | |
|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|
| Backpacks | Bells on shoes or clothing |
| Flashing lights on shoes | Rub-on tattoos or body stickers |
| Face painting | Hair paint |
| Lip gloss or other make-up | Toys or stuffed animals |
| Money | Costume jewelry |
| High heel or platform shoes | Flip flop shoes |
| Cowboy boots | Super-hero or cartoon clothing |
| Cleats | Roller skate shoes |
| Purposely squeaky shoes | Extremely long shoe laces |
| Candy or gum | |

Precious stone jewelry should not be worn to school. Aside from the risk of loss, it is a safety issue. Staff members will not be liable for jewelry.

General Procedures

Arrival

Between 7:00 and 8:30 a.m., each parent is to bring their toddler into the building and ensure that a staff member has acknowledged their child's arrival. Infants may arrive at any time.

Car Door Program

Between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m., toddlers may be dropped off in front of the building to a staff member. When arriving at our school, parents must pull their vehicles onto 27th Street and form a single line parallel to the curb. Students must be ready to depart the car with breakfast finished. Children should be released from the curb-side of the vehicle only. Parents should remain in their car and a staff member will escort the child from the vehicle. After a child leaves the vehicle, parents should pull out and then the other cars will reposition themselves for drop-off. Staff members will escort children through the playground to their respective classrooms.

Safety Concerns - Please do not pull in front of any vehicles in line, *no U-turns or double parking*, and exit through the American Legion parking lot across the street on the left. Please park in the designated parking lot across from the school if you would prefer to walk your child into school.

If you need to come inside the main building between 8:00 and 8:30 a.m., park across the street, thus reserving the front parking area for the Car Door program.

Dismissal

You will need to sign your child out at time of pick-up.

At the end of the day, when you pick up your child:

- Parents of toddlers are to wait **outside** the classroom and **quietly** make their presence known to the staff member. Parents of infants may pick up their child from inside the classroom.
- Parents may then need to wait until the child has completed their work and put it away before departing.
- Visit with other parents **outside** the classroom.
- Adults must accompany their child out of the door to the parking lot.
- Please keep cell phones put away while inside the school.

Parents should arrange to have conferences with teachers and administrative personnel at designated conference times or after 3:30 p.m., **NOT** upon arrival or departure of children. This is to ensure adequate supervision of the children at all times, and to ensure confidentiality.

Parents should check their child's lunch boxes or mail boxes daily for items that have been sent home. Soiled clothes will be returned for washing in the zip-lock bag provided by the parent.

Children will be released only to their parents or to those whom the parents have listed as authorized pick-up persons. Parents must notify the school in writing if a child's pick-up person is changed. All first-time people picking up a child **MUST** show the staff a valid photo ID before the child may be

released to them. No child may be picked up by anyone under eighteen (18) years of age; **this includes siblings**. Children will not be released to any person that appears under the influence of alcohol or drugs. Also, a child will not be released for transportation on a motorcycle or scooter. The Temple Police Department will be called if this becomes an issue. Children will not be released to staff members of MITS or MSCT.

Sign In/Out Log

All persons picking up children from the school are required to sign the child out on the sign-in/out log on a daily basis. A legible printed first and last name and signature must be provided on a daily basis. Staff members will sign your child in each day.

MITS assumes all biological parents are able to pick up their child from the school, regardless of names listed on the enrollment form. If there is a legal document stating otherwise, MITS must have this document on file. This includes divorce decrees stating the child is in the custody of one parent, or court restraining orders. MITS cannot refuse the right of a parent to pick up their child without this documentation.

Daily Reports

Each infant will have a daily log that records their eating and sleeping habits, bowel movements, and notable behaviors during the day. The daily report will need to be signed by the parent upon pick-up each day, and a copy will be provided to the parent.

Early Release from Class

It is important that your toddler remain every day until the conclusion of class. We understand that occasionally you may need to pick up your child early for a doctor's or dentist's appointment. If your child should need to be released from class early, please notify the school office and inform the office assistant that your child needs an early release.

Snack Program

The toddler children participate in the preparation of a nutritious snack each day. We serve fresh fruits and vegetables for the morning and afternoon snack periods with limited carbohydrates. Snacks which expose our children to interesting and appealing foods originating from the country or food group currently being studied are incorporated.

Snack takes place individually or in small groups, with no special time set aside for "snack time." The class has a snack table which accommodates small groups. Children set out their own snack, pour their own drink, and socialize while eating. Children discipline themselves, for the most part, to a single serving and decide with their own "internal clocks" when they are ready to have snack. Likewise, children may choose to continue their work uninterrupted until they finish and then decide to have snack.

Lunch

We would like for your child to have the most enjoyable day possible. One of the ways you can help with this is by sending a nutritious lunch. It has been our experience that those children who bring empty-nutrient foods and sweets are those who have a more difficult afternoon.

Involve your child in planning, preparing, and packing lunches to encourage their knowledge about nutrition, their creativity, and to avoid complaints about choices.

A good lunch should provide variety and satisfy one-third of a growing child's daily nutritional requirements. This means one selection from each of these five groups: protein, dairy, fruit, vegetable, and grain.

Children need to bring a **ready-to-eat**, picnic-style lunch in an **insulated lunch bag** each day (no warm-ups). Elementary students are provided a lesson in using the microwave for reheating foods (no cooking). Each lunch brought from home must contain a protein, a grain product, a fruit, and a vegetable. To meet the other nutritional requirements, the school will provide milk for the children's lunches. All food brought to school should be nutritious, fresh, and easy for the child to eat. Foods that are high in preservatives (i.e., Lunchables), sugar, or salt should be eaten away from school. Solid foods should be *precut* into safe and manageable pieces for young throats. *Please do not send drinks in your child's lunch.* It is not necessary to pack eating utensils or napkins as the school will provide these items.

A food allergy emergency plan is required for any child suffering from food allergies or related illnesses that prohibit him/her from eating certain foods, including milk. The emergency plan must be completed by a physician and submitted to the school before the child's start date. It is the parent's responsibility to provide alternate dairy products for children whose physician has determined an allergy to dairy.

Containers - Lunch items need to be packed in an easy-to-open container that allows the child to open it independently. *Children are not permitted to bring food items in pop-top or metal rimmed lid containers.*

Please note that tomato sauce is not considered a vegetable, nor are fruit flavorings considered a fruit, by state guidelines.

Please exclude drinks, cookies, cake, candy, donuts, fruit roll-ups, pie, Nutella, Jell-O, chips, chocolate pudding, frozen pizza, microwavable meals, food to be cooked, and go-gurt (yogurt, pudding, or other products in squeeze-type tube).

Parents are responsible for ensuring their child brings a lunch to school on a daily basis. If your child happens to forget their lunch, you will be contacted to bring a lunch for your child to school in a timely manner. The school is unable to provide lunches for students.

Lunch Suggestions:

Grains

Wheat bread or crackers
Granola
Nutri-grain bars
Rice cakes

Protein

Any meat
Peanut butter
Soup (in a thermos)
Beans and hotdogs

Pasta
Chex mix
Graham crackers
Rice

Boiled egg
Tuna fish
Nuts
Tofu

Fruit

Any fresh fruit
Dried fruit
Applesauce

Vegetables

Any raw vegetable or salad
Any cooked vegetable
Dill pickles

Rest Period

Following lunch, children settle down for a “campfire” story with a rest period. Children may bring a small, thin, child-size blanket for resting, if desired. Pillows and sleeping bags/mats are not allowed by state regulation. Blankets must be labeled with your child’s name with indelible ink or printed tags. Blankets are to be taken home each Friday to be washed.

Personal Supplies

A personal supply list will be given and explained upon enrollment. It is the responsibility of the parent to bring all personal supplies, marked with the child’s name, by the child’s first day of class and to maintain consumable supplies and changes of clean clothes. All students are encouraged to wear their school t-shirt on Fridays unless a special spirit day theme has been announced.

Birthday Celebrations

Since every child’s birthday is important, their special day can be celebrated at school during the morning group period. A birthday letter will be sent home prior to each child’s birthday explaining the celebration and birthday story. Parents are welcome to attend their child’s celebration. This event is a celebration, not a party.

On birthday celebration day, our tradition for the birthday child is to present their class with a realistic book in honor of their birthday. This enables the child to learn the value and pleasure of giving rather than just receiving. Parents wishing to participate in this tradition should inscribe the book with the child’s name and birth date in the cover of the book. We appreciate books of interest to our current units of study, or with realistic pictures.

Children can enjoy a special birthday snack at school. In an effort to adhere to a more nutritional approach and to avoid difficulties with allergies to peanuts, chocolate, etc., and with sweets (cake, cookies, etc.), please do not bring traditional birthday cakes, cupcakes, candy, ice cream, or cookies. We suggest a creative nutritious birthday treat.

Snack Ideas for Birthday Celebrations

Mini muffins
Popcorn
Cheese and crackers
Banana bread
Fruit and dip tray
Vegetable and dip tray
Fruit or sausage kolaches

Animals in the Toddler Classroom

Animals are included as an integral part of the Montessori environment. In our environments, you will find a variety of fish, mammals, reptiles, and amphibians. The children receive valuable lessons in caring for the needs of their classroom pets. Children are allowed to care for the fish and mammals in our environments. After caring for the animals, children are directed to wash their hands.

School Pictures

Each fall, individual and class school pictures are taken by a trustworthy photographer. These photographs are available for purchase from the photographer's company at a reasonable cost. Parents are under no obligation to make this purchase.

Release of Student Information

Written parental consent must be obtained for releasing information to community agencies or professional personnel outside of the school. Records such as test scores, health data, attendance records, and narrative progress reports will be forwarded to the school to which the student transfers upon receipt of written consent of the parents, provided that their tuition balance is current.

Confidential information about any child or parent shall be privileged communication and shall be respected with regard to utmost confidentiality.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

We believe that parents are the child's first teachers. We encourage close relationships between parents and staff members so that we can learn about each child and his or her unique qualities, and also understand the family customs and traditions that have helped to shape his or her life.

At conferences, we hope a discussion and exchange of ideas will occur. Observations about the child's cognitive, physical, social, and emotional growth are presented, and a plan for helping with the child's present challenges may be established. Conferences are scheduled throughout the year and are convened formally at least twice during the school year. In order to ensure that the parent(s) and teacher may speak freely, children are not part of the conference and alternate child care should be arranged.

Class Observations

Parents are welcome to observe their child's classroom (the best days to observe are Tuesday, Wednesday, or Thursday). An observation area is provided and mothers are welcome to nurse their babies during observation periods.

It is helpful to remember, however, that children do not act the same when they know their parents are watching - behavior can be surprising. Please recognize that observations are not true indicators of a child's progress within a group.

Please stop by the school office before observing your child's class to receive an observation form. We appreciate your comments on the form. Please remain in the observation area during your observation time.

Parent Communication

MITS Website: www.montessoriinfantandtoddlerschool.com

The school website is a good source for general information about MITS. It includes, among other information, school events, monthly newsletters and calendars, and other helpful links. The website also has a Parent Portal that is only accessible with a password. The password will be emailed to all parents at the beginning of each semester, and will also be provided upon request. You may also contact the school director through email at the following address:

director@templemontessori.com Dr. Jerry O'Donnell, Headmaster

Group E-mails

The office sends out weekly emails to families regarding weekly lesson plans, updates on school activities, and reminders of school events. Families are strongly encouraged to regularly check the email account they provided the school on the Enrollment Information form.

Calendar and Newsletter

Parents will be sent a copy of the new calendar and newsletter each month via email. Both the newsletter and calendar are posted to our website for your review on the Parent Portal page. Hard copies are available upon request.

Messages

Staff members can be reached by calling the front office after 3:00 p.m. daily at (254) 771-1116. The office personnel will connect you with the requested staff member, if that individual is available. If not, you may leave a request for the person to call you. If the office personnel are unable to answer the phone at the time of your call, please leave a voicemail with your name, number, and reason for calling. Voicemails will be checked on a daily basis.

Messages for a teacher or special instructions for any day should be written and given to the office assistant to be distributed to your child's teacher. Verbal messages **cannot** be acted upon, as they are less effective and parts may be forgotten by either speaker or listener.

Inclement Weather Advisories

Our concern is always for the safety of both child and adult. Our weather procedures have always been developed with safety as our primary concern.

During the winter season, please remember the following: for emergency school closings or late opening information, listen to local radio and/or television stations. Our school will follow the same weather closing procedures as Temple ISD. Late openings will be based on our 7:00 a.m. normal operating time. Therefore, with a two-hour delay, the school will open at 9:00 a.m.

Health and Safety

Immunizations and TB Requirements

Each child enrolled in The Montessori Infant & Toddler School must meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of Health. All immunizations required must be for the child's age and must be completed by the date of admission.

As needed, The Bell County Health Department can require that children enrolled in a child-care facility be screened for tuberculosis.

Illnesses

Staff members are unable to accept a child who is ill or who has a condition that is questionable. Parents should keep children home who have experienced the following symptoms within the previous 24 hour period:

Fever (over 101°F)	Undiagnosed rash
Diarrhea	Eye infection
Vomiting	

Children returning from an absence should be well enough to participate in the full program, including outside play, or they should remain at home until this is possible.

Children who become ill during the school day will need to be picked up within 30 minutes of notification.

Parents must leave correct information regarding work and **THREE** emergency numbers where someone can be reached at all times. As changes occur, parents are to inform the school of any updates in address or phone numbers.

Absence Notes - Upon a child's return to school after a contagious illness, a physician's note is required for re-admittance. Please notify the school office if your child will be absent due to an illness, or for any other reason.

Students should only have appointments during the school day when it is absolutely necessary. When an appointment does occur within the school day, please advise your child's teacher with a written note of the time you will be picking up your child.

Medical Procedures and Forms

If your child requires medication, you must complete a medication documentation form and give the form and medication, in its original container, to a staff member. **DO NOT** place medication in your child's lunch bag. Medication will be administered after the lunch period. We are unable to dispense medicines **as needed**. Over-the-counter medications will be administered according to the label directions. Please be sure to label all medication with your child's name and date. Medication documentation forms can be completed up to a 30-day period.

To ensure students are properly supervised at all times, we are unable to administer medication such as breathing treatments and/or other medical devices.

Food Allergies - Every child with a food allergy listed in their file must have a food allergy emergency plan. The food allergy emergency plan should be an individualized plan developed by the child's healthcare professional and should include:

1. A list of each food to which the child is allergic.
2. Possible symptoms if exposed to a food on the list
3. The steps to take if the child has an allergic reaction

The health care professional and a parent must sign and date the completed plan.

First Aid

Every effort will be made to ensure the safety of your child, but accidents may occur. Parents will be notified for emergency situations. If a parent cannot be reached, the emergency numbers you have indicated will be called. The child's doctor is the next to be called if emergency numbers are not reached. Upon the advice of the doctor, or if the need warrants such a trip, the child may be taken to the emergency room of the nearest hospital. Health records and emergency treatment release forms will be carried to the hospital. Parents will be asked to meet the child and staff member at the hospital as soon as possible.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

The purpose of the emergency preparedness plan is to ensure the safety of children enrolled in MITS during an emergency, with respect to emergency evacuation and relocation. This plan addresses several types of emergencies that could occur in this area, is not limited to only natural events such as tornadoes, floods, wildfires, or earthquakes.

Employees of MITS will be made aware of the plan during their initial orientation. Parents of enrolled students will be informed at the parent orientation meeting and a copy will be made available for review upon request.

The director is responsible for implementing the emergency preparedness plan. In the director's absence, the staff member assigned to be in charge will lead the emergency evacuation and relocation, if necessary. The assistant teachers in each classroom are responsible for the following items: roll-call sheets, the emergency notebook with contact information that includes the names of parents and telephone numbers, and a first aid kit and flashlight.

The emergency preparedness plan will be practiced as a minimum as follows:

Fire Drill: A fire drill will be practiced monthly with a safe evacuation of three (3) minutes or less. Infants will be transported in evacuation cribs.

Severe Weather: A severe weather drill will be practiced at least once every three months. All drills will be documented to include the date of the drill, time of the drill, and length of time for the evacuation or relocation.

Emergency Evacuation and Relocation Diagrams are posted in each classroom and at exit doors from each building. In an emergency, the staff will move the children to the designated safe area for

that type of emergency. Children will be evacuated in a quiet and orderly manner to the designated exit in the classroom and led to the safe area by the responsible staff member. Children will not be prodded to move, but will be verbally prompted to move quickly by walking to the designated location.

The designated alternate shelter for MITS is Pauline's Daycare, 1402 South 27th Street, Temple, Texas 76504, Telephone 254-791-5181.

The emergency telephone number for MITS is 254-394-1522. Children evacuated or relocated from MITS will be accounted for by the daily roll-call sheet maintained in each classroom.

Fire Safety

Our policy is to provide for the physical well being and safety of every child, and to regularly instruct each child and staff member in fire safety. The school meets all fire requirements as mandated by law. Monthly fire drills are conducted during the school day. There is to be no smoking anywhere on the premises or school grounds at any time.

Partnership with Parents

*“Montessori is a way of life encompassing the development of the whole child.
The parent, therefore, has a vital role to play in the educational process.”*

*David Kahn, President,
North American Montessori Teachers Association*

Children are largely dependent on their families for identity, security, care, and a general sense of well being. Good communication between parents and teachers helps to build mutual understanding, which provides consistent guidance for the child. A partnership between parents and teachers forms a basis for mutual problem solving about concerns, behaviors, and observations. It enhances the learning process in both the home and the school by strengthening ties.

Parent Forums

Parent education events are held regularly on a variety of topics; some are classroom oriented and some are open to the entire school. We encourage your attendance, as an understanding of Montessori theory and curriculum enhances your child’s development within MITS and your home. Parents will be asked to attend two events:

- **Parent Orientation** – An introduction to The Montessori Schools and what it offers each family.
- **Parent Enrichment Meetings** – Each class will hold individual meetings to explore the Montessori curriculum and how it benefits each child.

At least one Silent Journey or Discovery event will be offered during each school year. Parents are strongly encouraged to attend a Silent Journey and/or a Discovery event as early in their child’s Montessori experience as possible. Childcare is available for students enrolled at MITS during parent forums.

Parent Involvement

All quality schools need volunteer and financial resources to help achieve their goals. The school is a nonprofit organization that has only two basic means of support: the dedication of the faculty and staff, and the commitment and generosity of our families. Thanks to the outstanding support of many people, our school has accomplished a great deal since its founding. It is our goal to maintain this commitment and service to the children of our school. We invite you to join us and be a vital part of our school. We need your continued support, and your children will reap the benefits of your participation.

Parents are encouraged to become actively involved in the school as parent volunteers. Parents are asked to assist with fundraising events and work with the administration and faculty to support classroom activities. Parents complete various volunteer jobs around the school and grounds, aid in the classrooms, and consult with the Board of Directors in many areas. Parents or other designated adult family members are asked to volunteer 20 hours per academic year per family.

Parent Committees

Parent participation plays a significant and crucial role at The Montessori Infant & Toddler School. It provides a means through which parents can meet and get to know each other better and work together with the staff and students for the benefits of all children. This list below summarizes major volunteer activities. Committees meet at scheduled intervals. Please check your monthly newsletter and/or calendar for specific dates and times.

Helping Hands Committee - This committee assesses the needs of our facility and implements necessary maintenance and repairs. They endeavor to improve the school buildings and surrounding grounds. Parents with an interest in gardening and/or landscaping and who are willing to assist classrooms with gardening projects and campus beautification are also welcome.

Development and Advertising Committee – This committee administers and directs annual fundraising and advertising campaigns. They coordinate and conduct special fundraising events, as well as generate and implement new ideas for fundraising projects.

Classroom and Staff Support - The foundation of the classroom support responsibilities include welcoming new parents, recruiting volunteers within their class for school events or special class projects, and assisting with classroom parties and teacher appreciation activities.

Donations

Donations made to the school are tax deductible. MITS is a 501(c)(3) corporation. You will receive from the office a receipt of donations for tax purposes. Non-monetary donations can also be documented for tax purposes. Forms for this purpose are available from our front office personnel.

Policies for Staff and Parent Volunteers

Ethics and Confidentiality Code

When Maria Montessori says to follow the child, she directs us to consider the needs of children, and to provide for those needs. We know that children need guidance, and that they need role models to follow. In our capacities as MITS staff members and as volunteers, we are obligated by our hearts and minds to continually act in ways that we would have the children emulate. In this same spirit, everyone who works at the school, whether as staff member or volunteer, should be aware that all information read, overheard, or observed is strictly confidential and should not be shared with anyone that is not authorized to receive that information.

Supervision Policy

No child is to be left unsupervised at any time. The teacher's responsibility begins when the parent or responsible adult brings that child into the classroom or to the playground, and does not end until the parent or responsible adult collects the child at the end of the day.

Driver Policy

Parents are to be responsible for arranging for the transportation of their children to and from school at the beginning and the end of each school day. Staff and employees of MITS or MSCT may not provide transportation for students to and from the MITS facility at the beginning and end of each school day.

Abuse and Neglect Policy

If an employee or MITS volunteer suspects that a child is being abused or neglected, Texas law requires the staff member to report it to the TDFPS or a law enforcement agency.

To help deter an act of abuse or neglect, all employees undergo a criminal history check that includes a search of the TDFPS central registry of reported cases of child abuse and neglect. Our staff also undergoes FBI fingerprinting, as required by TDFPS. The staff does not prevent parents from visiting the facility during its hours of operation, and interactions between staff and the children can be observed.

Drug and Alcohol Policy

The Montessori Infant & Toddler School's policy dictates that MITS be free of alcoholic beverages or controlled substances. Each employee undergoes a pre-employment drug screen and random drug screens while employed.

Sexual Harassment Policy

MITS seeks to assure that it maintains a workplace free of sexual harassment and intimidation. The school has a zero tolerance policy for vulgar, abusive, humiliating, or threatening language, practical jokes, or other inappropriate behavior in the workplace. MITS will not tolerate the harassment of any employee or non-employee by another employee or non-employee or Board member for any reason. Non-employee violators of this policy are subject to expulsion from the school facilities when harassment occurs on the premises. Furthermore, MITS may report violators to the appropriate authority for civil action. Any harassment observed should be reported promptly to the school director.

Conflict Resolution Policy

The staff and administration of MITS desire to support and promote healthy and timely communications focused toward developing solutions in all interactions. For answers to your questions and solutions for your concerns, please refer to the following items below for direction:

Matter related to:

Your child's progress
Classroom activities and schedules
Classroom procedures
Montessori education
Academic policies
Parent conferences
Parent education

First contact:

Classroom teacher

Admissions information
Classroom observation schedule
Registration
School calendar
School schedules
Student records
Student finances
State regulations
Facilities
Faculty and staff
Fundraising
Governance
Legal matters
Montessori education

Office assistant

Headmaster

Parent organization activities
Volunteering
Annual Giving program
Winter gala

Parent coordinator

If more help is needed, resolutions should follow these steps:

1. If you have questions regarding your child, ask the teacher. Please leave a message on the voice mail system or in writing. Teachers are your first resource to answer your questions and resolve your concerns.
2. If the communication with the teacher by telephone does not answer your questions or resolve your concerns, please request a parent conference with the teacher.
3. If the communication with the teacher by telephone or conference does not resolve the issue, please address your question to the headmaster, who can assist in resolution of the problem. Written positions will be requested from both parties.

We desire to provide a healthy and safe school experience for all students. When areas of concern are addressed quickly, collaboratively, and with care, we will be able to support your student and family in developing appropriate solutions.

Acknowledgment of Operational Policies

MITS will add or change operational policies during the year as necessary. You will be given written copies of these changes. Just as you have acknowledged the receipt of the operational policies in this Parent Handbook on the associated form, we will request you sign your understanding of any revised policies. It is a regulation of TDFPS that this acknowledgement is kept in your child's file.