



Montessori School of Ojai

Educating the Individual Building Community Caring for the World

PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK

2023 – 2024

INTRODUCTION

Welcome to the Montessori School of Ojai (MSO). The school was founded in 1973 by local parents and Dr. Victoria Matthews. MSO provides an environment based on the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, who created a child-centered teaching method. Current research validates Montessori's methodology. Our complete educational program encompasses studies in reading, writing, math, social sciences, natural and physical sciences, garden, foreign language, drama, art, music, and physical education. With field trips, students have many opportunities to explore beyond the boundaries of our Ojai campus. Individualized attention ensures a student's success at his or her own level.

Montessori School of Ojai is a non-profit tax exempt, educational corporation licensed by the California Department of Social Services (#561702317 and #566212532).

CURRICULUM

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that no human being is educated by another person - they must do it by themselves or it will never be done. A truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years spent in the classroom because that person is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge. Dr. Montessori felt the goal of childhood education should not be to fill the child with facts, but to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

In the Montessori classroom this objective is approached in two ways: first, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by his/her own choice rather than being forced; and second, by helping the child perfect his/her natural tools for learning, so the child's abilities will be maximized for future learning. The materials used in the Montessori classroom have this dual, long-range function in addition to their immediate purpose of giving specific information to the child.

ADMISSION POLICY

MSO admits students of any race, color, religion, creed, sex, or nationality and ethnic origin to all the rights and privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, sex, or religion in administration of its educational policies, and athletic and other school administered programs. Montessori School of Ojai does not discriminate against any student under the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990.

SIGNING IN AND OUT

By California State Law, all children under age 5 in Rooms 1, 2, 3, 9 and 4 must be escorted to school and signed in and out by the adult responsible for their transportation to and from school. We ask that you be prompt in picking your child up from school. If you anticipate being late or an emergency arises, please call the school office or our child care program to let us know.

CHILD CARE

Child Care hours for all students over 2 years: **7:00 a.m.** until class begins and afternoons until **5:30 p.m.**

Infant Program Child Care by arrangement with Infant teacher.

Parents are given a fifteen-minute grace period prior to and following class hours. Children are in Child Care if they arrive prior to or are picked up following the grace period. You will be billed monthly for Child Care along with your tuition.

Please contact the Child Care line at 805-649-1543 with questions or concerns.

It is extremely important for you or the person picking up your child to personally notify Child Care that the child is leaving. Child Care has to know that a child has been picked up by an authorized person. A child will not be released to anyone other than a parent or person whose name appears on the **Identification and Emergency Form** unless specific arrangements have been made with the school. A written note must be sent to school, signed by one of the parents, stating the name of the person to whom the child is to be released. If there is any question, and the parents cannot be reached by phone, the police may be called to investigate.

EMAIL COMMUNICATION

Communication of school events, lunch menus, invoicing, etc. is primarily through email.

Please make sure your correct email address is up to date with the school office. Contact the school office with any questions you have.

mso@montessorischoolofjai.org or (805) 649-2525.

Newsletters, memos, etc., from the administration, office staff, and teacher provide vital and essential arteries of communication for parents. Please read all newsletters. The school calendar has important dates on the back. Watch for notices and reminders of special events and meetings.

LATE ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

It is very important children arrive promptly to school. Coming into the classroom after the group has already started is very difficult for many children. Please try to bring your child on time so that they can take full advantage of the program we offer.

FORMS

All enrollment forms must be returned to the office by the first day your child attends school.

These forms are a California State requirement.

Notify the office if there are any updates to the forms such as a change of phone numbers, addresses, allergies, etc.

TUITION

Operation of the school is funded primarily by the tuition you pay. A yearly tuition is set by the Board of Directors. Tuition payments are broken down into ten monthly installments payable by the fifteenth of each month.

Account balances which are unpaid after 30 days will be assessed a late fee as follows:

- Balance past due amount \$1.00 - \$100.00 is \$25.00 per month.
- Balance past due amount \$101.00 - \$1000.00 is \$50 per month.
- Balance past due amount \$1001.00 or higher is \$100 per month.

Additional charges (hot lunch, after-school programs, child care, etc.) are compiled monthly and added to your tuition bill.

FIELD TRIPS

Field trips and at-school performances constitute an integral part of our program. Field trips and performances are arranged by classroom teachers and administrative staff. Any program that includes a fee will be charged to the family account to cover the cost to the school.

Parent involvement is necessary for field trips and very much appreciated. Parents who volunteer to drive are required to have on file a copy of proof of insurance and a driver's license as well as a current DMV report (which MSO will obtain). The automobile must be in excellent running condition with fully operable seatbelts and good tire tread. Our insurance requires autos be subject to safety inspection. Parents will also be asked to sign a permission and release form for each field trip.

Parent drivers are asked to take students directly to the field trip location and back to MSO after, with no side trips for gas, snacks, etc. We also ask that should you want to supply a snack the day of the field trip, please talk to the classroom teacher beforehand and be sure to provide snacks for the entire class.

ABSENCES and ILLNESS

Under no circumstances will parents be allowed to bring a sick child to MSO. We need your cooperation in preventing the spread of illness. Often a child is feeling tired, cranky and generally out-of-sorts for a day or so before the appearance of illness. This is often the most contagious time. If your child seems overly tired or irritable, it is wise to keep them home for some extra rest. If there has been a fever, diarrhea or vomiting, or unusual drainage from eyes, nose, ears or open sores in the past 24 hours it is best for your child, and their classmates, to keep the child at home. Children who exhibit any of these symptoms will be sent home. Please notify us of anything contagious.

If your child or anyone in your household has been potentially exposed to COVID-19, please monitor your child's temperature every morning and every evening. If there is a temperature of 99.5 degrees or over, your child cannot come to school and will be sent home. Please keep track of any potential exposure to the COVID-19 virus. If you have given your child any fever-reducing medication in the last 24 hours, please keep your child home until you are able to get an all-clear from your doctor. Please also review social distancing practices and proper handwashing techniques with your child.

Because children can have accidents and/or become ill while at school, it is essential that the school have on file an Emergency Form with the names of at least two persons who may be contacted in a parent's absence to care for a sick child. Please include emergency information on the Emergency Release Form. Contact the school IMMEDIATELY when there are changes in emergency information.

SCHOOL CLOTHING

In addition to being neat, comfortable and appropriate for the weather, school clothing for younger children should be easy for the child to manage by themselves and completely washable. Every item should be labeled. Rubber-soled shoes (sneakers, not sandals or cowboy boots) are safest on the playground. Your child may find that a tote bag or backpack is helpful for carrying papers and personal belongings to and from school. It is also advisable for the younger children to keep one extra change of clothes at school.

Comfort, ease and modesty are the criteria for older students. We do not allow clothing which distracts from the learning process. Some examples of inappropriate dress are bare feet or clothing that bears words or symbols of drugs/alcohol use, sexual activity, or racial bias.

School administration reserves the right to determine what is appropriate.

SNACKS/LUNCH

Good nutrition is an emphasis of our program. We help children learn to make healthy food choices. Because sugar consumption decreases children's ability to concentrate, we ask that your child eat a healthy breakfast before coming to school and that you pack a well-balanced, nutritional lunch.

We ask that you not include candy and other high sugar foods with excessive quantities of additives and preservatives. Snacks should be healthy and from at least two food groups. No candy or sodas should be brought for snack or lunch. Avoid glass containers. Our school encourages a "no trash lunch" policy: using containers that can be reused instead of plastic bags or throwaway containers.

Please make sure lunch boxes are clearly labeled with your child's name on the lunch box and all plastic containers and thermoses. We find lunch boxes much easier for the children to handle than paper bags. The students eat lunch at school each day, including early dismissal days.

The school serves hot lunch with a salad bar daily. Our office will email the hot lunch menu a month in advance along with a form to sign-up your child(ren) if interested. Print outs of the forms will also be made available at the sign-in table and in the office. Please submit all hot lunch forms to the office in advanced.

CLASS LIST

In case you wish to form carpools or reach out to families for events, we can compile a list of names and email addresses upon request. Should you not want your name to appear on the list, please notify the office when you register your child.

SAFETY AND EMERGENCY PLAN

A copy of the school's Emergency Disaster Plan is available for review in the school office.

Fire drills are held monthly as required by California State Law.

Earthquake preparedness drills are practiced regularly.

To be prepared for an earthquake or other natural disaster, MSO has an emergency kit on hand for each child.

HARASSMENT POLICY AND PROCEDURE

MSO is committed to providing a learning environment that is free from harassment of any form. The school will treat allegations of harassment seriously and will review and investigate such allegations in a prompt, confidential and thorough manner.

If any parents or students are aware of, or a victim of, possible harassment, they should immediately notify a teacher, administrator, or office staff.

A charge of harassment shall not, in and of itself, create the presumption of wrongdoing. However, a substantiated act of harassment will result in disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal. Students found to have filed false or frivolous charges will also be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal.

DRUG POLICY

The Montessori School of Ojai has a zero-tolerance policy towards drug use, which includes alcohol, cigarettes, vaping and/or any other illegal drug. It includes possession, use, and/or selling any of the above. Any violation is grounds for immediate expulsion.

Medications to be dispensed during school hours must be accompanied by a physician's and/or parent's note.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The purpose of discipline is to help children learn ways of behaving that are acceptable to themselves and to others. With very young children, this usually means setting limits for their safety, the safety of others and the safety of property. Young children need to be reassured that the people who care for them will guide and protect them. All behavior has a reason and it is part of our behavior management to find out the cause of the behavior before setting a program to help a child deal with those difficult times.

No discipline shall be severe, humiliating or frightening. No discipline shall be associated with food, rest or toileting. Spanking and any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

Teachers facilitate the development of self-control in children by using positive guidance techniques such as modeling and encouraging expected behavior, redirecting children to a more acceptable activity, and setting clear limits for the benefit and safety of all children.

In the event that the unacceptable behavior is not resolved, a child's teacher will call the parent(s).

In the event that the unacceptable behavior is not resolved with redirection or parental contact, a parent/teacher/director conference will be arranged immediately and enrollment may be terminated at the director's discretion.

Any conduct that disrupts the students' ability to learn and/or the school's ability to educate its students in a safe environment is prohibited. Consequences for a student who commits any act of harassment, intimidation, bullying or inappropriate behavior shall be varied and graded according to the nature of the behavior, the developmental age of the student and the student's history of problem behaviors and performance.

MEDICATION

MSO requires that a medication form be filled out for any prescription or non-prescription medication that needs administration. For any medication that needs to be taken multiple times per day, please administer the a.m. dose at home prior to school and the p.m. dose after school.

Please make sure that any medications that are to be given to your child comply with the following criteria:

- Any prescription medication must be in the original childproof container, clearly labeled with the child's name, physician's name and number, instructions on administration and expiration date.
- If your doctor gives you samples of any drugs to give your child, we need to have a note from the doctor stating that your child is being treated with this medicine. The note must state the name of the medicine, how long the treatment will last and when it needs to be given to the child.
- Topical ointment may be applied if it is in original tube, clearly labeled with child's name and parent fills out the medication form.
- Please do not put any medications in a bottle of formula, milk or juice sent from home. Please do not put any medications in your child's cubby, lunch box or cups. This could endanger any child as accidental ingestion may occur.

BEE/WASP STINGS

If a student is stung while at school, staff will administer bee sting topical antiseptic.

BIRTHDAYS AND HOLIDAYS

Each teacher celebrates birthdays in a unique way. At the beginning of each year, the teacher will let you know how birthdays will be celebrated. Since many children suffer noticeable reactions to chocolate and sugar, please send only healthful snacks such as fruit juice popsicles or muffins once you have permission from your child's teacher. We ask that invitations to parties be handled outside of school to avoid hurt feelings among the children

HOME

The Montessori approach to education assumes cooperation between the parent and the teacher. As parents you can assist with your child's adjustment to school by:

- Being aware of what is expected of your child at school and following through at home.
- Reevaluating your attitude toward your child in the light of basic concepts of the Montessori approach to education.
- Setting up a home and play environment to correspond with that of the school so the transition is easier for your child.
- Providing a time and place for your child to do homework (if applicable).
- Limiting time spent playing video games and watching television.
- Sometimes students benefit from the additional services of a tutor. Contact your child's teacher if you need names.

TELEVISION, VIDEO, COMPUTER

We ask that the children not watch television or play video games in the morning before they come to school and that strict limits are set on these activities during the week. We also recommend that adults supervise all online computer activity

TOYS AND CANDY

We welcome the children to share any interesting hobbies or other special items which relate to class activities. Children should not bring toys (especially weapons), candy, soda, or gum.

LOST MONTESSORI APPARATUS

From time to time, the children become attached to small pieces of Montessori apparatus and take them home. We would appreciate your checking your child's pockets and your washing machine regularly. Please send whatever you may find back to school.

RECOMMENDED READING AND MONTESSORI INSTRUCTION

We would be happy to recommend reading suggestions to provide you with more detailed information regarding the philosophy, methods and materials found in the Montessori environment. For parents interested in Montessori teacher training, please inquire in the office.

TELEPHONES AND CELL PHONES

We don't allow students to use the school phones for making non-school related calls. Parents can help with this policy by reminding children to make their social arrangements at home before coming to school. Possession and use of cell phones by students while on campus is determined by each teacher. Please talk to your child's teacher regarding the policy before sending your child to school with a cell phone.

ENROLLMENT AND RE-ENROLLMENT OF CONTINUING STUDENTS

Each year, all parents of enrolled children are given an opportunity to re-enroll for the next year by May 15 to ensure their child's spot. New children will be enrolled from the waiting list after May 15.

Parents may place their child on our waiting list at any time by simply returning an Application for Enrollment. It is not necessary to pay the Registration Fee until your child is accepted. Payment of the non-refundable Registration Fee is due upon acceptance.

PARENT CONTRIBUTION

Volunteers are very much appreciated at the school. Tuition does not cover the costs of major maintenance and improvements to the school. We depend on financial donations for special projects or new equipment purchases. You may be personally contacted during the year in regards to making these contributions.

School events such as the A Day in the Country, Harvest Moon Fundraiser, Music Program, Sportathon, and the Family Picnics provide parents with an excellent opportunity to interact with the members of the entire school. Parents assist with school functions, field trips, snack sign-up, fundraising, and other volunteer projects.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

The Board of Directors consists of alumni, parents, and members of the community charged with the duty of overseeing the general operation of the school as well as overseeing its fiscal health.

COMMUNICATION WITH THE TEACHING STAFF

Teachers may set up appointments with any parents who have questions or concerns. Simply contact the teacher by calling the school office and requesting an appointment or email the teacher directly.

Conferences are scheduled twice per school year. Whenever possible, we ask both parents to attend. Teachers are available for conferences at any time during the year. We welcome any questions, comments, concerns, or compliments.

COMMUNICATION WITH ADMINISTRATION AND OFFICE STAFF

If you are in need of immediate assistance, always feel free to call the office to set up appointments or to arrange a return phone call with members of our staff. It is appreciated if parents avoid contacting staff outside of business hours unless it is an emergency.

SCHOOL OFFICE – (805) 649-2525

CHILD CARE NUMBER – (805) 649-1543

FAX NUMBER – (805) 649-3718

EMAIL – mso@montessorischoolofjai.org