



Parent Handbook of School Policies

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Welcome

To new and returning parents and students, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year. Over the course of this year our children will grow in a Montessori environment to become self-assured, vibrant students who love to learn. Our staff is committed to providing an outstanding academic program that includes the development of the whole person, including socio-emotional and cognitive development. Through high-quality, excellent instruction and a passion for working with children, our school fosters an atmosphere that creates a joy for learning so that children can imagine, excel, and flourish. As parents, you play an important role in your child's success. The Montessori Method can benefit your child best when you understand the roles played by parents, guides (teachers), and students. Please use this handbook to become familiar with ArborCreek Montessori Academy. The handbook is reviewed annually and updated if necessary. Our priority is the same as yours: your child. We look forward to a wonderful and productive year together!

ArborCreek Montessori Academy is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. The officers, directors, committee members, employees, and persons served by ArborCreek Montessori Academy shall be selected entirely on a nondiscriminatory basis with respect to age, sex, race, religion, national origin, and sexual orientation. It is the policy of ArborCreek Montessori Academy not to discriminate on the basis of race, creed, ancestry, marital status, gender, sexual orientation, age, physical disability, veteran's status, political service or affiliation, color, religion, or national origin.

Mission

Our mission is to utilize the Montessori philosophy to foster a diverse learning environment where children of *all* backgrounds excel and flourish.

Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) observed that children learn with enthusiasm through discovery. In her work as a physician, she developed materials that foster independence, concentration, coordination, and order. These tools led to what would become the Montessori Method, wherein Guides work with parents and students to encourage the growth of the whole person. Montessori Guides excite and challenge students in a safe and nurturing environment. We value children as individuals, treat them with respect, and teach respect for the ideas and property of others as well as an appreciation of the environment. The Montessori philosophy allows each child to study at an individual pace, and the students experience both individual and group work, including the preparation and execution of long-term projects and presentations. Through the methods, materials, and practices, students develop a lifelong love of learning.

Why Montessori?

We are excited that you have chosen a Montessori education for your child and honored that ACMA will be providing that educational experience. The Montessori method reinforces the child's natural tendency toward discovery and readily allows each child to capitalize on inherent strengths as well as to apply herself or himself in areas needing attention for growth. Montessori education has been proven an effective method to reduce the achievement gap in educational systems, and it provides a strong foundation to assist children in developing independence, critical thinking skills, and creativity. Through paying close attention to each student, we can prepare them to create a path for themselves and to realize their greatest potential.

SCHOOL POLICIES

Accidents and Injuries

In case of a minor injury, ACMA staff will prepare an incident report form and notify the parent. In case of major injury/emergency, your child will be transported to the nearest hospital and parents will be notified immediately. Please keep us current on telephone and address changes as well as notification preferences to help with ensure you are informed in the event of emergency. ACMA does not assume responsibility in case an accident occurs, and is not financially responsible for emergency care or transportation.

Arrivals, Dismissals, and Attendance

The school day starts promptly at 8:30 am. Your child's academic and social progress depends upon punctuality and regular attendance. Parents are invited to drop off students between 8:10 - 8:25 am. Attendance is marked at 8:30; arrival after 8:30 will be marked as a "tardy". Five "tardy" marks translates into one (1) absence. Please communicate with us in advance whenever possible to alert us of an absence. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, such as illness, please be sure to notify the Office so that we are aware of the reason your child is absent. If your child is absent for a medical appointment (doctor, dentist, etc.), please send a doctor's note to have absences recorded as "excused" absences. Outside appointments are better handled after school whenever possible. *State standards lay out that students must attend school 90% of the days the class is offered in order to receive credit. ALL student absences, excused or unexcused, count towards the 90% Compulsory Attendance Law. Students who fall below 90% in attendance are required by the State of Texas to make up hours/minutes with a Principal's Plan or risk losing credit for class(es). ArborCreek's calendar includes 178 instructional days; if a student misses more than 18 days, she falls below the 90% attendance requirement. As a private school, we are able to work with you to remedy this issue in cases where such attendance issues can be addressed. However, habitual absences may impair a student's progress to the point where it is necessary to unenroll a student.*

Dismissal is at 3:15, and pickup is scheduled from 3:15 - 3:30. If pickup occurs after 3:30, this is considered "late pickup" and subject to the late pickup fee (\$1 per minute). This fee will be calculated after the end of the month and invoiced separately.

Note on Communication Policy at pickup/dropoff. Before class, Guides are busy preparing the classrooms and lessons, preparing for student arrival. These tasks requires their full attention in order to ensure a smooth work day for students. Similarly, Guides use the afternoon hours for staff meetings and lesson preparation work. We ask that parents refrain from attempting to speak with Guides regarding student issues during these transition times so that the Guide can give you her full attention and we can ensure privacy. Parents are welcome to speak with the Office to resolve questions or to set up an appointment with the Guide outside of classroom hours. See **Communications** in this manual for additional information on staff communications.

Cancellation of Classes and School Closures

It may be necessary to close, to start late, or otherwise deviate from the school schedule due to inclement weather or for other reasons. Check televised announcements (look for Carrollton Farmers Branch I.S.D. closings), email, and/or our Facebook page. In general, ACMA will be closed for most Federal Holidays and CFBISD breaks, as well as designated Staff Development days. See School Calendar (available online at www.acmontessoriacademy.org).

Celebrations at School (Birthdays and Holidays)

Birthdays: Montessori has a unique “Celebration of Life” for birthdays. Children may bring photographs in order to share his or her life story as well as a special snack to share. Your student may choose to bring photos in the form of a timeline, poster board, small photo album or even simply loose photos to share with classmates. (Note they will be eating a snack, so there is risk of damaging or smudging photos.) We ask that the snack follow one of the healthy suggestions from our Meals and Nutrition information pages; please note that cake/cupcakes, candy, and toys are not permitted. Some snack ideas may include cheese, fruit, yogurt cups, and/or vegetables with dip. Invitations for outside parties may be brought to class to distribute if there are enough for the entire class. If not, please handle invitations outside of the classroom setting.

Holidays: Holidays are a special time for families and are often deeply rooted in tradition. We enjoy the opportunity to learn about the history behind holiday traditions, and this is part of what makes our multicultural school so special. If you would like to share a tradition with the class, we welcome you to do so! Please make arrangements with the teacher for a date and time, and you and/or your student can make a 15-30 minute presentation to the class about your family’s tradition. As a school, we will also celebrate and study many of our national holidays (please see the calendar for full list of holidays).

Code Of Conduct

In the spirit of maintaining a safe and nurturing environment, promoting a peaceful atmosphere, and sustaining professional working relationships with our families, we ask that all grievances be addressed directly with the appropriate Staff member through a meeting or email communication. If you are unable to resolve your grievance with the Staff member directly, please contact the Office to request a conference with the Head of School. If it is appropriate, another leader from the school or outside resource (e.g., the Executive Director, Board of Directors or conflict specialist) may become involved as well. Your concerns are very important to us; early and clear communication is key to working together to ensure the best for your child.

Because our programs are based on developing partnerships with our families, it is only on rare occasions that a parent’s or guardian’s actions or requests may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for the child and family. Some examples of such instances include:

- A parent/guardian fails to abide by the school’s policies or those requirements imposed by appropriate licensing agencies.
- A parent/guardian demands special services which are not provided to other children and which cannot reasonably be delivered by the program (including requests that are outside the Montessori philosophy of the program).
- A parent/guardian is physically or verbally abusive to staff, faculty or students.

Communications: Notes, Emails, Messages, Phone Calls, Updates

Effective and open communication benefits your child! As we work in partnership together, we will communicate regularly via conferences, newsletters, and emails. Please be sure we have a valid email address and phone number on file for you, and please let us know of any changes in address, phone or other contact information in a timely fashion.

In order for us to best serve your student's needs, please keep us apprised of changes or situations that you feel may affect your student's progress or behavior at school, including changes experienced directly by your student or to your family's home life (i.e., visitors at home, pregnancy, family difficulties, moving, illness, financial stress, loss of a pet, etc.).

Methods of communication: We encourage you to please use email as the primary mode of communication with information about your child. Text messages regarding last minute issues are permitted, but a follow up email is highly encouraged, as it facilitates our ability to keep timely and accurate records regarding important communications about your child. (See below regarding additional communication guidelines with Guides.)

Mobile phone and tablet usage and communication: In order to maintain the concentration of the work cycle and in respect of the work of other students, ACMA maintains a policy of no mobile phones or personal tablets (or similar technology) in the classroom or otherwise during the school day. If there is a medical or other reason your child must utilize such as device during the school day, please make arrangements with the Office. Thank you for your understanding of this important policy.

In addition, we ask that parents refrain from mobile phone usage during drop off and pickup in order to facilitate safety in our parking lot and courtesy during this busy time. We certainly understand that parents lead busy lives and the use of mobile phones and devices is often necessary, but we also ask that you exercise minimal device use while on campus, and please limit this use to the front lobby. Model grace and courtesy with students by giving them your undivided attention at arrival and dismissal. Thank you.

Methods of communication with Guides: Guides have your child's best interest at heart and want to give you their uninterrupted attention. The best time to communicate with Guides is after school hours or in specific meeting times. To communicate information about your child during class hours, please leave a message in the Office, and your child's Guide will get back with you as soon as possible (within 1 day). Please refrain from texting regarding substantive issues; email is the best method for us to keep accurate and timely records about the needs of your student. You may also email the Office and/or the Guide at any time for any reason. You will receive a response within 24 hours. If it is an urgent matter, please notify the Office via phone or email. We will respond as soon as possible and, if warranted, will make arrangements for a conference with appropriate parties. See Parent/Teacher Conferences and Parent Involvement. ****Please be sure we have updated contact information for you and any other caretakers by sending any updates in writing (please send via email).****

Curriculum

The Montessori curriculum is conceived in cycles in accordance with the child's development: Pre-Primary (birth to 3 years), Primary (3 to 6 years), Elementary (6 to 9 and 9 to 12 years), and

Adolescence; 12 to 15 (7th-8th). Each child proceeds through these cycles in a logical manner based upon his or her stage of development, completing the work within each phase before moving on to the next, attaining greater competence at every step along the way. The Montessori Method succeeds because it draws its principles from the natural development of the child. Its inherent flexibility allows the method to adapt to the needs of the individual regardless of the level of ability or social maturity, with the result that each child becomes a lifelong learner with the capacity to fulfill an individual potential, whatever it may be. This curriculum includes exercises in Practical Life, Sensory Training, Language, Math, History, Geography, Geometry, Botany, Zoology, and Science. Art, Music, Physical Education, Cooking, Foreign Language, and Gardening are also incorporated. A copy of the Curriculum is available upon request or on our website: www.acmontessoriacademy.org.

Upper Elementary Goals: The goal of the Upper Elementary curriculum is to instill in the student joy in discovery, confidence in experimentation and experiential learning, a desire for independence and responsibility, strong cooperative learning and conflict resolution, and appreciation for others and our environment. These traits are central to the student building a foundation for life-long success.

Middle School Goals: The goal of the Middle School program is for the student to build upon the independence gained in the Upper Elementary years and enter into adolescence with the self-confidence necessary to gain strong self-knowledge, to build their own community, to learn to adapt to and contribute to the world around them, to seek personal and academic challenges, and to create a vision for their future.

Work Completion in the Curriculum:

Independent Work Time in School: A hallmark of Montessori education is independence. This is developed through the independent work cycle. At each level, students will have time set aside during the day to allow for long periods of concentration on the content of the curriculum. Students are given ample time to complete their school work during the day, and as they move through the program, they will receive decreasing reminders and redirection, allowing them to gain greater independence in decision making and time management. We also provide a **Study Hall** period to provide students with an opportunity to complete the work they were unable to complete during the day or to receive one-on-one time with the Guide.

Work Tracking: Students in each level are provided a work plan or similar tracking document to help them manage their time and the work they are to complete each week.

In **Upper Elementary**, work plans are provided at the start of each week for each student. The Guide specifically tracks which lessons and concepts each student needs to master, and provides those on the sheet so the student knows how to direct her work time. Work plans are tracked on a weekly basis and discussed in conferences. Students have autonomy to choose which work to complete on which days, though they may need the assistance of the Guide in spacing work throughout the week. Students get a wonderful sense of accomplishment when they have completed their work plan! Once it is complete, the student also completes a short assessment to reflect on what strategies worked well and what might be improved in future weeks. These concepts are also reviewed and discussed in the conferences as well.

In **Middle School**, work completion is tracked on a daily and weekly basis, which corresponds to the heavier workload at this level and the ongoing assessment and development

of an effective individual work style.

Incomplete Work: If a Middle School student has not completed her daily work, she will complete an Incomplete Work form, which helps her to identify what the root cause. This form is signed by the parent and Guide. The student and Guide work together to adjust the goals and work plan to address issues. If the student has three days of incomplete work, a family conference is scheduled to promptly review and address any underlying issues with work completion, with the goal of supporting the student as he finds the most effective work style to foster independence and confidence.

Weekly Work Graph: Students complete a graph of progress at the end of each week within a work cycle (cycles are usually 5 weeks long). Graphs are sent home each week to be reviewed with parents, and we ask parents to talk with their students about how their schoolwork and time management are progressing. Please sign and return the form on the following school day (usually a Monday).

Home Study: In Upper Elementary, students start a Home Study practice, which usually consists of study work appropriate for each student's individual needs that is given on Monday and due back on Friday. In Middle School, Home Study is a regular part of most days. This allows students to develop a practice of working outside of the structure of the classroom in order to prepare them for high school, college, and beyond. It is not intended for students to do this work during the Study Hall period on campus, as working at home (or in another appropriate location off campus) provides students with a chance to practice greater independence as well as to engage with parents, providing an additional bridge between the environments of home and school. Please see our Home Study Info handout and/or speak with your Guide for tips on making Home Study a rewarding experience.

Study Hall: We provide two weekly study hall sessions to provide students with an opportunity to work with their Guide on specific concepts or to catch up on any work that is not yet completed. This is a great tool for them to experiment with time management and strengthen concepts that might need more attention.

Classroom Management: Behavioral Expectations and Conflict Resolution

We use a positive approach to discipline in line with the Montessori philosophy. The goal of a Montessori education is to support children in developing self-regulation. The classroom is structured to avoid frustration and the behavioral problems that can arise as a result. Each Guide has an individual approach to classroom management, which is always centered on respect for each student. Working with classroom materials and companions is a privilege. Guides model respect for materials and the classroom environment, and students are responsible to carry out similarly respectful behavior throughout their day: in the classroom, during outside time, while working on special projects, during field trips, during meal times, etc. When a student exhibits difficulty in maintaining appropriate behavior, the student is provided an opportunity to redirect or recenter. The student may be invited to take time in another classroom, to work independently, or to refrain from a certain activity. If another student is involved, appropriate conflict resolution steps are followed (see below).

Conflict resolution is a key part of the Montessori method. Peer conflict is a part of everyone's life experience and social interactions. It is critical to model and guide students toward productive responses to these situations. The Guide will assist students in communicating

peacefully when peer conflict arises. Students who use inappropriate language or engage in inappropriate conduct are asked first to utilize the peace table (or other safe and appropriate space) as neutral ground to resolve the conflict. If a resolution does not result, the students may ask the Guide or an older student to weigh in on the matter and provide objective feedback. In the event that the issue persists, a meeting for the students with the Office and/or Head of School may be warranted.

This process of conflict resolution will be followed any time a dispute arises among students. In cases where inappropriate behavior occurs repeatedly, natural consequences will be given. Natural consequences do not involve shame or humiliation, but may include time away from a classroom activity if a student issue is interfering with the ability of others to work. This may include time in another classroom or another appropriate setting where the student can find time to regulate while allowing other students to continue their work.

A request for a family conference may be sent home when behavior rises to the level wherein parent involvement is warranted. Repetitive occurrences that do not warrant immediate parental notification and the progress made by students through the conflict resolution process will be noted and discussed at the regularly scheduled Conference time. If the Guide identifies that more immediate action is necessary, the Guide will get in touch with parents in writing and will advise the Office and Head of School. ACMA and its staff will work with any child/children whose parents are willing to work with ACMA in order to maintain consistency in both home and school environments.

Bullying policy: Bullying is characterized by a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, manipulate, or threaten another. Bullying usually includes a series of repeated and intentionally cruel or hurtful incidents. It involves an imbalance of power (real or perceived), and it may take on physical or verbal forms. ACMA takes such behavior seriously, and any bullying behavior will involve additional attention outside of the above processes. All instances of peer conflict are assessed by our professionally trained, experienced staff, and we take into account the individual personality of each student. We always strive to work with families to ensure proper intervention and supporting practices are in place.

In cases where parents are not willing to spend the necessary time in collaboration with ACMA staff to facilitate a resolution to bullying or similar behavior by students, or by any member of our community, it may become necessary for ACMA to advise parents to find a different educational environment better suited to the student and to the family's expectations. In addition, extreme cases of such behavior may also warrant the removal of a student from the ACMA program.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

In the event of an emergency, students will either shelter in place or may need to be evacuated, depending on circumstances.

- Nearby Evacuation Site: Parking lot of Edward Jones Building (one building south of ACMA: 14435 Webb Chapel Rd, Farmers Branch, TX 75234)
- Distance Evacuation Site: Strickland Intermediate School: 3030 Fyke Road, Farmers Branch, Texas 75234
- If we are unable to walk to our site, we will use alternate transportation and notify

parents at all times.

Our Sign-In and Sign-Out sheet and classroom attendance sheets will be used to check attendance at the designated evacuation site. Our Emergency packet is in our Office. We also keep on file a full Emergency Preparedness Plan, parent and emergency contact telephone numbers for each child, and Authorization for emergency care for each child in care. We will use cell phones, the School's cordless phone and/or a two way radio if necessary to communicate with local authorities.

Enrollment and Acceptance

The Admissions Office is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 am to 3:45 pm. ArborCreek Montessori Academy accepts students without regard to race, color, creed, or national origin and so administers its educational, admissions, and financial policies. ArborCreek Montessori Academy currently welcomes children from ages 8 to 14 years (4th to 8th Grade). A completed enrollment packet and all fees must be submitted to the Admissions Office in a timely manner (no later than 48 hours before a child starts attendance with our school), and appropriate meetings and visits will be conducted before the enrollment commences. Minimum enrollment of one full academic year is required to maintain the stability of the classroom environments; we do not offer part-time attendance programs due to the nature of the Montessori curriculum.

Financial Policies (Tuition/Fees/Payments/Discounts)

When ACMA accepts a student, significant financial commitments have already been made. Staff levels have been determined and employment contracts awarded. In order to ensure quality learning environments, investments are made in teaching, training, materials and the school grounds. The Tuition Schedule lists the annual amount due for the Academic School Year, which is due on August 1st. You may elect to make semester or monthly tuition payments, in which case, payments are due on the 1st of each month and delinquent after the 3rd day of the month. This includes days on which the 1st, 2nd, or 3rd falls on a weekend, holiday, or non-school day. A late fee will be assessed for payment received after the 3rd (see fee schedule on page 13). If enrolling after the first day of instruction, tuition is prorated using a daily rate according to the number of instructional days on school calendar.

Payments delinquent after 30 days may be turned over to an attorney for collection and enrollment may be suspended. A fee is charged for each returned check and will be re-deposited only once. After two returned checks, subsequent payments must be made by cash or money order.

Enrollment with ACMA is a commitment to the full academic year. Deposits paid at the beginning of the school year as part of the installment payment option are non-refundable and will be applied to the final installment payment of a full school year (e.g., applied in May) or be carried over to the subsequent enrollment period. Note that any outstanding fees such as late pickup or other fees will be deducted from this deposit if unpaid. If you terminate your student's enrollment prior to the end of the school year for any reason other than the student's medical need, the deposit fee will not be refunded due to the financial commitments that have already been made based on the enrollment agreement.

Early withdrawal: If a student is withdrawn prior to the first day of school, any tuition paid is non-refundable. If the parent chooses to withdraw the student from school during the school year, tuition and deposits paid to that point are non-refundable; in the case of families paying monthly, the deposit will not be credited to the final payment. The Enrollment Agreement must be fulfilled unless due to a medical illness verified in writing by a Licensed Physician. If a student is withdrawn at the request of the school, deposit(s) may be refunded at the discretion of the Head of School. Unpaid balances must be paid in full prior to the release of any school records or transcripts, including teacher reports and referrals. The purpose of these policies is to ensure the ongoing fiscal integrity of ArborCreek Montessori Academy.

Illness

Please remember that our illness policy is for your child's benefit, and must be strictly enforced for safety and wellness of the school community; a sick child can cause other children and Guides to become sick. When our Staff runs the risk of becoming sick, it is difficult to provide the quality education your child deserves. Students should be kept at home if they exhibit any sign of illness (temperature of more than 99.5 degrees, sore throat, cough, colored nasal discharge, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.), until the symptoms have stopped, until the child has been fever-free for 24 hours without a fever-reducing medication, or unless authorized in writing by a licensed physician. If a child requires medication more than once per day, she is considered too ill to participate in school and should remain at home. ACMA follows the communicable disease exclusions required for schools as defined by the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) in 25 TAC §97.7 (relating to Diseases Requiring Exclusion from Schools).

Immunization Requirements for Children

ACMA normally requires that each child enrolled in our programs meet applicable immunization requirements specified by the Texas Department of State Health Services in 25 TAC 97, (relating to Immunization Requirements for Students K-12). If our regional Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) or local health authority requires tuberculosis testing for children in our school (or other testing as deemed necessary for safety), you must have documentation to indicate that your child is free of active tuberculosis. We conduct annual file review to ensure families are up to date on immunizations and will notify you if a student is not meeting the published TDSHS standards. Please contact with any questions about the immunization policy.

Protecting Children from Vaccine-Preventable Diseases Policy

The policy for Staff required immunizations is as follows:

1. All Staff are required biennially (every two years) to submit a letter from their physician stating that they are in good health and are not in need of immunizations for vaccine preventable diseases and are able to work in a licensed Child Care Center in Texas.
2. Once an employee is identified as a risk by both the Administrative and Educational Director, the employee will not be allowed to be in contact with any children and/or able to return to work without proof of receiving the needed vaccine(s).
3. Employees will comply with this policy by signing and dating our form stating that they have read and agree to follow the procedures in this handbook. The employee will also need to provide documentation of the required vaccine. Acceptable documentation includes an original immunization record, a photocopy of the record, or an official immunization record generated from a state or local health authority, such as a registry. The immunization record must include:

- Name and birthdate;
 - The number of doses and vaccine type;
 - The month, day, and year the employee received each vaccination; and
 - The signature or stamp of the physician or other health care professional who administered the vaccine.
4. Any Staff who is exempt from having required immunization because of medical conditions identified as contraindications or precautions by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC); or by reasons of conscience, including religious belief, will submit a signed statement to that effect.
 5. Exempt Staff will provide documentation by a licensed physician that they pose no health risk to children by the Staff's direct and routine exposure to children. Such documentation must specify that the Staff use of protective medical equipment, including gloves and masks, will not interfere with everyday routines at ArborCreek as specified in staff handbook.
 6. Discrimination or retaliatory action against an exempt employee is prohibited. The requirement to use protective medical equipment, including gloves and masks may not be considered as retaliatory action for the purpose of this section.
 7. A copy of a record of each employee's compliance with or exemption from this policy shall remain in the Staff's file for the remainder of their employment.
 8. Failure to comply within 3 weeks of receiving the written warning will result in the Staff having their employment suspended without pay until such time as the required documentation has been received by the school.

Kitchen

Due to health and sanitation concerns, we ask that you do not enter the kitchen area without supervision or prior permission from the Guide. Student medication that requires refrigeration will be handled by our Office; please coordinate directly with our Office in such instances.

Meals and Nutrition

All food and drinks and serviceware are of safe quality and are stored, prepared, distributed, and served under sanitary and safe conditions, including but not limited to the following: food service equipment, dishes, and utensils are sanitized after each use (washed in dishwasher); reusable napkins and placemats are sent home to be washed after each use; single-service napkins, dishes, and utensils are discarded after use; staff with open wounds and/or any injury that inhibits hand washing, such as casts, bandages, or braces do not prepare food; food is covered when stored in the refrigerator; food preparation area is separated from learning and bathroom areas; the food preparation area is not used as a passageway while food is being prepared; and we do not store poisonous or toxic materials and cleaning supplies with food. Liquids and food hotter than 110 degrees F are kept out of reach. All staff are advised on food allergies and take precautions to ensure children are protected.

Food restrictions: Please be sure to notify the Office in writing of any changes to dietary restrictions or food allergies or sensitivities. On special occasions when we serve meals, prepared food that is brought into the school to be shared among children may be either commercially prepared or homemade.

Nutrition: How your child functions in the classroom is influenced by what she eats. We

discourage prepackaged foods (e.g., Lay’s, Lunchables, Hot Pockets, etc., as these are not nutrient-dense and may contain unhealthy preservatives). Candy, chips, chocolate, cookies, cakes, cupcakes, donuts, glass bottles, high sugar “gogurts,” juice beverages, flavored milks and food (e.g. chocolate milk or chocolate flavor cereal bars), and carbonated beverages are not allowed for nutrition and safety reasons. Filtered water is served with every snack and is available throughout the day. Students are also welcome to store extra snacks and beverages, as space allows, to ensure they have plenty to eat throughout the day. Students requiring additional nutritional support must have written approval from a physician or a registered or licensed dietician detailing the therapeutic or special diet including nutrient concentrates and supplements. As noted in the Celebrations section, this policy also applies to birthday celebration snacks.

We ask that your student be provided with a healthy lunch from home in an insulated lunch box with an ice pack (lunches can be stored in the kitchen refrigerator). A microwave and toaster oven are available to warm up lunch items, but please limit warm-ups to no more than three minutes. Your child’s name should appear on the outside of the lunch box. To encourage trash-free lunches, ACMA encourages the use of recyclable/reusable items to pack lunches rather than plastic bags. Please send food in reusable containers whenever possible. Students are encouraged to bring home any uneaten food in their lunch boxes. Our goal is a waste-free and nutritious lunch!

Here are some diverse ideas for healthy foods to prepare and pack in your student’s lunch:

Grains	Spreads & Condiments	Fillings	Fruits	Vegetables
bagel	almond butter	carrots (shredded)	apricots	asparagus
baguette	apple butter	cheese (lite/low-fat)	avocado	beets
bread sticks	avocado (mashed)	chicken	blueberries	bell peppers
crackers	banana (mashed)	chicken salad	cherries	bok choy
English muffin	brie cheese	egg salad	cranberries (dried)	Brussels sprouts
focaccia	cashew butter	hard boiled egg	dates	cabbage
lavash bread	cream cheese (lowfat)	nitrite-free hot dogs	figs	cauliflower
pita bread	goat cheese	lettuce	mango	eggplant
pizza bread	honey	shrimp salad	papaya	green beans
rice cakes	hummus	sliced avocado	pears	mushrooms
rolls	jam (spreadable fruit)	sliced cucumber	prunes	seaweed (nori, wakame, hijiki)

sandwich bread	ketchup	smoked salmon	raisins	shelling peas
tortillas	mayonnaise/mustard	sprouts	grapefruit	snap peas
pasta	peanut butter	tofu	kiwi	soy beans (edamame)
rice	pesto	tuna salad	melon	spinach
couscous	pizza or tomato sauce		nectarines	squash
oatmeal	pumpkin butter		peaches	sweet potatoes
bulgar			pineapple	yams
			plums	zucchini
			raspberries	
			tomatoes	

Food Allergies: Many children may have food allergies - about 3 million in the United States alone. These foods cause the most food allergies: peanuts and tree nuts, seafood, milk (particularly cow's) milk, eggs, soy, and wheat. **What Is a Food Allergy?** A simplified explanation is that food allergies occur when the immune system is not functioning properly. Normally, your immune system protects you from germs and disease. It does this by making antibodies that help you fight off bacteria, viruses, and other tiny organisms that can make you sick. But if you have a food allergy, your immune system mistakenly treats something in a certain food as a dangerous threat and the body reacts in sometimes dangerous ways (anaphylactic shock, hives, swelling or similar symptoms). If your doctor has determined your child has a food allergy, please send a food allergy emergency plan signed by you and your student's doctor to ACMA.

Garden

By incorporating a gardening experience into our curriculum, we can enhance the way children approach and think about food. All around the country we see schools and children's advocacy groups working to enable children to enthusiastically get their hands dirty while learning how to grow, harvest, prepare, and share fresh, seasonal food. The staff of ArborCreek strongly believes that children are likely to make better food choices when they understand where good food comes from, know how to prepare it, and have the opportunity to share it with friends, family, and their community. Children also need to understand how to harvest and use produce to prepare meals and snacks that can be replicated at home. Strategies to educate your child about nutrition are often discussed at lunch time.

Medication

In order to give students any medication (oral, nasal, topical or otherwise), we must have a signed and dated Medication Form, which must include the name of the student, the name of

the medication, dosage, and related information. Provide the Form, the labeled medication in its original container, and any necessary administration tools to the Office. For safety reasons, please *do not* send medication in your child's backpack, lunchbox, or pocket; this is a potential danger to other students. Medications administration will be arranged with the Office; please note that there are restrictions on our ability to administer medication, and we will work with you to best accommodate the student's need. See Illness policy for information about keeping students home due to illness.

Observations

In order to make an appointment to observe your child's class, please telephone or stop by the Office. We have an Open Door Policy. You may observe your child, our operation, and program activities at any time; we kindly ask for prior notification so as to make arrangements for observation space, but it is not required. Please understand that certain times are not opportune for observation. We want your child to have quality work time with the least amount of distraction possible, and unexpected visits from parents or family can be a disruption.

Parent Involvement is Encouraged!

Consistent communication and collaboration are essential to the success of your student in the ACMA Montessori program. Our nonprofit school depends in no small part on our wonderful volunteers in order to maintain our sense of community as well as to minimize financial costs to our families. We encourage parents to join our PTO group, which organizes volunteer opportunities and helps to plan/assist the school with its mission and special functions as determined at the meetings. A positive and constructive working relationship between ACMA and the families we serve is essential to the fulfillment of our educational purpose. We need you to be a part of our growing school, and your student benefits greatly from your participation.

Communication: Newsletters and email communications are the primary method through which we will communicate notifications to parents and opportunities for involvement; please be sure we have a valid email address on file. Text communications are discouraged other than for emergent situations and notifications.

Parent/Teacher and Family Conferences

Conferences are scheduled at least three times per year: fall, mid-year, and spring. Some conferences will involve the participation of your student and some will not; your Guide will provide specific details. The purpose of the conference will include goal setting, assessing progress, reflecting on achievements and challenges, and celebrating the accomplishments of each student. We enjoy working collaboratively with our families to assess the student's current and future learning goals and potentials, to map out the plan for development throughout the year, and to discuss activities and engagement in learning that will take place at home.

Upper Elementary Conferences: Your student's Guide will advise whether it is appropriate for your student to attend the conference with you, and this is increasingly common as they move up in the program. Our ability to foster independence in our students relies on having the students become aware of and participate in goal setting and reflection upon their work and individual work styles.

Middle School Conferences: All scheduled conferences in the Middle School are designed

to include student participation. Again, these scheduled family conferences are centered on goal setting, assessment, reflection on learning styles, and self-evaluation. Students will prepare for these conferences by evaluating their progress in their work as well as progress in personal and community responsibility. They will also prepare a portfolio of academic work and request input from their Guide as well as parents. This is a wonderful time to celebrate the many achievements and to lay the groundwork for the path ahead with the support of school and family.

In addition to these scheduled conferences regarding school work and personal development, additional conferences may be scheduled as needed either with your student or in private with the Guide or other staff. Please contact the Office for your child's Guide for such a request.

Personal Items

Please label every item your child brings to school with first and last name. We understand that this is time consuming; however, we may be unable to identify the owner of items without such information. Each child is asked to bring a family photograph (in a sturdy frame) and a plant to school for which the student will be responsible. Toys, gum, candy, money, dangerous items, or large jewelry items are not allowed at school with the exception of certain activities as communicated by the Guides. ACMA will not be responsible for lost or missing items; we strongly encourage children to avoid bringing valuables to school. See Sharing.

Questions and Concerns

Parent-Teacher conferences, parent education books, magazines, tapes, videos, classes, and observations are all designed to help you understand your child's method of education using the Montessori Philosophy. When you have a question or concern, please bring it to our attention as soon as possible so that we may better meet your family's needs. Questions regarding your child should be directed first to the Lead Teacher and then to the Head of School. Questions about the school or its policies (illness, financial, etc.) should be directed first to the Office, who will relay them to the Business Manager or to the Administrative Director as appropriate.

Referrals

ACMA's program focuses on the child. We seek to provide programs designed to support children's growth and to challenge them to learn as individuals with unique learning styles and ways of responding to the world. Given the diversity of families and communities we serve, we recognize and appreciate the characteristics and behaviors that each student brings to our school. Our desire is to provide a program that truly celebrates and values the individuality of each child.

Release of Children

Only persons listed on the Child Release Authorization will be allowed to pick up your child from school. If you have someone other than those listed on the CRA picking up your child, the Office **must** have prior written notification from a parent or legal guardian. A Release Authorization Form (RAF) is available in the Office or you may include on a separate sheet of paper the following information: child's name, parent's signature, person authorized to pick up your child and their telephone number(s) and driver's license number. Authorization via email is allowed with authorized signature and the above information. No child will be released by telephone

authorization. Only adults listed on your child’s RAF are permitted to use the keypad to enter the building. Please do not share your code beyond this group.

Schedule of Fees and Discounts

School Day Program 8:30am - 3:15pm (Arrival at 8:00 and pick up at 3:20)

Fees	Charge
Registration (annually)	\$150.00
Application	\$495.00
Deposit	\$500.00
Late Payment Fee (daily after 3 days late)	\$10.00 per day (max 5% of monthly tuition)
Returned Check Service Fee	\$25.00
Late Pickup after 3:30 (per minute)	\$1.00

Discounts	
Second child enrolled (sibling)	10%
Three Children enrolled (all receive)	10%
Pre-pay Tuition for the School Year by Aug 1 st	5%
Pre-pay Tuition for the Semester by Aug 1 st /Jan 1 st	3%
Teacher/Student (full-time)	5%
Corporate (50 or more employees)	5%
Active Military	5%
Parent Referrals	\$200.00 credit

Student Binders and Portfolios

Students maintain their work at school in a portfolio, which will be theirs to keep. Upper Elementary students keep one large binder per semester. Middle School students maintain binders for each Cycle as well as journals for various subjects of study. These items are available for your review at any time, and students are encouraged to take them home at the completion of the work period.

Technology

Technology is an integral part of our world. Classroom laptops and tables are used for research purposes, access to foreign language software, and to assist the Guide with lessons as is appropriate and necessary.

Uniforms and Clothing

Goals for the students include independence, concentration, coordination, and order. As such, you can understand the importance of appropriate attire. Remember that your student’s clothing may very likely get soiled at school. We recommend durable, washable fabrics. Hats, loose-fitting boots, and sandals or open-toed shoes are discouraged for safety reasons. All students need to bring a second set of athletic shoes to leave at school for outdoor time. Uniforms are required; please reference the guidelines below.

Shirts: Long or short sleeve polo-style shirts only. Sweaters or jackets that will be worn in the classroom can be any style with no writing.

Shoes: Any style meeting ACMA requirements (see above).

Skirts: To maintain modesty, girls must wear shorts under jumpers and skirts.

	<u>Sweater/Jacket/Shirt</u>	<u>Pants/Shorts/Jumper/Skirt</u>	<u>School T-shirt & Jeans</u>
Boys	White, Dark Green, Navy, Orange	Khaki	Friday only
Girls	White, Dark Green, Navy, Orange	Khaki (w/ shorts/leggings)	Friday only

APPENDICES

Appendix 1. Code of Ethics of the American Montessori Society

(Adopted by the AMS Board of Directors October 1969, Expanded June 1975)

Our Head of School, Sima Cheregosha, is a lifetime American Montessori Society member. Under her leadership, we pledge to conduct ourselves professionally and personally in ways that will reflect our respect for each other and for the children we serve. We will do whatever is within our talents and capacity to protect the rights of each child to have the freedom and opportunity to develop to his/her full potential.

PRINCIPLE I - Commitment to the Student.

In fulfillment of the obligation to the children, the educator:

1. Shall encourage independent action in the pursuit of learning.
2. Shall protect the opportunity to provide for participation in educational programs without regard to race, sex, color, creed or national origin.
3. Shall protect the health and safety of students.
4. Shall honor professional commitments, maintain obligations and contracts while never soliciting nor involving students or their parents in schemes for commercial gain.
5. Shall keep in confidence information that has been secured in the course of professional purposes or is required by law.

PRINCIPLE II - Commitment to the Public.

The Montessori educator shares in the responsibility for the development of policy relating to the extension of educational opportunity for all and for interpreting educational programs and policies to the public. In fulfilling these goals, the educator:

1. Shall support his professional society and not misrepresent its policies in public discussion. Whenever speaking or writing about policies, the Montessori educator should take the precaution to distinguish his private views from the official position of the Society.
2. Shall not interfere with nor exploit the rights and responsibilities of colleagues within the teaching profession.

PRINCIPLE III - Commitment to the Profession.

The Montessori educator makes efforts to raise professional standards and conditions to attract persons worthy of trust to careers in Montessori education. In fulfilling these goals the educator:

1. Shall extend just and equitable treatment of all members of the Montessori education profession.
2. Shall represent his own professional qualification with clarity and true intent.
3. Shall apply for, accept, offer, recommend, and assign professional positions and responsibilities on the basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications.
4. Shall use honest and effective methods of administering his duties, use of time and conducting business.

All AMS Montessori teachers, members, and AMS Schools Affiliates are expected to uphold and abide by the CODE OF ETHICS.

Appendix 2. Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect Policy

The number for reporting abuse and neglect is 1-800-252-5400. State law requires anyone who suspects child abuse or neglect to report those suspicions to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) or to local law enforcement. Any person who suspects abuse, but fails to report it, can be charged with a misdemeanor or state jail felony. Mandatory reporters (teachers and educational staff) are required to report signs of abuse within 48 hours. ACMA staff receive annual training in prevention techniques for and the recognition of symptoms of abuse and neglect as well as the responsibility and procedure for reporting suspected abuse and neglect. Online training and supplemental information and resources are available through DFPS: <https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Training/Reporting/>.

Factors indicating a child is at risk of abuse or neglect:

Individual Risk Factors

- Children younger than 4 years of age
- Special needs that may increase caregiver burden (e.g., disabilities, mental retardation, mental health issues, and chronic physical illnesses)

Risk Factors for Perpetration:

Individual Risk Factors

- Parents' lack of understanding of children's needs, child development and parenting skills
- Parents' history of child maltreatment in family of origin
- Substance abuse and/or mental health issues including depression in the family
- Parental characteristics such as young age, low education, single parenthood, large number of dependent children, and low income
- Nonbiological, transient caregivers in the home (e.g., mother's male partner)
- Parental thoughts and emotions that tend to support or justify maltreatment behaviors

Family Risk Factors

- Social isolation
- Family disorganization, dissolution, and violence, including intimate partner violence
- Parenting stress, poor parent-child relationships, and negative interactions

Community Risk Factors

- Community violence
- Concentrated neighborhood disadvantage (e.g., high poverty and residential instability, high unemployment rates, and high density of alcohol outlets), and poor social connections.

How to Recognize **Child Abuse**:

There are four major types of child maltreatment: physical abuse, neglect, sexual abuse, and emotional abuse. Physical Abuse is physical injury that results in substantial harm to the child, or the genuine threat of substantial harm from physical injury to the child. The physical injury (ranging from minor bruises to severe fractures or death) can result from punching, beating, shaking, kicking, biting, throwing, stabbing, hitting, burning, choking, or otherwise harming a child. Such injury is considered abuse regardless of whether the caretaker intended to hurt the child.

Suspect Physical Abuse When You See:

- Frequent injuries such as bruises, cuts, black eyes, or burns without adequate explanations
- Frequent complaints of pain without obvious injury
- Burns or bruises in unusual patterns that may indicate the use of an instrument or human bite; cigarette burns on any part of the body
- Lack of reaction to pain
- Aggressive, disruptive, and destructive behavior
- Passive, withdrawn, and emotionless behavior
- Fear of going home or seeing parents
- Injuries that appear after a child has not been seen for several days
- Unreasonable clothing that may hide injuries to arms or legs

Neglect is failure to provide for a child's basic needs necessary to sustain the life or health of the child, excluding failure caused primarily by financial inability unless relief services have been offered and refused.

Suspect Neglect When You See:

- Obvious malnourishment
- Lack of personal cleanliness
- Torn or dirty clothing
- Stealing or begging for food
- Child unattended for long periods of time
- Need for glasses, dental care, or other medical attention
- Frequent tardiness or absence from school

Sexual Abuse includes fondling a child's genitals, penetration, incest, rape, sodomy, indecent exposure, and exploitation through prostitution or producing pornographic materials.

Suspect Sexual Abuse When You See:

- Physical signs of sexually transmitted diseases
- Evidence of injury to the genital area
- Pregnancy in a young girl
- Difficulty in sitting or walking
- Extreme fear of being alone with adults of a certain sex
- Sexual comments, behaviors or play
- Knowledge of sexual relations beyond what is expected for a child's age
- Sexual victimization of other children

Emotional Abuse is mental or emotional injury that results in an observable and material impairment in a child's growth, development, or psychological functioning. It includes extreme forms of punishment such as confining a child in a dark closet, habitual scapegoating, belittling, and rejecting treatment for a child.

Suspect Emotional Abuse When You See:

- Over compliance
- Low self-esteem
- Severe depression, anxiety, or aggression
- Difficulty making friends or doing things with other children
- Lagging in physical, emotional, and intellectual development
- Caregiver who belittles the child, withholds love, and seems unconcerned about the child's problems

Child Neglect Prevention and Intervention

Programs that promote a positive and responsive parent-child relationship are desirable as prevention and intervention strategies. Optimally, parents can be assisted when their children are very young and the families are not yet presenting serious child behavior problems. Chances for better parent-infant relationships are improved, and the likelihood of child neglect is diminished. The intensity of interventions required for children to catch up is expensive and unlikely to be available. For children of families living in poverty, the support needed for proper development often exceeds what their parents can provide. These children may benefit from quality child care or preschool settings, such as Head Start, a component not typically considered in most interventions for neglected children. These center-based programs can offer the parent respite from child care and teach the child communication and problem-solving skills that may buffer the child from some effects of neglect.

Principles for Effective Prevention and Intervention

Efforts targeting single risk factors may be as effective in preventing neglect and its recurrence as programs that are individualized and offer multiple services. Either way, services must be based on principles that empower families, build upon strengths, and respect cultural diversity. The following are some basic principles for practitioners who intervene with families when children's basic needs are unmet:

- Have an ecological-developmental framework. Neglect may be viewed within a system of risk and protective factors interacting at multiple levels, including the individual, the family system, and the larger social system. Examples include affordable child care, education and employment opportunities, low-income housing, and large-scale drug prevention and treatment initiatives.
- Understand the importance of outreach and community. Because families experiencing neglect tend to be poor, socially isolated, and lacking access to resources, interventions must include aggressive outreach and be designed to mobilize concrete formal and informal helping resources. It must be a collaborative process between the family and community in which people plan and carry out goals together for strengthening their neighborhood.
- A comprehensive assessment can be made using standardized clinical measures of risk and protective factors, as well as by assessing parenting attitudes, knowledge, and skills.

- Establish a helping alliance and partnership with the family. Utilize an empowerment-based practice. Emphasize family strengths. Develop cultural competence. Risk and protective factors for child neglect may differ according to race and ethnicity. Ensure developmental appropriateness. Practitioners must consider the developmental needs of the children, the caregivers, and the family as a system in their assessments and intervention strategies.

Strategies for coordination between school and community organizations: any and all staff members who suspect abuse and/or neglect will notify the Director immediately by verbal communication as well as in writing within 24 hours. The Director will then contact the following organizations: Dallas Children's Advocacy 214.818.2600 or 1.800.244.5373 to obtain assistance and intervention.

The parent of a child who is a victim of abuse or neglect should contact the Director as well as the local Child Abuse Prevention Center and/or the local licensing office (www.dfps.state.tx.us) for assistance and intervention information regarding community-based organizations that offer resources.

Appendix 3. Required Notifications

1. You are entitled to the following information: Emergency Preparedness Plan; The Minimum Standards for Licensed Child-Care Center; the most recent DFPS Inspection/Investigation Report; DFPS website www.dfps.state.tx.us; Local Licensing Office: DFPS, Child Care Licensing, 8700 N. Stemmons Frwy, Ste. 104, Dallas TX 75247, 214.951.7902 and 214.583.4253 and 1.800.582.6036.
2. Transportation is provided for field trips. Water activities (sprinklers only) may be provided during Summer Camp. Field Trips are provided occasionally, and we comply with each of the following requirements when conducting such trips: secure signed permission from the parent to take a child on a field trip, including permission to transport the child, if applicable; one or more chaperones must carry emergency medical consent forms and emergency contact information for each child on the field trip; chaperones must have a written list of all children on the field trip and keeps account for the presence of all children; chaperones will carry a basic first-aid kit; each child must wear a shirt, name tag, or other identification listing the name of the school; each chaperone must be easily identifiable by all children on the field trip by wearing a hat, school t-shirt, brightly-colored clothes, or other easily spotted identification; each chaperone on a field trip must have transportation available or a communication device such as a mobile phone, message pager, or two-way radio available or an alternate plan for transportation at the field trip location in case of emergency. We will notify the parent of each child who will be on the field trip indicating when and where the child will be going and when the child is expected to return to school. The notice will be provided at least 48 hours in advance of a field trip. We post field trip notices in a prominent place at school where parents and others may view it. The notice will remain posted until all children on the field trip have returned.
3. In every classroom we have a variety of pets which may include birds, fish, hermit crabs, etc. Parents will be notified in writing within 24 hours of any changes to our policies regarding animals/class pets at school.

4. Regarding Bill 2086, please be informed that certain gang-related criminal activity or engaging in organized criminal activity within 1000 feet of this program is a violation of this law and therefore subject to increased penalty.