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2009-2010 PARENT HANDBOOK

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**Welcome to Woods Creek Montessori.
We are happy to have you and your family with us.**

Staff Articulation of WCM Mission & Core Values:

We are a community dedicated to discovering and supporting the greatness in each of us and using that greatness to enrich our world now and in the future.

As we live this mission, we will endeavor to instill certain values in the children so that when they leave us, they will be prepared to meet life fully, with confidence and a desire to contribute to the world.

Sense of Self

Authenticity
Integrity
Honesty
Self-Respect
Self-Worth
Self-Awareness
Spiritual foundation

Creativity

In an effort to carry out this mission, we will seek ways to enhance the children's Montessori educational and cultural experiences through expanded curriculum programs and interactive opportunities, such as international celebrations, family social events and community outreach to Kendal and other schools and service agencies.

Sense of Respect

Love
Compassion
Consideration

Sense of Community

Charity
Cultural awareness
Respect
Love of country

--Created by the Staff, April 11-15, 2005.

Sense of Service

Peace
Leadership
Spirit

Sense of Motivation

Independence
Purpose
Responsibility
Accountability
Sense of Wonder
Curiosity
Questioning
Thinking
Joyful Learning

Sense of Whimsy

Play
Joy
Fun
Possibility
Imagination

Introduction to the Parent Handbook

The Parent Handbook describes the philosophy, the policies and the procedures of the Woods Creek Montessori. Since the Handbook serves as a valuable and informational resource, all parents are encouraged to read it in full and to refer to it as needed. Parents are always invited to direct questions about the Handbook or WCM policies to the Director.

We, the WCM Staff, consider parents to be partners in their children's education. We see their school experience as a continuum of the parents' nurturing and goals, recognizing that we merely build on the strengths parents have fostered. We recognize the importance of forming a close partnership with parents because meaningful communication among the parents, teachers and administration provides the consistency necessary for the guidance of children. Children feel supported when they see their parents actively participating in school life through school meetings, teacher conferences, school gatherings, work days, and fundraising events. In these contexts children see that their school is valuable to their parents.

WCM is a cooperative school, meaning that it relies on its families to contribute to its healthy operation. Information regarding our co-op system is provided for parents below. Parents' co-op work provides an essential service to the school and opportunities for making new friends and getting to know other WCM families.

Parents are welcome to observe in the classroom. However, we request that you refrain from scheduling visits during the first six weeks of the school year to allow time for the students to develop their classroom community. So that parents may gain as much as possible from the classroom experience, we have Guidelines for Observation available for parents to review prior to the classroom observation (see below). Parents are encouraged to schedule a time for observation with the Director.

History and Organization

Woods Creek Montessori, originally called the Montessori Center for Children, Inc., is a not-for-profit corporation established in 1992 in Lexington, Virginia, by a group of interested parents and community members guided by Shirley Ziegler in consultation with Yates Noble. Ms. Noble, a Montessori teacher trained and certified through the American Montessori Internationale organization, served as MCC's first Directress. In its first year, the school was housed in the basement of the Randolph St. Memorial Methodist Church. In the fall of 1993, the school was housed temporarily at The Good Shepherd Evangelical Lutheran Church until the present building was completed November 1, 1993.

Since 1993, the school has been housed at 2 Dold Place, Lexington, on the campus of Washington and Lee University, adjacent to Woods Creek. The school invested capital, and financed renovation of the original building and the addition of an upstairs classroom. In exchange for MCC's financial outlay, Washington and Lee provide the school with affordable rent and a long-term lease. With the concurrence of Washington and Lee, a second Primary classroom was constructed during the summer of 2003 at MCC's present location. In 2005, the upper classroom was built on the WCM campus with the assistance of United Way funds.

The Board of Directors has fiscal responsibility for the school. Its role is to guide the overall development of the school and support the Staff in implementing the Montessori method of education. Ideally, the Board is comprised of 12 members with a balance of current WCM parents, alumni parents, and non-WCM-affiliated community members. The Executive Director and staff are responsible for the daily operation of the school and for maintaining the integrity of the Montessori philosophy and curriculum in the classrooms.

The Board of Directors takes great care to recruit and hire Montessori teachers who hold diplomas from the American Montessori Society (AMS), the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) or a MACTE approved teacher training program. Along with their qualifying training credentials, teachers are chosen by the Board for their competence and love of guiding children in their emotional, physical, social, and intellectual development. WCM seeks out classroom assistants who demonstrate a genuine care for children and their needs, and who share an interest in developing as Montessori teachers.

WCM is non-denominational and open to children of all backgrounds, without discrimination in regard to race, religion, gender, nationality or economic and educational background. The school desires as much diversity among the children and staff as possible.

Our Purpose

Woods Creek Montessori recognizes that all children are born with a yearning for self-development and learning. The mission of the school is, therefore, to provide an environment and curriculum designed to facilitate the development of the whole child. The goal of the program is to allow each child to experience the joy of learning in a supportive and stimulating environment, develop self-esteem and work toward realizing full potential in all areas of life. We believe an inherent part of our mission is to provide this opportunity to all children regardless of race, religion, gender, nationality, or economic and educational background.

WCM has four classroom environments. The Pre-Toddler class serves children from the age of 16 months until approximately 24 months. The Toddler class serves children of approximately 24 to 36 months of age. These classes provide a comfortable introduction to a school experience and preparation for the Primary class. The school has two Primary classes offering 3-6 year-old children a wide range of learning activities appropriate for their age and development. While all the children work together in the morning, children of or approaching Kindergarten age participate in an afternoon program designed to meet their specific academic needs and interests.

In an effort to accommodate the needs of our families, WCM provides an After School program for children. Summer camp is offered most summers, when enrollment and staffing allow. After School and Summer programs incorporate aspects of the Montessori approach, but they are not technically Montessori programs.

Montessori Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori was the first woman to earn a medical degree from the University of Rome in 1896. She brought all of her experience as a doctor, an anthropologist and a scientist to her

work with young children when she opened her first school in the tenement houses of San Lorenzo, Italy in 1907. Montessori spent a great deal of time observing these children, their behavior, their interactions with each other and the classroom. Through these observations, she discovered what the children needed to thrive physically and cognitively. Paying close attention to the subtle cues the children were providing her and consulting with educational experts of her day, Montessori was able to prepare a learning environment and design materials that served the children's every aspect of development.

Montessori's work shed a new light on the care and education of young children. She saw that each child has a personality and characteristics that are unique to that child alone, and that because of those inherent qualities, each child deserves to be respected for whom he or she is at any and all stages of life. Montessori recognized that the education is an experience for the child as a complete person, not just a formula of rote dictations for the intellect. For this reason, Montessori developed a theory of education that included methods and materials that addressed each aspect of the child's being – intellectual, physical, emotional and social. Children who live and learn in such an atmosphere of respect experience the true joy of education – they gain a sense of themselves as people, discover and explore the world around them and begin to consider how they can fit into it, now and in the future.

Montessori Terms

When Montessori developed her theory and method, she included a certain vocabulary to describe her philosophical and educational concepts and her understanding of children and their developmental and educational needs. Parents may find the following explanations helpful when reading and hearing about Montessori.

The Vocabulary for the Child:

- **Unique Individual** – Each child is his or her own person, intrinsically worthwhile in his and her own right.
- **Respect** – Each child deserves to be considered and acknowledged as a valuable person at every age, stage and phase of life. As children experience respect from others, they will learn to respect themselves and others.
- **Individual Rate of Progress (Learning at One's Own Pace)** – The right of the child to learn a lesson, to understand a concept and to master a skill within a time frame suitable to his or her learning style and developmental capability.
- **Sensitive Periods** – The time in the child's development when he and she are especially prepared to learn a specific skill.
- **Absorbent Mind** – The child's ability to absorb knowledge (to learn consciously or unconsciously) from his or her environment and experiences.

The Vocabulary for the Classroom:

- **Prepared Environment** – A learning space established for children with special attention paid to beauty of arrangement, order of learning materials (left to right, simple to complex, concrete to abstract), and an atmosphere conducive to security, calmness and independent learning.

- **Didactic Materials** – The specially designed materials and learning activities which best teach the children the lessons and skills they are ready to learn.
- **Curriculum Areas** – The classroom is divided into five major areas of learning, each containing materials and activities appropriate for the children in the class: Sensorial, Practical Life, Language, Math and the Cultural Subjects.
- **Ground Rules (Classroom Guidelines)** – The cornerstones of the classroom decorum from which the children gain an understanding of order, peace and calm and mutual respect. Presented in various forms, and always in positive terms, they read:
 1. We take care of ourselves.
 2. We take care of each other.
 3. We take care of the materials in the classroom and on the playground.
- **Liberty within Limits** – Once the children have learned to respect the people in the class, the classroom guidelines and the materials, they are free to move about the classroom and to work as independently as they see fit. They have the security of knowing what is expected of them and what they can expect from others. The experience of independence gives children the opportunity to develop a positive self-image as a valued and respected person and the confidence to move forward academically, emotionally and socially.

The Vocabulary for Lessons:

Each Montessori material and learning activity has certain inherent characteristics which ensure the child's success in completing a lesson.

- **Control of Error** – Each material or activity is designed so that any mistake a child may make becomes readily apparent and easily corrected. The success and ability to master a task leads to the development of the child's self-confidence.
- **Cycle of Activity** – Each exercise involves the process of:
 1. Choose the work.
 2. Do the work.
 3. Return the work to its proper place.
 This process leads to the child's sense of order and security.
- **Point of Interest** – The built-in aspect of an activity or material that captures the child's interest and imagination and encourages him or her to work with the activity until the intended lesson is learned or the skill is mastered.
- **Direct Aim** – Each material, activity, exercise and lesson has specific and intended skills for the child to learn.
- **Indirect Aim** – Along with the intended and obvious skills presented to a child, each material or activity has some indirect (underlying) lessons available to the child:
 1. Concentration
 2. Coordination
 3. Independence
 4. Order
 5. Awareness of self and the environment and how the two interact

The Montessori Classroom Environment

Human Beings are formed slowly...and each individual is different from every other, having his own distinct spirit, as if he were a natural piece of art. The process takes a very long time.

Maria Montessori
Child in the Family

The Montessori curriculum is linked to the child's entrance into an environment prepared to recognize the child's unique personality and individual interests. The Montessori teacher's purpose is to observe each child in order to become familiar with his or her individual learning style, personality, needs and interests and then to guide each child toward the fulfillment of those developmental needs and educational interests. The child is encouraged to explore the classroom to gain knowledge and master skills by choosing the materials and activities that interest him or her. Such exploration, however, is not limited to the classroom, but includes the child's home, the outdoors and the larger community. In the Montessori classroom, emphasis is given to the development of personal skills and social sensitivities, the development of coordination, the ability to concentrate and the perseverance to complete tasks. The teacher maintains an atmosphere that respects the child and gives precedence to nurturing self-esteem and self-discipline as he or she grows and learns in a manner appropriate for each child.

Curriculum Description

Montessori classrooms contain specific learning areas within which each child is free to choose work, move about, and receive individual guidance and encouragement by the teacher (guide) as needed. The children learn to equate the terms "work" and "play" because their work is pleasurable and fulfilling. They work individually and in small groups and large groups.

The Montessori teacher acts as a catalyst and guide to help the child learn by doing. The teacher demonstrates the way to work with the materials, and then invites the child to try it on his or her own. Based on observations of the child, the teacher serves as the child's link to the learning materials and the environment. Careful to stay in tune with the child's sensitive periods, the teacher shows each child new activities that relate to his or her interests and level of development at a given time. Learning is simplified and enhanced because the child is learning what he/she wants to learn. Because the level of difficulty presented is in harmony with the child's readiness (sensitive period), the child's likelihood of success is high. With each opportunity to succeed, the child is heartened to progress to the next level of difficulty.

Our school is oriented toward assisting the children in developing their powers of critical analysis and creative problem solving. The children are also guided through processes of fact absorption along with skill mastery.

Parents may find it helpful to read one or more of the books by Dr. Maria Montessori and additional books on child development, as the basis for our sharing ideas, goals and ways of nurturing the children. A list of suggested books can be found with the specific Curriculum Descriptions. Some books are available in the school office. Others maybe obtained through the public library and the bookstores.

Pre-Toddler Program Description:

From the time a child is born, s/he is considered to be a very unique, special individual, respected as the valuable human being s/he is. The world is graced with the presence of each new being, and our work, as the most important adults in each child's life, is to provide love, care and guidance every step of the way.

The purpose of the Montessori program is to give these very young children the best environment possible in which to grow. We believe a child can thrive only if s/he feels safe. That sense of security is a matter of trust, a trust that develops as child experiences her/his needs being met with appropriate, timely and joyful responses.

As in every other Montessori program, the classroom environment is designed especially for the children it will serve. The teachers have been chosen because of their experience and natural ability and desire to work with children 16 to 24 months of age. They are keenly aware of needs and interests of these children, and they want nothing more than to assist them in their development. Being mindful that this may be the first time these children have been separated from Mom and Dad, the staff is especially careful to give the child a sense of comfort.

The classroom is a cheerful room, a warm and welcoming place. The arrangement of furniture (appropriately-sized tables, chairs, shelves, and cots), the types of activities and selection of toys and materials, and the opportunity for conversation and verbal interactions all combine to give the children a sense of belonging.

As Montessori observed children of this age, she began to understand that movement and exploration are two important elements in their development. When a child is given the opportunity to move about with some sense of freedom, she will not only build her muscles and coordination, but also gain a sense of independence and connection to the environment. The classroom is equipped with activity areas for just such activities, such as a climbing structure for building muscles and balance.

A child's day in the Pre-Toddler program is much like a day at home – full of care, conversation, play time, rest time and lots of love. Each day is a day of growing, learning and steps along the way to becoming the person s/he is meant to be.

Toddler Curriculum Description:

The Toddler classroom provides a stimulating and developmentally fulfilling environment, supporting the young child's need for exploration and drive for independence. Within the Toddler community the sensitive periods for movement, language, and order are fostered through choices in the curriculum and by the structure of the day. The toddler curriculum contains components for the Primary curriculum, but varies from it because children between 24 and 36 months of age are in a very special stage of development. It is a period characterized by the need to explore everything, move and develop large motor coordination and strength.

Sensorial - Toddler

The purpose of the Sensorial lessons is to awaken in the child an awareness of himself and the world in which he lives. Montessori called young children "sensorial explorers" and with hands-on materials, they are able to explore and experience each of the five senses. The sensorial world

is still new to toddlers and they learn about their body and how it relates to the environment through their senses. Sense awareness involves learning about dimensions, shapes, colors, tactile, auditory, taste and smell. That learning comes through a child's sensorial experiences as he/she moves about and interacts with the environment. The materials allow the toddler to explore each of the five sense areas.

Practical Life (Daily Living) - Toddler

The purpose of the Practical Life activities is to instill in the child a sense of order, independence, and respect for himself, others, and the environment around him. A toddler is starting to separate from parents and realize that s/he is an individual and the practical life materials aid in his/her quest for independence. The exercises and materials of the lessons prepare children to care for themselves and their environment on a daily basis. Care of self is the major emphasis in the toddler environment. Stand-up diapering, individual snack, and a long period of work support the toddler's efforts toward independence. As the child works with the practical life materials, he/she develops the concentration, coordination (particularly eye-hand coordination), and motor skills needed in other areas of learning. The practical life curriculum allows the child to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline. It also sets a pattern for a lifetime of good work habits and a sense of responsibility. This process helps them develop an inner sense of order and a higher ability to concentrate and follow a complex sequence of steps.

Language - Toddler

The purpose of the Language area is to help children learn to express themselves and to communicate with others. Every aspect of the toddler environment supports language development. Language develops through usage and for this reason the language area is very rich in nomenclature and naming. At this age toddlers experience a huge expansion into language. They develop a capacity to create symbols, images and concepts and become aware of themselves as separate and independent persons. Additionally, toddlers, with their budding language skills, have the desire to learn new words and practice speaking them. The Toddler environment provides ample opportunities for children to develop social skills through interaction with peers and adults. During group time we share stories and songs; we talk and read about families, our community, other cultures, and holidays or special events in our life.

Math/Manipulatives - Toddler

The purpose of the Math activities is to introduce children to number recognition, one to one correspondence, and simple counting (1-5 or 1-10 or higher when appropriate). Toddlers are curious about everything and need to touch and manipulate objects in order to learn. In the toddler math area simple concepts of numbers are introduced through songs, counting games, and manipulative materials. As toddlers work with manipulative activities such as puzzles and counting objects, their understanding of number concepts and sequence gains substance. The use of knobbed puzzles and other toys with a special grip prepare children for writing and other fine muscle activities, while it satisfies their need to think and solve problems. It is specifically the use of the thumb and index finger (the pincer grasp) that is a precursor for writing.

Primary Curriculum Description:

The learning areas within the Primary classroom include a wide-ranging curriculum: practical life, sensorial activities, language, math and cultural studies (art and music, history and

geography and science). Emphasis is given to the study of ecology and international studies. Ample opportunity is provided for the development of fine and gross motor skills. When appropriate, a foreign language may be introduced. WCM recognizes the importance of the child finding harmony between mind and body during this period of early learning.

Sensorial - Primary

The purpose of the Sensorial lessons is to awaken the child to who he or she is as a person, and of the world in which he or she lives. With hands-on materials, the child is able to explore and experience each of the five senses and learn to recognize and distinguish subtle differences inherent in the activities. The abilities the child develops with the sensorial activities will enable him and her better understand the lessons in the language, math and cultural subjects.

Practical Life - Primary

The purpose of the Practical Life activities is to instill in the child a sense of order, independence, and respect for himself or herself, others and the surrounding environment.

The materials and lessons prepare the child to care for himself or herself, other people and the environment on a daily basis. As the child works with these activities, he or she develops the concentration, coordination (particularly eye-hand coordination), and the motor skills needed in all other areas of learning.

Language - Primary

The purpose of the Language area is to help the child learn to express himself or herself and to communicate with others both verbally and through the written word. The activities include hands-on materials to increase pre-reading skills, as well as books and paper and pencil, to introduce the child to higher skills and abstract concepts of language. The curriculum integrates all aspects of reading and writing and it promotes a clear understanding of the uses of language.

Math - Primary

The purpose of the Math activities is to introduce the child to the symbols, quantities, properties, and uses of numbers. The hands-on materials and the sequence and order of the activities allow the child to explore mathematical concepts concretely and then, allow him or her to move easily into the abstract level of logical reasoning and the mathematical computation of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division as well as algebra, geometry, fractions and square roots, especially in the elementary classes.

Cultural Subjects - Primary

The purpose of the Cultural lessons is to introduce the child to aspects of the world beyond himself and to broaden his life experience. Geography, history, science, art and music are presented to the child through various materials, projects, and experiences. The activities in each of these areas allow the child to learn about people, places, traditions and ideas of the world, to gain an understanding about the interconnectedness of the peoples of the world and to inspire him or her to have a positive effect upon the world.

Extended Day / Kindergarten Program Description:

While all children in the Primary class work together in the morning, the children of or approaching Kindergarten age are invited to participate in the Extended Day/Kindergarten program. This afternoon class gives the teacher and a small group of students the time to

explore and master the most advanced Montessori lessons in the math, language and cultural curricula.

When a child is or soon to be 5 years old or if the child's 5th birthday occurs during the school year, he or she is usually ready to join the Extended Day/Kindergarten program. At that time, the teacher will suggest to the Director that a particular child may be ready for the Montessori lessons highlighted in the afternoon program. The teacher may then suggest to the parents that the child pay a formal visit to the Kindergarten program for one or more days. During this time, the teacher will observe the child in the class situation. If both the parents and the teacher consider this an appropriate placement for the child, he or she will be invited to join the group.

We strongly suggest children complete this third Primary year at WCM and participate in the Extended Day/Kindergarten program. The three-year cycle of Montessori education will best prepare the child for the elementary school years and will give him or her a strong foundation for all future learning and living. It is the year in which the academic experience will lay a foundation in math and reading, a foundation he or she will build upon well into the traditional elementary curriculum. The third Primary year is the culmination of the child's Montessori experience at this school. It is the year in which the child is ready to take on the role of leadership within the classroom community. It is the year in which he or she will serve as a role model for fellow students.

Children have an exceptional opportunity to flourish academically, socially and personally in the Extended Day/Kindergarten program. The structure of the afternoon encourages the children to make independent work choices. The curriculum continues to allow for freedom of choice, freedom of movement, and freedom of statement. The child is supported as he or she develops skills in critical thinking, effective problem solving, and creative expression.

In the Montessori Kindergarten program, children may choose to work co-operatively on a science project, to add several groups of 4 digit numbers together alone or to listen to another child read a book. These experiences allow the children to see themselves as a cohesive group as well as competent individuals and all the skills they have been developing up to this point are now honed and sharpened and more fully realized. The children become aware of their capabilities, their achievements and their ability to help others.

Social Dynamics in the Montessori Environment

The teacher provides the model of behavior who shows respect and caring for the feelings of children, parents, and colleagues. As the adult relates to each child in depth, the child observes the adult's practice of behavior and learns to meet his or her own needs, finds ways to express concerns, and discovers effective problem-solving techniques. A child's own sense of discipline comes through self-awareness and an understanding of expectations, and a primary goal of the Montessori environment is to assist the child in the attainment of both of these qualities.

Lessons in grace and courtesy present social expectations positively and clearly before problems arise. In this way, emphasis is placed on the prevention of frustration or boredom that could lead to disruptive or passive behavior. Classroom ground rules for the children and adults are few and quite simple. Because these simple rules are adhered to consistently, they create a sense of understanding, trust and security for the children.

Montessori Classroom Orientation

In addition to the initial interview, parents of newly accepted children are asked to schedule a visit to the school with their children prior to admission and to spend time on site. The visit allows the child to become familiar with the school, and parents to talk informally with the teacher about Montessori education and Woods Creek Montessori.

The philosophical foundation of the Montessori approach is based on the premise that education can be a valuable aid to life. In order to develop their intellectual, physical, emotional and social capabilities to the fullest, children must have freedom – a freedom achieved through the classroom order and routine and the child’s growing self-awareness and self-discipline. Respect for a child’s personality and trust in his or her innate potential are prerequisite to the foundation of an adequate educational alliance between the teacher and the child. Therefore, it is important that the children at WCM the opportunity to feel safe and confident within their classroom. Supporting this need, we conduct a phase-in period prior to the first full day of attendance during which the children can become orientated to the Montessori school experience.

The Orientation Days are designed to give the children who are new to the classroom the opportunity to learn the layout of the room, to experience the routines of snack, lunch, and group gatherings, and to receive lessons on as many materials as possible before the entire group comes together. It is an opportunity for the staff to focus exclusively on the children who are integrating into the community and getting used to their new classroom and peers. Fewer children and less activity provide the environment necessary to foster a new student’s sense of safety and security. The Orientation Days offer parents the assurance that each of the children is gaining independence in a safe and nurturing environment. Returning students then have the opportunity to demonstrate their confidence and mastery within the classroom upon their arrival during the Orientation.

The Montessori School Day

Preparation for School

We ask that parents help prepare their children for happy school days by allowing enough time for dressing and breakfast before school. It is essential that each child has had ample sleep, exercise, rest, and opportunities for recreation with family and friends outside of school. Please keep the teacher and Director informed of any change in family circumstances, major events, or changes in the child’s behavior or health. We urge each parent to join us in recognizing the child’s efforts and successes during his or her journey towards independence. Parental approval and appreciation are important keys to a child’s healthy self-esteem and self-development.

Arrival and Departure

Drop-off and pick-up times can be difficult transitional periods for children. Order, routine, and efficiency enable the child to approach these times with greater ease. WCM’s arrival process is designed to optimize a smooth and positive start to the day for children, parents, and teachers.

It is also structured to facilitate the safe and effective flow of traffic and families through our small parking lot.

Parents of Pre-Toddlers should park in the parking lot and bring their children to the Pre-Toddler classroom between 8:00 and 8:15am. Parents of Primary students should utilize the drop-off line between 8:20 and 8:45am. Teachers will greet children in the drop-off line by helping them out of their vehicle and directing them to their classroom. Parents of Toddlers may choose either of these drop-off methods, although if they choose to park and walk to the classroom with their child this must occur between 8:00 and 8:15 so that parked cars do not block the flow of the drop-off line at 8:20.

In order to maximize their opportunity for learning and to prevent disruption of the class in progress, it is important for children to arrive on time and to be in the classroom between 8:20am and 8:45am. It is important that Primary students are not dropped off before 8:20am because teachers will be occupied with classroom set-up and will not be prepared to supervise. If, on occasion, a child needs to arrive after 9am, we ask that s/he be dropped off and picked up in the Director's office so as not to disturb the rest of the class. Please inform your child's teacher or the Administrator prior to any change in your child's schedule.

Sign-In and Sign-Out sheets are posted on or near the classroom doors. Pick-up times are 12:30, 3:00, or 5:00pm. It is *critical* that parents (or persons authorized by the child's parents) record the time of the child's pick up on the sheet. The staff will record the child's arrival time unless the child arrives at school after class time has begun, in which case the Director will record it when s/he brings the child to the classroom.

Please note:

A \$10 late fee is charged if a child is picked up 10 minutes after the scheduled pick-up time, and again every 10 minutes after that period. At the end of the school day, if a child is not picked up by 5:15, the parents will be called. If the parents *cannot* be reached, the child's emergency contacts will be called in the order of priority. If no one can be reached, the child will remain in the staff member's care until a parent or authorized caregiver can be located.

No child should be dropped off in the parking lot without staff assistance, nor should any child be allowed outside the gate without a responsible adult accompanying her/him.

No car should be left unattended in the drop off line. Parents who must enter the school should park at a far end of the parking lot.

Transportation

Children are transported to school by the parents or by another person authorized by the parents. When a child belongs to a car pool, all participating parents must give written permission to the school, naming each person who will be driving in the car pool.

Whenever the child is to be transported by someone other than those named at the time of application or in writing thereafter, a written note and/or personal introduction to a staff

member will be required from the parent who enrolled the child. Anyone new to the school will be asked to present a photo ID before a staff member will release the child into their custody. The ID should correspond with the name on the written notice received by the parent/guardian. A copy of the ID will be made and the date and the relationship to the child will be noted. The information copy will be placed in the child's file for future reference. Only in the case of an emergency may parents phone and ask that someone other than the person normally specified be allowed to pick up the child. In such a case, there should be verification by both parties as to the arrangements made for the child's transportation.

Snack

Approximately one week during each semester of the academic year, each child's family is responsible for bringing enough nutritious snack food for the class. A monthly Snack Menu will be available for parents in the Friday Folders and posted in the classrooms. On the Friday before each family's Snack Week, a list of needed food items will be sent home to assist parents in their purchase and preparation of the class snack for the following week. The children enjoy helping with planning, purchasing and preparing snacks for their friends, and this activity can provide the occasion for fun with parents, and learning about nutrition and sharing.

* For the Pre-Toddler Class, parents are asked to provide a daily snack and lunch for their children. We make this request because we are extremely sensitive to the presence as well as the possibility of the development of allergies in children of this age. In order to provide the safest environment for our children, we feel this practice will protect the health of each child.

Those parents who find that bringing snacks is too difficult may choose to pay a snack fee instead. The cost is \$75 per semester.

Lunch

Lunch serves as a social opportunity as well as a time to practice grace and courtesy. It is important that, after an active morning, children receive proper nutrition to refuel their body. We ask parents to please pack nutritious foods that the child likes and will eat (whole grain snacks, fresh fruit, etc.), avoiding convenience and highly processed lunch items that may contain hidden sugars, preservatives and food colors. Please pack his/her lunch as much as possible in containers that can be reused in order to reinforce the lesson of "reduce, reuse, and recycle." Rubbermaid type juice and food containers are appropriate. Send just enough food for one child, keeping in mind that sharing is not allowed at lunchtime (including desserts).

While we strongly discourage sugary foods, small treats or desserts may be sent as part of the child's lunch. However, s/he will be asked to save it until the other items in the lunch have been eaten. Uneaten portions will be sent home whenever possible to allow the parent to see what the child does/does not eat. Candy and gum are not permitted at school as they are non-nutritious and they can serve as a distraction to the children.

Rest/Nap Time

While the Pre-Toddlers will follow a general daily schedule that includes a nap time beginning after lunch (about 12:30-1:00), the children may rest any time during the day as needed.

Toddlers take a nap after lunch from approximately 1:00-2:15/2:30pm.

For Primary students under the age of 5, naptime will be replaced by an hour-long quiet time as mandated by Virginia Department of Social Services. During quiet time each child will rest on a mat and be given the opportunity to sleep if needed. After approximately 30 minutes, children who are not sleeping may be invited to look at a book, work with a puzzle or engage in another relaxing activity on the mat or at a table. All children will get up after quiet time and resume a normal Montessori afternoon.

Children in the Extended Day/Kindergarten program begin the afternoon with a short quiet time during which the teacher reads a chapter or two from a novel of particular interest to the children. The daily reading time not only gives children the opportunity to experience classic and contemporary literature, but listening to the story and discussing it with each other and the teacher allows them to develop sequential processing abilities and critical thinking skills. After the reading time, the children are rested and ready for their work with the materials and activities available to them in the advanced Montessori curriculum.

The After-School Program

WCM provides an After-School program from 3:00-5:00 pm. Children participate in outside play, snack, and various projects – arts and crafts, music and movement, cooking and nature activities. Parents planning to have their children in this program on a regular basis may complete the After-School Care Agreement. When staff/student ratios allow, we offer the option of drop-in care for parents who would like to have their children stay on an occasional basis.

Suggested Reading for Parents

Pre-Toddler and Toddler Parents

- ❖ *Understanding the Human Being: The Importance of the First Three Years of Life.* Silvana Quattrocchi Montanaro, M.D., Nienhuis Montessori
- ❖ *Montessori-A Modern Approach.* Paula Polk Lillard, Schocken Books
- ❖ *Child in the Family.* Maria Montessori, Clio Press.
- ❖ *Oneness and Separateness: From Infant to Individual.* Louise J. Kaplan, Simon and Schuster.
- ❖ *The Six Stages of Parenthood.* Ellen Galinsky, Addison-Wesley Publishing Co.
- ❖ *Montessori From the Start: The Child at home from Birth to Age Three.* Paula Polk Lillard and Lynn Lillard Jessen.

Primary Parents

- ❖ *Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook*. Maria Montessori, Schocken Books.
- ❖ *Montessori – A Modern Approach*. Paula Polk Lillard, Schocken Books.
- ❖ *Teaching Montessori in the Home*. Elizabeth Hainstock, RandomHouse.
- ❖ *The Six Stages of Parenthood*. Ellen Galinsky, Addison-Wesley Publishing Company.
- ❖ *Whole Child/Whole Parent*. Polly Berrien Berends, Harper & Row Publishers.
- ❖ *Something More....Nurturing Your Child's Spiritual Growth*. Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick, Penguin Books.

Special Occasions

Field Trips

As part of their school experience, the children may take field trips away from the school. Each child should have a signed Field Trip Permission form on file in the office. This form eliminates the need to sign a new form for every field trip. Special trips usually are planned for a specific time and place and will be announced well in advance of the scheduled date. Parents interested in helping with field trips should speak with the teachers.

Many of our field trips are walking trips and are occasionally spontaneous. Information about the walking route and a time of return will be posted for parents who may arrive before the group gets back to the school.

Pre-Toddlers may be taken on short walks in strollers and Toddlers often take walking field trips in the near vicinity of the school. Parent chaperones are invited to join the class for trips further away from the school. Primary children may also walk to their field trip destinations, but occasionally the teachers will ask parents to drive and chaperone for particular trips, such as our monthly visits to Kendal. The children in the Extended Day program may go on field trips more frequently than the Toddler children or the younger Primary students because trips into the community are an integral part of their curriculum and educational experience.

Each adult participating in a field trip is responsible for the whereabouts of the children in his or her group at the destination as well as in the car during transportation. The staff members will be responsible for the care of the entire group and will have a first-aid kit will be available if needed. Each volunteer driver is required to have a copy of his or her license and insurance card on file at the school. Each child must wear a seat belt while in the car and may not ride in the front seat. The driver will be given a passenger list of children before embarking and will be given a telephone number of the destination.

Birthdays

Birthdays are special days in the Montessori classroom, celebrated to acknowledge the birth and

life of the individual child. Each child will have the opportunity to celebrate his or her birthday. The child's parents are invited to bring a nutritious group snack along with a pictorial timeline of their child's life, and are encouraged to attend the celebration. All of the children will gather for the celebration, sing a celebratory song, hear about the birthday child's life on Earth and share the birthday snack. We discourage balloons, birthday hats, etc. during this celebration. It is a very calm coming-together of the community to honor the individual within the group.

Holidays

Holidays provide opportunities for cultural extension. They help the children become acquainted with and form a connection to the world around them. As part of the Montessori curriculum, the children become aware of the rituals and reasons for celebration within their culture and other cultures around the world. Holidays as such are not celebrated in school, but are acknowledged as a part of culture through books, group discussion, art and craft activities and songs related to the holiday.

Parent – School Interface

Classroom Observations

Woods Creek Montessori encourages parents and grandparents to visit the school and to discuss the child's needs and progress with the teachers. This allows parents the opportunity to understand and participate in the child's school experience. WCM's goal is to establish a partnership between parents and teachers that will foster consistency for the child and confidence for the parents. Observing in the classroom helps parents to see the reality of the Montessori philosophy as it plays out in the classroom and will help them understand the daily experiences their child faces.

Our preferred observation hours are from 8:45 to 11am with 45 minutes being the optimum time frame for a visit. The Teacher is pleased to talk with parents at any time by appointment, but will not discuss the child when the child or other parents are present, nor during class time. Please telephone in advance to schedule an observation, if possible, so that the class does not have more than one visitor per day. Parents are encouraged to observe *at least once* during the course of the school year. They will be asked to comment on their experience. The Director will give each observer a copy of the "Observation Guidelines" at the time of the visit.

Guidelines for Observation

An observation window is available to give you an overall view of the whole class. Many visitors, however, enjoy coming into the classroom for their observation visits. It has been our experience that children may come over to welcome any visitor to the classroom. The children may be greeted in return and then encouraged to go on with their work so the visitor can continue observing. The children need to continue with the regular daily routine if the observer is to have an accurate perspective of how they spend their day.

Each Montessori environment has its own personality, but some aspects are the same for every Montessori classroom. Different children have different needs. Whether these needs are

intellectual, physical, emotional or social whether they are big or obvious or small and subtle, the classroom has the flexibility and materials to meet them all.

We ask that visitors keep interactions with the children at a minimum. It is helpful to the class not to become involved with the children's activities or work, or engage them in conversation. Since visitors are not present every day, it is difficult for the children to focus on their own work once the visitor becomes active in the classroom.

When observing a Montessori class, a visitor may expect to see:

- An environment prepared to fit the needs of each child
- Teachers circulating through the classroom to observe the needs and activities of the children
- Teachers giving lessons one child, a small group or a large group of children
- Children of different ages working together
- Children choosing work on their own
- Children asking the teachers for assistance as needed
- Children concentrating/at work
- Children solving their own problems

The role of the Montessori teacher is not to entertain or mold the child, but to provide guidance and support for the growing developing person. This includes insistence upon following guidelines as established for the classroom. One of our goals is to foster independence in the children as they grow so that they develop a true sense of self-confidence and mastery. If an adult instantly jumps in to provide solutions or help, the child does not have the opportunity to develop his or her own abilities and problem solving skills or to become aware of his or her own capabilities.

An observer may want to notice that:

- Children given enough time to handle their own emotional and social problems
- Children encouraged to do things for themselves
- Teachers available and supportive, but not intrusive

The teachers need to give the children their full attention during class time, but will be happy to call each observer after school to discuss the visit. Please complete the observation visit form and leave it with the Director. We appreciate parents and other visitors showing the interest to spend time with us.

Communication

One of the keys to a community's success is the quality of its members' communication. The WCM staff will work to keep communication flowing. In an effort to have the families informed about school matters, regular blog postings are made by teachers on our website at woodscreekmontessori.org. The website is also an excellent source of information regarding school events, programs, staff members, and cooperative opportunities.

Parents are encouraged to make every effort to communicate directly with the child's

teacher. The staff encourages all parents to feel free to discuss any questions, concerns, comments and positive aspects of the program with us. We ask that when parents have a concern, they begin by discussing the issue with the child's teacher. If full understanding is not achieved or if the issue remains unresolved, the Director is available for further discussion.

Parent Conferences

Regularly scheduled parent conference days take place during two days in fall, two days in spring, and at the close of the school year. These meetings give the teachers and the parents a time to sit together in a relaxed, undisturbed atmosphere and discuss the child's school experience. This is a time of connection and discovery for the parent and the teacher – both will have the opportunity to learn more about the child and how best to meet his or her needs. School is closed to children on these days.

In addition to the scheduled conferences, parents should feel free to contact the teacher at any time to discuss a question or concern about a child. Conferences may be initiated either by the parents or the teacher at any time mutually convenient. We do ask parents to refrain from initiating conversations about your child when he or she is present. Out of respect for the child, the teacher will gladly talk to any parent on the phone in the evening (before 8 p.m.) or schedule a time when you can meet without your child present.

Parent Discussions and Events

WCM offers a number of Parent Events throughout the year and the teachers are available to discuss Montessori theory and application at the meetings. We invite parents to participate in as many of these events as they can. The discussions are always interesting, enlightening and beneficial.

Classroom Participation

We encourage parents to volunteer skills and talents such as playing a musical instrument or demonstrating a profession or hobby. The point is not to teach but rather to demonstrate and share a passion you may have. Parents may also want to consider volunteering as classroom substitutes. We invite parents to talk with the Director or the teacher about interests they would like to share with the children as well as the days and times they have available.

WCM's Cooperative Model and Responsibilities

WCM is a not-for-profit school and is reliant upon the participation and assistance of our parents for the well being of our school. For instance, all families directly support classroom operations by providing snack and laundering classroom towels and rest mat covers two times during the academic year.

WCM's co-op system is designed to fit the diverse needs of families, foster a sense of community, and increase equitability across families' contributions to the school. In the spring of 2009, the WCM parent body democratically selected the following model to structure parents' co-op contributions.

There are two options for families to fulfill their co-op contribution:

- 1) Actively seek opportunities to contribute at least 6 hours of labor during each semester (i.e., fall and winter/spring).
- 2) Pay into a Co-op Fund that is used to hire subcontractors for buildings and grounds work, at a rate of \$20 per hour of labor (i.e., \$120/semester, \$240/academic year). Families may pay into this fund up front (August 1st and January 1st) and opt out of formal co-op labor for the year.

Families are responsible for logging their co-op labor hours with WCM. The WCM administration keeps a record of this labor and sends an individualized Co-op Fund bill at the end of each semester for labor hours that have not been contributed. That is, on December 15th families are billed for the Co-op Fund at a rate of \$20 per hour for each of the 6 hours that has not been contributed during the fall. On May 15th, families are billed for the Co-op Fund at a rate of \$20 per hour for each of the 6 hours that has not been contributed during the winter/spring.

Co-op labor is organized through parent teams that have two objectives at WCM. From a community perspective, teamwork provides parents with a tangible way to support our wonderful teachers, become more familiar with the workings of our children's school, and connect with other WCM parents. From an institutional perspective, it helps WCM to make ends meet. As a non-profit agency, WCM struggles to cover all of the operational costs of our school. Parent teams are absolutely critical in accomplishing much of the work required on campus.

As part of the enrollment process in the spring, parents rank their preferences for parent team affiliation. A member of the Board of Directors serves as the liaison between the Board and each of the parent teams. Parent team assignments, along with Board liaisons for each team, are announced in June so that some work can begin during the summer.

Leaders and/or co-leaders are needed for each team. Team leaders meet with the Board liaison to establish goals for the team, prioritize and organize the tasks of the team, and correspond with team members.

Parent team members work on specific tasks throughout the year. The available volunteer tasks are numerous and diverse. Although some tasks are time-specific (e.g., driving for a field trip), and others will be completed in groups on WCM workdays, others can be completed in small groups when it is convenient, and many jobs can be completed independently according to parents' unique time preferences.

WCM Board of Directors

One of the ways parents may provide service to the school is through a term on the Board of Directors. The WCM Board is comprised of 12 members, ideally including a balance of current

WCM parents, alumni parents, and non-WCM-affiliated community members. Board members serve a 3-year term. Regardless of term, the President serves for one year following her/his term as President. WCM has a working Board, as opposed to a strictly advisory Board. Each Board member occupies a specific position (outlined below) and assumes responsibility for a domain of the Board's business. Board meetings are held on the third Tuesday of each month at 8pm. By the second Friday of each month, each Board member submits a brief written update about her/his domain. This facilitates efficient meetings. Each Board member submits a brief written report to the WCM community twice annually as an update of the activities of her/his committee. Board elections are held at the WCM end-of-year picnic in the first week of June.

Board Positions

The Executive Committee is comprised of the President, Vice President, Secretary and Treasurer.

President: The President of the Board is responsible for organizing and facilitating meetings, coordinating committee work, and acting as spokesperson for the full Board in its communications with parents, staff, and the community.

Vice-President/Planning Committee: The Vice President acts in place of the President in the President's absence. This may include organizing and facilitating meetings, coordinating committee work, and acting as spokesperson for the Board. The Vice-President also serves as the Chair of the Planning Committee and its liaison with the Board.

Secretary: The Secretary is responsible for keeping minutes at all Board meetings and distributing the minutes in a timely fashion to the Board and other members of the WCM community as requested. The Secretary maintains and updates a WCM archive of past minutes and documents that may be useful to present and future Board members.

Treasurer: The Treasurer is responsible for overseeing the formulation and presentation of an annual budget, collaborating with the school's bookkeeper and Executive Director to ensure accurate financial record-keeping and budget compliance, and presenting additional reports as requested by the board. The Treasurer serves as the Chair of the Finance Committee and its liaison with the Board.

Buildings and Grounds: Two Buildings and Grounds Committee Co-Chairs are responsible for the physical upkeep, maintenance, and improvement of WCM facilities. Duties of these Co-Chairs include assessment of maintenance issues, planning for improvements to the indoor and outdoor space, recruitment of parent and community volunteers, and coordination of volunteer labor.

Fundraising (Annual Fund and Grants): The Fundraising Committee Chair is responsible for organizing the Annual Fund Campaign and soliciting donations to WCM from individuals and local businesses. This individual assists the Executive Director in investigating all possible opportunities for funding, writing grants on behalf of WCM, and recruiting volunteers to help with this process.

Events (Art Auction): The Events Committee Chair works with community members to organize fundraising events for WCM. This individual's primary responsibility is to recruit volunteers and oversee one major fundraising event (e.g., the Art Auction every other year) and a small number of minor fundraising events each year.

Cooperative Coordinator: The Cooperative Coordinator oversees WCM's cooperative system by ensuring that opportunities for volunteer labor are available and well-organized. This individual serves as the primary liaison among the Board, Executive Director, and WCM parents for cooperative-related issues. Each spring prior to the fall enrollment process, the Cooperative Coordinator is responsible for preparing paperwork for parents to choose volunteer team affiliations and then organizing parents into teams that begin in the summer. Additional responsibilities include working with other Board Chairs to organize, publicize, and coordinate volunteer activities, ensuring that record-keeping and billing processes are consistent and accurate, and communicating regularly with the WCM community with information regarding volunteer activities.

Director Support and Evaluation (DSEC) / Financial Aid: The DSEC Chair convenes the DSEC, maintains open communication with the Executive Director, serves as a liaison between the Director and the Board, provides help and guidance to facilitate the Director's optimal performance, and coordinates her/his regular performance evaluations. The DSEC Chair also serves as the Financial Aid Chair. This involves convening the Financial Aid Committee and collaborating with the Director to manage financial aid applications and award financial aid to families.

Public Relations (Website and Media): The Public Relations Committee Chair is responsible for providing information to WCM families and to the public regarding the school. This includes overseeing the design, improvement, and weekly maintenance of the WCM website. It also includes writing text and arranging for photographs to be taken for the purpose of advertising and publicizing school events, activities, and developments in local newspapers and other relevant media outlets.

Classroom, Teacher and Community Support (CTCS): The CTCS Chair is responsible for fostering the cooperative nature of our school through three mechanisms. First, this individual maintains monthly communication with teachers to assess their needs in the classroom (e.g., regularly scheduled and/or special assistance with preparation of curricular materials; extra help with class activities such as field trips) and mobilizes volunteers to assist with these tasks. Second, the CTCS Chair develops and coordinates staff appreciation initiatives. Third, s/he sets an agenda for community events (e.g., Lake Robertson hike, end-of-year picnic) and coordinates parent volunteers to manage them.

Helpful Hints for Parents

Inclement Weather

All children should be dressed appropriately for weather conditions (e.g., rain boots, raincoat, mittens, hats, well fitting jackets) so that they can have time outside each day. Children who do not have appropriate dress will be asked to remain inside unless backup clothing can be provided from either the child's cubby or the school's supplies.

WCM follows the Lexington City Schools for weather-related delays and closings. Parents may also listen to the local radio station (WREL, 96.7, WMRA (Public Radio, 89.9) and watch Channel 10, NBC television for reports concerning Lexington (therefore WCM) school closures.

In the event that unexpected severe weather develops while the children are at school, the staff will begin calling parents to inform them of an imminent closure. Based on severity of the weather, emergency contacts may be notified if the staff is unable to immediately inform the parents.

Clothing, Labels, Lost and Found

We suggest that the children participate in choosing what clothing they wear to school. We are accustomed to unusual combinations that reflect the children's emerging sense of self. Many families find it helpful for this choice to be made the evening before school. Clothing should be casual enough to be worn without the worry of dirt and stains. It should be comfortable, fit well (cover tummies, arms and legs in cold weather), and allow for the child's independence in dressing.

Please make sure that all sweaters, jackets, and other important items are labeled with your child's last name in indelible ink. WCM cannot assume responsibility for children's personal belongings. Misplaced and unmarked items will be placed in a lost and found box. Items not claimed by the end of the school term will be given away. It is a good idea for parents to check their children's cubbies periodically to make sure back-up clothing is still appropriate for size and season. Staff will send home periodic reminders as they become aware that items need to be replenished. In the case of an emergency, the school will use the backup supplies of clothing. Please launder such items and return them to the school as soon as possible.

Favorite Objects from Home

Blankets may be brought to school to be used at naptime. If a child has a special nap buddy such as a stuffed animal or doll, the staff will place it in a safe place until rest time. The child may choose to take it home each day or keep it at school.

We find that toys from home sometimes cause distraction and dissension among the children, and they often become damaged or lost. WCM cannot be responsible for toys from home and if a child brings one to school, it will be put on a shelf out of reach. It is helpful for parents to explain that the school has plenty of enjoyable activities for the child and that his or her toys can wait safely at home or in the car. Items that are brought in for sharing with the class for show and tell should be educational. All books must be deemed appropriate before they will be read to the whole group.

We recognize the extent to which children are bombarded with fantastic images. They seem to be surrounded by cartoons, super heroes and monsters, and adaptations of fairy tales. While some of these animations are harmless and delightful diversions, others can be scary for children who are trying to distinguish fact and fantasy. WCM strives to create an environment that is protected from all images that may cause confusion for the children. We work to provide

an atmosphere in which children are free to think and act creatively while being grounded in reality. This framework provides a firm foundation for children as they explore their own imaginative abilities. Because we want to encourage children in their creative endeavors, we appreciate the parents' support in keeping the commercially created images (even the positive ones) out of the classroom.

Favorite Materials from School

Occasionally, a child is so enamored by the materials and bits and pieces of the activities at school that they find their way home in pockets or lunchboxes. We are delighted to know the children are so happy and interested in the work at school that they would like to continue the process at home, but we do need to keep all of the materials in order to give everyone a full Montessori school experience. We ask parents to bring any unfamiliar objects to school so that we may determine whether it is a missing component of the classroom materials. There will be no disciplinary action taken with the child. We will thank him or her profusely for helping us restore the material or activity to its most useful place.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

Non-Discrimination and Values Policy

This school does not discriminate in enrollment or hiring with regard to race, gender, religion, or national origin. Our policy is to encourage diversity and internationalism, as well as non-violence, kindness to others, and an awareness of ecological and social responsibility

Children 16 months to 6 years of age may apply for admission at any time during the year and may enroll when there is a classroom opening. Therefore, parents are encouraged to place their child's name on the waiting list if space is not available at the time of application. Waiting list status is obtained by submission of the Application/Enrollment Agreement Form and the fees.

Montessori philosophy encourages a mixing of age, gender, and ethnicity. WCM is mindful of maintaining that balance of children when filling available spaces. Priority status is granted to WCM Alumni siblings. Subsequent available spaces will be filled from the waiting list.

In order for each child to derive the greatest benefit possible from the Montessori experience, we ***strongly encourage*** each family to respect the three-year cycle of the Montessori philosophy by maintaining the child's enrollment through the third year of the Primary Program.

Admissions Policies

Initial Inquiry: A call or personal visit may be made to the school to gather information about WCM. A brochure about the school and other Montessori information will be given to the visitor or will be sent in the mail at that time. Interested parents are invited to schedule a classroom observation to see how Montessori actually works in the classroom. Questions can be asked and answered by the classroom teacher immediately if the circumstances allow, or in a timely manner upon receipt of the Observation Questionnaire provided at the visit.

Application: Families interested in WCM may request a Waitlist Form from the Director. Once

this form is completed and returned with the non-refundable application fee, the child's name will be placed on the waiting list for enrollment until an opening becomes available. A time will be scheduled for the family to meet with the appropriate teacher and visit the classroom.

Waitlist Procedures

The WCM waitlist does not operate on a simple first-come, first-served basis for several reasons. First, our physical space and licensure regulations place limits on the number of children within narrow age groups that can inhabit each of our classrooms. Also, Montessori classrooms need to be balanced across several dimensions (for example, age) in order to function best. Priority in enrollment is given to siblings of current and alumni WCM students.

Although the WCM Director is happy to speak to families about their status on the waitlist, it is impossible to communicate a child's "place" on the waitlist (for example, "you're first on the Primary waiting list"), due to the reasons outlined above.

Families on the waitlist will receive two annual correspondences in the mail regarding their status on the waitlist: In May (regarding fall enrollment) and December (regarding January enrollment). If positions become available in between these dates, waitlist families who can be admitted will be contacted immediately by phone. The following schedule of events is used to guide this process:

Waitlist Procedures Relevant to Fall Enrollment:

- Late April: Fall enrollment forms and fees are due.
- 1st week of May: Teachers meet to discuss transitions of enrolled children across WCM classrooms.
- 2nd week of May: Fall classroom enrollments are finalized. Waitlist families who can be admitted are contacted and asked to submit enrollment forms and pay fees within the next two weeks.
- Mid-May: Fall enrollment is finalized. Waitlist families who cannot be admitted are sent a letter in the mail letting them know that enrollment is set and the status of their child. In this letter, waitlist families are reminded that there are often changes in enrollment status throughout the summer, and they will be informed immediately by phone if a position becomes available for their child.

Waitlist Procedures Relevant to January Enrollment:

- 1st week of December: Teachers meet to discuss transitions of enrolled children across WCM classrooms and any other changes in classroom censuses projected for January.
- 2nd week of December: January classroom enrollments are finalized. Waitlist families who can be admitted are contacted and asked to submit enrollment forms and pay fees within the next two weeks.

- Mid-December: Waitlist families who cannot be admitted are sent a letter in the mail letting them know that enrollment is set and the status of their child.

Enrollment Procedures

When placement in the school is mutually agreed, a date will be scheduled for the child to begin school. All forms and fees will be due at least **two weeks** prior to the child's first day at school. Current forms, complete with fee schedules, are available on the WCM website.

Forms required for enrollment:

- 1) WCM Enrollment Form
- 2) WCM Registration Form
- 3) Virginia Department of Social Services Child Registration Form
- 4) Proof of Identity (copy of birth certificate, passport, adoption papers)
- 5) Commonwealth of Virginia School Entrance Health Form (including Immunization record)
- 6) Co-op Team Affiliation Form
- 7) Discipline Policy Form

Classroom Transitions

The composition of each classroom at WCM depends on several overlapping factors. Because we are a state licensed facility, our student:teacher ratios are set by Virginia law (i.e., 5:1 for Pre-Toddlers, 8:1 for Toddlers, and 14:1 for a balanced-age classroom of children between 3 and 6 years). The capacity of each classroom is also limited by our physical structures. In accordance with Montessori philosophy, an attempt is made to balance multiple characteristics of children within the Primary classrooms (e.g., age, personality characteristics, behavioral styles) to optimize teachers' ability to implement the Montessori method.

Classroom transitions (i.e., Pre-Toddler → Toddler; Toddler → Primary) occur in August and January. In May and December, Lead Teachers observe individual children and meet together with the Director to plan children's classroom transitions for August and January. An individual child's transition is based on her/his developmental readiness as well as the school-related factors described above. Although there are many developmental factors that enter into a child's readiness for a classroom transition, some fundamental elements include:

Pre-Toddler → Toddler Room Transition:

- No pacifiers
- Blankets should only be used at nap time (i.e., not carried around all day as a self-comfort)
- Solid coordination and physical ability (e.g., should have the ability to carry works from the shelf to the tables and carry a plate to the dishpan)
- Ability to walk from the parking lot to the classroom with little to no assistance
- Ability to sit attentively for gather time
- No longer putting objects in their mouth (e.g., small works such as marbles, rocks, seeds)

Toddler → Primary Room Transition:

- Potty trained (i.e., Can recognize and routinely respond appropriately to body's need. Occasional accidents are fine, but the child needs to have full awareness and ability to head for the toilet when the need arises.)
- No pacifiers (i.e., should have ability to self comfort versus reliance on a pacifier or other comforting object)
- Ability to follow simple verbal instruction
- Ability to communicate feelings and desires effectively using words and/or body language
- Ability to recognize the first letter of his/her first name
- General understanding of the Montessori work cycle (i.e., choose, do, clean up, and put away the works)
- Ability to sit attentively at a gathering

An individual child's placement within a classroom and transitions across classrooms are carefully considered by the WCM Lead Teachers, Director, and Assistant Teachers. Every attempt is made to find the most ideal classroom environment for each child, given all of the factors described above.

Although parents are welcome to express preferences regarding their child's classroom placement and transitions, these decisions are firmly in the hands of WCM staff members who are able to integrate the many child- and school-level factors that are relevant to the process.

Financial Policies

The Financial Agreement confirms the commitment of the parents or guardian to pay the contracted tuition and fees in full for the August to June academic year. In this agreement, each parent or guardian assumes financial responsibility for tuition and fee payment.

For working parents who choose to deduct the cost of tuition on the IRS form 1040, the Federal ID number for WCM (i.e., Montessori Center for Children) is #54-1628875 .

Tuition and Fee Policy

Because WCM is a non-profit school, tuition is our greatest source of income and the foundation of our operational budget. The tuition allows us to continue to provide the highest quality educational program for the children, and to recruit and retain the best staff for the school. In order for WCM to maintain a sound financial footing, full and prompt payment of your tuition and fees is essential, and appreciated.

Tuition is due and payable as contracted by the parents on the Enrollment Agreement. The school makes every effort to keep tuition and fees at a minimum despite the high cost of Montessori materials, qualified staff, and annual inflation. A minimal increase in tuition is to be expected each year. Nevertheless, the cost of Montessori education exceeds the tuition charged,

and the school incorporates fundraising as a necessary part of its budget to keep fees as low as possible and to provide scholarship assistance as needed.

School insurance is mandatory. The annual fee is payable at the time of enrollment or re-enrollment.

Between Fall Orientation and the end of the formal school calendar in June, no reduction in tuition or make-up days are granted for absences due to vacation or illness, as the school continues to hold the child's space and to meet fixed costs of school operation. Payment invoices will be emailed to each family's home approximately two weeks (mid month) before the next month's tuition is due (the 1st of the following month). Payments can be mailed to the school, or may be taken directly to the office. A 'paid' invoice will be returned to parents who request a receipt of the payment for their files.

Tuition Payment Plans

WCM offers three payment tuition plans.

- Full Year (single) payments are due on or before August 1st. Parents choosing this plan will receive a modest discount on the school year tuition.
- Semester (two) payments are due on or before August 1st and December 1st. Parents choosing this plan will receive a modest discount on the school year tuition.
- Annual tuition may be made in ten installments. The first installment is due June 1st. Remaining payments are due September 1st through May 1st.

Late/Missed Payment Policy

WCM understands circumstances arise that may cause payments to be late or missed. If this is a concern or if an emergency financial situation arises, the parent/guardian financially responsible to the school should take the initiative to discuss payment problems with the Director immediately, preferably, before any payments are missed. It may be possible to work out a mutually beneficial payment plan.

Unfortunately, there are also times when the late payments accumulate beyond one month. WCM has developed a policy meant to protect the school from the loss of expected income, and the families from further penalties, as follows:

1. WCM annual tuition is billed in ten (10) equal payment cycles from August through May.
2. Invoices are emailed during the last week of each month and payments are due on the 1st of each month.
3. Payments received after the 5th of the month are considered late and a \$75 late fee will be assessed on the following month's tuition invoice.
4. If a payment is not received by the 30th of the month, it is considered missed. The family will be sent a Letter of Notification of further action. The Board of Directors will be notified of the situation.
5. In the event payment is two (2) months in arrears, the family will be asked to withdraw the child until full payment is remitted. If no payment has been made after three (3)

months, the child will be withdrawn from the school's enrollment roster and another child will be offered the available place in the classroom. The matter will be turned over to a collection agency or small claims court for final resolution.

Discipline Policies

The term "discipline" comes from the word 'disciple' and means, literally, 'to teach'. The Montessori approach to discipline is to help children learn they are responsible for what they do and that their actions and choices have consequences. When a child is disruptive, a teacher will offer support and understanding, including an attempt to help the child understand his or her own behavior and to find alternative approaches to solving the problem. If a child is experiencing difficulty, he or she is given time and peace to think about the situation, to express his or her honest feelings, and to come to an increased understanding about it. As the situation becomes resolved, the child is invited to join the teacher in constructive activity as a means of re-integrating into the classroom. The adults take care to relate to the children according to their age, developmental level and temperament.

No physical punishment is used at the school. Discipline is not associated with food, nap-time, or toileting. The teachers will work with the children to help them learn to use words to express themselves rather than acting out or becoming passive when they are disturbed. If unacceptable behavior persists, the teacher will consult with the child's parents. The belief is that through parent-teacher cooperation and consistency, improved behavior will result.

Our approach to discipline is to help children learn that they are responsible for what they do and that their actions have consequences. Often the consequences of a child's actions are good, but sometimes they are not. We present 3 basic ground rules to the children in the class to guide them along the way:

We take care of ourselves.
We take care of each other.
We take care of the environment.

Each of these rules is explained the first day of school and reviewed and practiced in the group lessons throughout the year and individually as appropriate. Whether a problem involves only two people or the whole class, we try to help the children learn how to solve problems on their own. We encourage children to come to a mutual resolution through talking about the problem, listening to each side and understanding the differing points of view. There is no physical punishment or disciplinary action administered to the child. There is no verbal abuse. No belittling remarks are used with the child.

Discipline Procedure

1. The child is **asked** to correct his or her behavior by a positive restatement of the rule.
2. The child is **told** to correct the behavior.
3. The child is **removed** from the group until s/he feels ready to rejoin the group.

4. If a problem persists beyond three consecutive days parents are contacted to discuss strategies/ ideas to help the child and to support the desired behavior change with the teacher. At this point procedures regarding serious and recurring misbehavior will be enacted.
5. If the above steps fail, help from a professional may be suggested.
6. The Teacher records serious or recurrent misbehaviors as they occur as documentation for possible further disciplinary action

Parents are asked to sign a statement of our disciplinary procedure, to ensure their understanding of our stated policy. A copy of the signed form will be placed in the child's file.

Serious & Recurring Misbehavior

Serious misbehavior is defined as being damaging, disturbing, or dangerous to self, others, or the property of the school. Recurring misbehavior is defined as inappropriate behavior persisting after four weeks of focused strategies towards misconduct. Examples include but are not limited to: verbal or physical abuse of peers, teachers, or staff members; malicious name calling; refusal to do work; out of control hitting and kicking; temper tantrums; throwing objects; damaging materials; hitting, biting, scratching, kicking or pinching others.

Biting cannot and will not be tolerated. Regardless of the reason for the child's choice to bite (e.g., aggression, frustration, etc.), a discussion between the children involved and a staff member will take place. In most cases, the biter will be removed from the environment immediately. The staff member will write up an incident report notifying the parents of both children. The parents of the child who bit another child should be talked to in person, if possible when given the incident report. If the biter attempts repeated behavior in a given day or bites hard enough to break the skin, the staff member shall use his/her discretion about calling the parents and sending the child home immediately.

Whenever there appears to be consistent discipline problems, every effort will be made by the teachers, assistants and the Director to work with the child, parents and any professional involved. Of course, it is of vital importance that regular communication between parents and teachers be maintained during this time period. If after three weeks of focused strategies towards a change in behavior the child is still exhibiting serious and recurring misguided behavior, the parents are again contacted and the following procedure is explained. If, after all avenues have been followed, the child is not responding positively, dismissal may be warranted.

Procedure for Consideration of Dismissal

1. Any time after the beginning of the 4th week of focused strategies the teacher will raise the possibility of the child's dismissal with the Director.
2. If/when the child continues their misguided behavior after the first incident, the teacher will request a verbal conference with the parents, as well as present to the parents a written report of the child's actions/ experience in the classroom. At that time, the teacher will discuss the child's situation and the possibility of his/her suitability of a Montessori classroom for this particular

child. It may be advisable to explain to the parents that any more similar incidents will result in removal from school for the remainder of the day, and subsequent days if the behavior continues. Parents will be notified to pick up their child.

3. Upon returning to school, if the child again disrespects social rules, removal from school for the remainder of the day plus an additional one day suspension will result.
4. The full Board will hold a special session, whereupon the Director, with advisement from the child's teacher, will present a recommendation for or against the child's dismissal. The Board will make the final decision. Once all avenues are employed, such as intentional efforts with the child, discussions with the parents, and work with professionals/experts in the matter of concern, the teacher and the Director will discuss the advisability of asking the parents to withdraw the child from the school. Such a request should only occur if all efforts fail and/or the parents do not cooperate with the efforts of the school or the school truly cannot meet the educational, physical or emotional needs of the child.

Required Withdrawal

When students enter Woods Creek Montessori it is understood that both they and their parents agree to support all the rules of the school as outlined in the Parent Handbook and other communications to the families while the child is enrolled in the school. In situations involving repeated violations of school rules or continued disruptive behavior, or if at any time the child's influence is considered harmful to the other children, the environment or the staff, the school reserves the right to require the child's withdrawal.

If it becomes clear that WCM is unable to meet a child's academic, emotional and social needs, the school reserves the right to require a change of environment to ensure the child's success and well-being.

Health Policies

Illness

The health guidelines below are set by the state.

A child should not be in school if any of the following conditions exist:

- A temperature registering above normal (100 degrees). A child's temperature **must** be at normal temperature, without fever-reducing medication, for 24 hours before returning to school.
 - *Note:* Even if the temperature is caused by a non-contagious illness, the child *cannot* attend school as fever indicates that the body is under stress or is fighting an infection. In this condition, complications can easily arise; therefore, the school cannot assume the responsibility of monitoring sick children.

- Rash
- Conjunctivitis/ pink-eye
- Sore throat, persistent cough, or breathing difficulties
- Fresh cold with a profuse, cloudy discharge from the nose
- Child not well enough to play outside
- Vomiting the night before or the morning of attending school
- Continuous diarrhea (loose stool which cannot be contained by a diaper or cannot be controlled by the child)
- Any type of contagious disease

Should a staff member observe a child with any of the above conditions or feel that the child is too ill to participate in his or her class activities even without symptoms, the Lead Teacher will be notified immediately to assess the child's condition. If the Lead Teacher feels that the child cannot adequately participate in the classroom environment, she will notify the Director who will then notify the child's parents or the emergency contacts.

Parent or Responsible Person Contact Procedure

1. A staff member will attempt to call the parents as soon as it is determined that the child is too ill to remain at school.
2. If the staff member or Director is unable to speak with the parents, she will leave a message or a callback phone number if possible.
3. If after 15 minutes contact has not been made with the parents, the staff member will attempt to contact them again.
4. If after 30 minutes from the original call, contact has still not been made with the parents, the staff member will begin calling the emergency contacts in the order listed on the Emergency Card.
5. Staff has discretion to alter this timetable depending on the seriousness of the situation.

Procedures for Dispensing Medication

If the child is taking any medications (prescription or over-the-counter), the staff must be given written permission to administer the medication. The written permission must accompany the bottle of medication (with the label on it) and must include specific instructions. Parents may come to the School to administer medication to their children if advance arrangements are made with the child's teacher. The staff will not administer fever-reducing medications to children at school. Children with fevers over 100 degrees taken orally or the equivalent will be sent home.

Parents whose children have any known allergy or disability should alert both the Director and the teacher to the specifics of special needs. An antidote for the allergy should be kept at the school in case the child should experience an allergic reaction at school.

Injury Procedures

Accident Report: For routine cuts, scrapes, and splinters, the teacher will handle the problem and inform the parent upon arrival. At this time the parent or guardian will be asked to sign an Accident Report, which a staff member will have completed. Parents will be informed and given the opportunity to come to school and make their own assessment for injuries that appear to be more than a routine occurrence.

Incident Report: An Incident Report documents a child's involvement in dangerous, damaging or aggressive behavior toward themselves, others, or the environment. A parent will be asked to sign the report whenever their child is involved in an "incident" as either an "initiator" or "recipient" of inappropriate behavior. Children's names will be kept confidential, and will not be noted in the incident report.

Safety Policies

Suspected Abuse/Neglect

By law staff are required to report any suspected cases of child abuse and/or neglect. If a child attends school with an unusual physical injury or in an unusual emotional state, the staff will:

1. Consult each other regarding their observations
2. Discuss the issue with the child's parent/guardian
3. Reserve the right to consult social services regarding further courses of action

Every effort will be made to protect the confidentiality of the child/ family.

Lost or Missing Child Procedures

Extensive efforts are made to secure the physical safety of the children while at school. If an occasion should arise when a child is unaccounted for the following steps will be taken.

On Site:

1. The classroom staff will consult each other regarding the child's whereabouts.
2. The Director will be informed.
3. The classroom and playground areas will be searched.
4. The remainder of the facility and adjoining areas will be searched. The Director and Assistants will search for the child while the Lead Teacher remains with the other students.
5. If the child is not located within 10 minutes, a staff member will call 911 for assistance at which time child's parents/guardian will be notified – Every attempt will be made to notify an emergency contact as soon as possible. Such words as "emergency" or 911 may be used to convey the seriousness of the situation.

Off Site:

1. The staff will consult each other and any parent volunteers who may be accompanying a field trip regarding the child's whereabouts.

2. Each adult will be asked to remain with the children or to search the building/ surrounding area. At no time will the remaining children be left unattended.
3. After a reasonable search, depending on location and circumstances, a staff member will notify local authorities requesting further assistance. The Director and the child's parent/guardian will be notified immediately following such actions.

Emergency Policies

Medical Emergencies

All children enrolled at the school must have on file written permission for WCM to authorize emergency care. These cards are located in the classroom and the Director's office. In the case of a medical emergency, the child's parents will be contacted as soon as possible. A doctor and hospital preference must be listed in the child's records, with the understanding that WCM would have to take into account time factors for deciding the most appropriate course of action in case of any emergency.

Fire / Fire Drill Procedure

WCM will conduct a fire drill once monthly, as required by VA Standards. The drill will be at varied times of day to ensure all programs are prepared for an emergency. The results of each drill will be located in the office. Evacuation maps are located in each classroom and in the office. All exits are illuminated. All staff members are expected to assist students and visitors in following the procedures.

Safe Areas:

- Pre-Toddlers: School side of chain link gate beside parking area.
- Toddlers, Primary I, Primary II: School side of double chain link gates at end of evaluation path at top of hill on Primary playground.

Exit Procedure:

1. Director will ring bell to indicate start of fire drill. Timing will begin upon bell ringing.
2. Lead Staff for each class will retrieve Attendance Log and Emergency Contact List before leaving the building.
3. All occupants are to walk immediately to the appropriate exit (as outlined below).
4. All staff members are expected to perform a head count of their class upon exiting the building and upon arrival at their Safe Area.
5. All students and staff are to follow their respective procedures for exiting the building as quickly as possible and arriving at their Safe Area.
6. Lead teachers are expected to stay with their respective class and students.
7. Assistants are responsible for checking bathrooms and classrooms to ensure all children have been safely evacuated from the building, **closing all doors behind them**, before joining their class at the Safe Area.
8. Visitors are to exit the building following the same procedures as the room they are in at the time of the drill (as outlined below) and follow students to their respective Safe Area.

9. When the building has been evacuated and all children/staff are in their Safe Area, the Director will verify with all classroom teachers that all students and adults are accounted for and note exit times for each classroom.
10. Director announces the end of the drill (code green) and everyone returns to the classrooms.

Students will line up at the appropriate exit. Primary teacher will guide students from the exit to upper level of the playground. Pre-Toddler teacher will guide students from the exit to the front gate. Toddler teacher will guide students outside gate and down emergency path to double gate. Visitors are to follow behind students. Assistants will check classrooms and bathrooms for anyone remaining, closing all doors behind them. Assistants will then join the group outside. Director will conduct a final check of upper classroom for anyone remaining before exiting the building.

Emergency Evacuation Procedures

In the case of an actual emergency where the school grounds must be vacated and all children and personnel evacuated (e.g., fire, flooding, electrical problems, imminent danger), the following procedure will be followed:

1. Director (or designated staff member) will call 911 to report the emergency situation. After calling 911 the Director will follow the Emergency Evacuation Contact Procedures. Parents will be contacted upon arrival at the Theatre.
2. Director (or designated staff member) will gather emergency information on children and staff, school roster, emergency backpack, first aid kit, and cell phone.
3. Primary classes will leave through side double green gate and walk up to the road and proceed to Dold and Sorority Row intersection. Staff will have a handheld stop sign available for evacuation path at intersection.
4. The Pre-Toddler class will leave through front gate and walk up to the intersection (in flood situations or situations in which integrity of the WCM campus is not affected, they will use double green gate up by the road).
5. The Toddler class will leave through the side gate and onto the emergency trail along the upper green fence.
6. All WCM staff and children will meet at the Central Meeting Area on the school side of the double green chain link gate at the top of the upper Primary playground.
7. When all staff and children are present at the Central Meeting Area, the school will cross the road to the Washington and Lee campus via the sorority row walkway bridge where they will continue up the stairs (and/or elevators) along the walkway, to the back entrance of the Elrod Commons (Stackhouse Theatre).
8. Upon arrival at the Stackhouse Theatre, the Director and available staff will use the Emergency Contact List to inform parents of the evacuation through the parent web system.
9. Parents (or emergency contacts) will be asked to pick up children from the Stackhouse Theatre. Parents picking up their children from the Stackhouse Theatre may temporarily park in the Washington and Lee parking garage (only in emergency situations).
10. Staff will remain with the children until a parent/emergency contact person comes to get them and signs them out from their respective teacher.

Flooding

In the case of flooding, the same procedure will be followed, with all children being taken to the area at the back of the Primary playground. Dismissal and pick up of children during such a disaster will take place from the far end of the playground, nearest the road.

Lock Down Procedure (Shelter in place)

In the case of imminent danger from suspicious persons, tornado, or other outside threat, all classrooms will follow this procedure:

1. The Director or administrator on site will issue a code “Yellow” (be on alert) verbally (Primary I) or by cell phone (Primary II, Toddler, Pre-Toddler) if time permits. Teachers will await further instructions. The Director will call 911 immediately to request further assistance.
2. If necessary, a code “Red” (lock down) will then be issued verbally (Primary I) or by cell phone (Primary II, Toddler, Pre-Toddler).
3. A designated assistant staff member in each classroom will respond by locking down all entrances (windows, outer and inner doors) to their classroom and take a key with them to their designated safe place. Lead teachers and/or remaining staff will assemble all children in each classroom to a designated space where children can be safe and/or hidden until danger is past.
 - Pre-Toddler room: Stairwell (if tornado) or fireplace/bathrooms in classroom
 - Toddler room: Bathrooms or far infant sleeping corner.
 - Primary I and office: stairwell (if tornado) or low on brick wall on east side away from door and windows
 - Primary II: teacher closet, bathroom, or corner farthest from door
4. When situation is secure, the director or designated administrative staff will issue a Code “Green” (all clear) and staff can resume their classes.