



RISING TO STARDOM WITH EDUCATION

Family Handbook

2026-2027

Rising Star Montessori Academy

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Fayetteville, Georgia 30214
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RisingStarMontessori.com

RSMA HANDBOOK

2026-2027

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RISING STAR MONTESSORI ACADEMY

Rising Star Montessori, Inc. began its quest to inspire the lives of children in August of 2001. Nancy Dutton and Debi Montgomery founded Rising Star Montessori with one Primary Class, consisting of 16 students. Within one year, the school added an Elementary Program and moved their home base to a 1920's historical house on two acres of land in the heart of Fayetteville, Georgia. This land provides the children with many opportunities to run and explore God's nature. There are numerous activities built into the curriculum for the children, including gardening, nature walks, basketball, football and soccer.

To meet the demands of its continuing growth, Rising Star completed an addition to the main building in 2005, which currently houses the Junior Elementary Program. In 2006, Rising Star purchased adjacent land and built a second structure that now houses the Senior Elementary Program, expanding the school property to 5 acres! In 2015, Rising Star opened a Toddler Program to add to the two Primary Classes, the Junior Elementary Class and Senior Elementary Class. The Toddler Class consists of a teacher-child ratio of 1:6. All other classrooms consist of a teacher-child ratio of 1:11 or less.



The Director, along with our other Certified Montessori Leads and support staff, dedicate their lives to giving children a quality education in a Christian Montessori environment.

CLASS SCHEDULE

Toddler Class	5 days/week	Half Day	8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	(18 – 36 months)
Primary Class	5 days/week	Half Day	8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.	(3 – 4 years old)
	5 days/week	Full Day	8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.	(4½ – 6 years old)
Jr. Elementary Class	5 days/week	Full Day	8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.	
Sr. Elementary Class	5 days/week	Full Day	8:15 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.	
Enrichment Program	5 days/week		7:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m., or 6:00 p.m.	



2026-2027 Tuition and Fee Schedule

Tuition Payment Plans

			Registration Fees	Total Tuition	PLAN A One Payment (Annual) 5% Discount DUE July 1 in full	PLAN B Two Payments (Bi-Annual) 2.5% Discount DUE July 1 + Jan 1	PLAN C 10 Payments (Monthly) No Payment Feb. DUE July 1 to May 1
TODDLER PROGRAM							
18 Mos. – 3 Years	Half Day (No Enrichment)		\$300.00	\$ 9,100.00	\$ 8,645.00	\$4,436.25 x 2	\$ 910.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 2:30 PM		\$300.00	\$10,200.00	\$ 9,690.00	\$4,972.50 x 2	\$1,020.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 4:30 PM		\$300.00	\$10,900.00	\$10,355.00	\$5,313.75 x 2	\$1,090.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 6:00 PM		\$300.00	\$11,600.00	\$11,200.00	\$5,655.00 x 2	\$1,160.00 x 10
PRIMARY PROGRAM							
3 – 4½ Years	Half Day (No Enrichment)		\$400.00	\$ 8,800.00	\$ 8,360.00	\$4,290.00 x 2	\$ 880.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 2:30 PM		\$400.00	\$10,000.00	\$ 9,500.00	\$4,875.00 x 2	\$1,000.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 4:30 PM		\$400.00	\$10,650.00	\$10,117.50	\$5,191.88 x 2	\$1,065.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 6:00 PM		\$400.00	\$11,100.00	\$10,545.00	\$5,411.25 x 2	\$1,110.00 x 10
4½ – 6 Years	Full Day (No Enrichment)		\$425.00	\$10,100.00	\$ 9,595.00	\$4,923.75 x 2	\$1,010.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 4:30 PM		\$425.00	\$11,250.00	\$10,687.50	\$5,484.38 x 2	\$1,125.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 6:00 PM		\$425.00	\$11,800.00	\$11,210.00	\$5,752.50 x 2	\$1,180.00 x 10
JR. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM							
6 – 9 Years	Full Day (No Enrichment)		\$500.00	\$10,750.00	\$10,212.50	\$5,240.63 x 2	\$1,075.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 4:30 PM		\$500.00	\$11,750.00	\$11,162.50	\$5,728.13 x 2	\$1,175.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 6:00 PM		\$500.00	\$12,250.00	\$11,637.50	\$5,971.88 x 2	\$1,225.00 x 10
SR. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM							
9 – 13 Years	Full Day (No Enrichment)		\$500.00	\$10,750.00	\$10,212.50	\$5,240.63 x 2	\$1,075.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 4:30 PM		\$500.00	\$11,750.00	\$11,162.50	\$5,728.13 x 2	\$1,175.00 x 10
	+ Enrichment to 6:00 PM		\$500.00	\$12,250.00	\$11,637.50	\$5,971.88 x 2	\$1,225.00 x 10

Ages as of September 1, 2026

Registration fees are due in full when the application for enrollment is submitted. Class spaces are limited and will not be reserved for any student for whom the fees remain unpaid.

TODDLER PROGRAM

Registration Fee	\$300.00	>	NON-
Activity Fee	\$50.00	>	REFUNDABLE

HALF DAY:

8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Annual Tuition \$9,100.00

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$8,645.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$4,436.25 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$8,872.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$910.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$9,100.00</i>

HALF DAY + 2:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 2:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,200.00 (\$9,100.00 Base + \$1,100.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,690.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$4,972.50 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,945.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,020.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,200.00</i>

HALF DAY + 4:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 4:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,900.00 (\$9,100.00 Base + \$1,800.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,355.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,313.75 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,627.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,090.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,400.00</i>

HALF DAY + 6:00 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 6:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,600.00 (\$9,100.00 Base + \$2,500.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,200.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,655.00 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,310.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,160.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,600.00</i>

PRIMARY PROGRAM
(HALF DAY)

Registration Fee	\$400.00	>	NON-
Activity Fee	\$100.00	>	REFUNDABLE

HALF DAY:

8:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.

Annual Tuition \$8,800.00

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$8,360.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$4,290.00 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$8,580.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$880.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$8,800.00</i>

HALF DAY + 2:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 2:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,000.00 (\$8,800.00 Base + \$1,200.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,500.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$4,875.00 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,750.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$950.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,000.00</i>

HALF DAY + 4:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 4:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,650.00 (\$8,800.00 Base + \$1,850.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,642.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,191.88 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,383.76</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,065.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,650.00</i>

HALF DAY + 6:00 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 11:45 a.m.
Enrichment to 6:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,100.00 (\$8,800.00 Base + \$2,300.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,545.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,411.25 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,822.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,110.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,100.00</i>

PRIMARY PROGRAM
(FULL DAY)

Registration Fee	\$425.00	>	NON-
Activity Fee	\$100.00	>	REFUNDABLE

FULL DAY:

8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,100.00

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,595.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$4,923.75 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$9,847.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,010.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,100.00</i>

FULL DAY + 4:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Enrichment to 4:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,250.00 (\$10,100.00 Base + \$1,150.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,687.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,484.38 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,968.76</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,125.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,250.00</i>

FULL DAY + 6:00 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 2:30 p.m.
Enrichment to 6:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,800.00 (\$10,100.00 Base + \$1,700.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,210.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,752.50 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,505.00</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,180.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,800.00</i>

JR. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

Registration Fee	\$500.00	>	NON-
Activity Fee	\$150.00	>	REFUNDABLE

FULL DAY:

8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,750.00

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,212.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,240.63 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,481.26</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,075.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,750.00</i>

FULL DAY + 4:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Enrichment to 4:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,750.00 (\$10,750.00 Base + \$1,000.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,162.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,728.13 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,456.26</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,175.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,750.00</i>

FULL DAY + 6:00 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Enrichment to 6:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$12,250.00 (\$10,750.00 Base + \$1,500.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,637.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,971.88 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,943.76</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,225.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$12,250.00</i>

SR. ELEMENTARY PROGRAM

Registration Fee	\$500.00	>	NON-
Activity Fee	\$150.00	>	REFUNDABLE

FULL DAY:

8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$10,750.00

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,212.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,240.63 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$10,481.26</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,075.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$10,750.00</i>

FULL DAY + 4:30 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Enrichment to 4:30 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$11,750.00 (\$10,750.00 Base + \$1,000.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,162.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,728.13 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,456.26</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,175.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$11,750.00</i>

FULL DAY + 6:00 PM:

7:30 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Enrichment to 6:00 p.m.

Annual Tuition \$12,250.00 (\$10,750.00 Base + \$1,500.00 Enr.)

<i>Payment Plan A:</i>	5% discount if <u>paid in full by July 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,637.50</i>
<i>Payment Plan B:</i>	2.5% discount if paid Bi-Annually <u>\$5,971.88 due on July 1 & January 1</u>	<i>Total = \$11,943.76</i>
<i>Payment Plan C:</i>	10-Month Plan - Equal Payments starting July 1 <u>\$1,225.00/month (July 1 – May 1) - No payment in Feb.</u>	<i>Total = \$12,250.00</i>

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

STANDARDS

Rising Star Montessori, Inc., d/b/a Rising Star Montessori Academy is licensed by Bright from the Start and complies with all standards set forth by the Department.

MISSION STATEMENT

To give every child a superior Montessori experience by embracing the principles and practices of Maria Montessori.

- Encourage positive self-image, independent thinking and leadership skills
- Nurturing the individual's creativity, curiosity, and critical thinking
- Instilling compassion, integrity, and confidence
- Fostering a Christian environment that embraces spirituality and cultural diversity

SERVICES PROVIDED

Ages of Children	18 months to 14 years of age
Months of Operation	August through May of each year
Days of Operation	Monday through Friday
Hours of Operation	7:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.
Lunch/Snacks	Morning and afternoon snack provided by the school
Admission Requirements	See Parental Agreement with Rising Star Montessori, Inc.
Transportation	Transportation to or from school is <u>not</u> provided

PROGRAMS

Half Day Toddler Program 8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

The Toddler classroom is a safe and nurturing environment consisting of appropriate shelving and activities geared toward 18- to 36-month old children. During the Sensitive period, the Toddler begins to learn independence, self reliance, fine and gross motor skills, grace and courtesy, cognitive skills in a prepared environment.

Half Day Primary Program 8:30 a.m. – 11:45 a.m.

Fundamental to Montessori theory is the multi-age classroom. This classroom includes children 3 – 6 years of age. They may work either individually or in small groups, learning from sharing with one another. The children engage in activities specially designed for their learning in the areas of Practical Life, Sensorial, Natural Science, Geography, Math, Language, Art and Music.

Full Day Primary Program 8:30 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.

This program refers to the more advanced academic work which is available to the older and more independent child. This program is typically for the 5 and 6 years old but a child that is 4 ½ years old with six months of previous Montessori training can be assessed by the teacher for the program if space is available.

Junior Elementary Program 8:30 a.m. – 3:00 p.m.

This program refers to the 6-9 years old child, 1st – 3rd grade. Normally, a child must have had previous Montessori schooling to be accepted in this program. This program continues with the advanced academic work individually or in small groups and at their own pace. Long blocks of work encourage extended spans of concentration.

Senior Elementary Class 8:15 a.m. – 2:45 p.m.

This program refers to the 10-14 years old child, 4th – 8th grade. Normally, a child must have had previous Montessori schooling to be accepted in this program. This program continues with the advanced academic work. Most of their work is now abstract and targets writing skills, research, reports, etc.

Enrichment Program 7:30 a.m. – 2:30/4:30/6:00 p.m. (Before & After Care)

This program is for half and full day students. Children that need to arrive prior to the start of class time may arrive as early as 7:30 a.m. and stay as late as 2:30 p.m., 4:30 p.m. or 6:00 p.m. This program consists of school activities that allow children to reinforce their manipulative skills as well as rest time (for the younger students). A snack is provided for each child that stays in the after-school Enrichment Program.

If you are not enrolled in the Enrichment Program and need ***limited*** service, your cost is \$6.00/hour which is billed at the end of the month. This service can only be used with prior notice (before 10:00 a.m. of the day needed), and if space is available.

ENROLLMENT

Rising Star Montessori accepts children that are 18 months to 14 years of age. Children applying for the Primary class (3 - 6 years old), must be toilet trained. Each child and parent will meet with the Director for an interview. The child will have a minimum two-week and up to one month evaluation period. After one or two weeks, if the child is not adapting to the Montessori environment, a meeting will be called between the Director and parents. After two-four weeks, if the child shows no improvement with assimilation into the environment, the parents will be notified of termination. The parents will be billed according to the days the child attended, and the registration fee will be refunded in full, apart from a \$50.00 processing fee.

LATE FEES

A late fee will be assessed for children left in the school beyond 6:00 p.m. Late pick-up fees will also be applied to children who leave at 11:45 a.m., 2:30 p.m., 2:45 p.m., 3:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. if not picked up within a five-minute grace period of class/enrichment dismissal. There is **no** grace period for 6:00 p.m. pickup. The late fees are as follows:

Late Fees:	2:30-3:00 Dismissal	4:30 Dismissal	6:00 Dismissal
0-5 minutes late	Grace Period	Grace Period	\$ 5.00
6-10 minutes late	\$ 5.00	\$ 5.00	+ \$10.00
11-15 minutes late	+ \$10.00	+ \$10.00	+ \$20.00
16-20 minutes late	+ \$20.00	+ \$20.00	+ \$20.00
21+ minutes late	+ \$ 2.00 per min.	+ \$ 2.00 per min.	+ \$ 2.00 per min.

RETURN CHECK FEE

There will be a \$35.00 charge on any returned check or e-check (ACH) payment through Procure. This payment must be paid by cash or money order. A second returned check would require that the account become a cash only account. If the payment is not received by 11:59 p.m. on the 5th or 15th (see Tuition – Monthly Plan in the section below for additional details), there will be a late charge of \$25.00 for each date missed.

TUITION

Annual/Bi-Annual Tuition Plans

A person that pays the annual or bi-annual tuition before July 1 prior to the start of the school year will receive a 5% or 2.5% discount. Any payment after July 1 will result in loss of discount.

Monthly Plan

Payment is due on the first day of the month, whether school is open or closed. There will be no waived late fees. **If payment has not been made by the 5th, a late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed. This assessment is per child. If payment has not been received by the 15th, another \$25.00 late fee will be assessed. If payment is not received by the end of the month, the child will be refused admission to the school until payment is current.**

If payment is not received by the 15th for the last payment in May, the student will not be able to attend the last days of school until the account balance is \$0.00. If payment is not received within 45 days, further action will be taken. Postdated checks will be considered late and a late fee assessed.

Split Payments

RSMA will no longer receive separate payments from two parents. We will only accept payment from one parent and will only speak to the paying parent regarding the billing.

Tuition Account Balance

Account balance must be zero before May 15 for your child to return to school for the remainder of the school year.

Payment Methods Accepted

Payments can be made through Procure via ACH (no fee) or credit card (a fee will apply), or they may also be made directly via check, money order or cash. Debit cards are not accepted.

REFUND OF TUITION AND FEES / EARLY WITHDRAWAL

Students who enroll for the new school year and have paid their first payment (July 1) and terminate before school starts, will not be refunded any portion of the tuition payment for July, the registration fee, or the activity fee.

Should a student withdraw during the school year, there will be no refund of tuition for any month in which the student has attended one or more days. Likewise, there will be no refund of any portion of the registration or activity fee. A 30-days’ notice IS REQUIRED for early withdrawals and all tuition fees within that 30 day period remain due and payable. There will also be an additional one-time termination fee equal to one month’s tuition due upon early withdrawal plus a \$50 processing fee. If the school year is not completed, any discounts will become null and void, and you will be responsible for paying the difference. **No records will be released until there is a \$0 balance on your account.**

REQUEST OF RECORDS

If your child is registering with another local school, we will need the parent to sign a release form for us to release the records to the new school. They will only be released upon receiving the request form sent directly from the school and the signed consent form from the parent. If the parent requests the records to be released to them, we must be given a week’s notice to prepare the records. **RECORDS WILL NOT BE RELEASED FOR ANY STUDENT WHO HAS A CURRENT BALANCE ON THEIR PROCARE ACCOUNT.**

REGISTRATION

A NON-REFUNDABLE Registration Fee is paid upon acceptance into our school. Payment of the registration fee will secure your child’s place in the elected program. If we do not receive a response along with paid registration fees within two (2) days of the Procure and Workplace invitations being sent to the parent/guardian(s), we will assume you no longer want your slot, and it will be given to the next person on the waiting list.

In-House Enrollment begins on February 1 each year. Open enrollment (outside of the school) begins March 1 each year. The in-house registration fees are due in full by February 28 for the following school year. If full payment is not received by this date, your child’s slot will be given to the next available person on the waiting list. The registration and activity fees for the school year are as follows:

Half Day Toddler	\$300.00	Full Day Primary	\$425.00
Half Day Primary	\$400.00	Jr. & Sr. Elementary	\$500.00

ACTIVITY FEE

The activity fee is a yearly fee due at registration. This fee will cover the cost of in-house presentations and field trips for children only.

DRESS CODES/UNIFORM ORDERS

Elementary students are required to wear a uniform consisting of khaki or navy pants, dress, skorts or shorts; a maroon, navy or white polo shirt with Rising Star insignia, or a Rising Star t-shirt. The polo shirts, t-shirts, sweaters and custom items can be ordered by you directly from Lighthouse Promotions in Fayetteville. Any parent from other classrooms can order from them as well. Fridays are dress down days and uniforms are not required.

All Rising Star students must wear shoes with backs and socks. Socks must be worn at all times. Tennis shoes are required on the playground at all times. Sandals are not permitted for safety reasons. An extra pair of socks must be brought in to wear for outside play time to keep our classrooms clean. Clean socks or slippers are required to wear for the classroom.

PERSONAL GROOMING AND APPEARANCE

- No pierced jewelry is allowed for boys at school or at school-related functions.
- Pierced jewelry for girls is limited to earrings with a maximum of 2 per ear.
- Hair should always be clean, neat, and well groomed with no extreme haircuts or colors.
- Boy's hair must be well-kept and must be off the eyebrows.
- All Elementary students must wear deodorant daily.
- Hats are not to be worn in the school building.
- No mini skirts or halter tops are allowed to be worn to school.
- Shorts MUST be worn under dresses.

ABSENCES

Tuition is based on a yearly fee and broken down by 10 months, July to January, March to May. There is no reduction of fees for vacations or holidays.

ATTEDANCE POLICY / MAXIMUM ABSENCES ALLOWED

Fifteen (15) days is the maximum number of days absent in a year for Kindergarten and Elementary students. Any student with more than fifteen absences in one year may become ineligible to receive credit for the year's work.

School attendance is critical to learning; therefore, Rising Star Montessori Academy (per the mandated guidelines of the Fayette County Board of Education) has instituted a compulsory attendance policy in accordance with Georgia Board of Education Rule 160-5-1.10, as follows:

Each student will be allowed five (5) self-certified excused absences per semester (10 self-certified excused absences per school year).

Excused Absences:

- Personal illness – Up to five (5) absences for illness per semester will be excused without requiring a physician's note. Any absences for illness thereafter MUST have a note or else it will be considered unexcused.
- Serious illness or death in the immediate family (mother, father, brother, sister, grandmother, grandfather, or guardians).
- Court Order.
- Religious Holiday(s).
- Instances in which attendance could be hazardous as determined by the Fayette County School System.
- Up to five (5) additional days excused absences per year to students whose parents are in the military and are being deployed or are on leave.
- Out-of-school suspensions.
- Family trips in which learning will be occurring / experiencing other states, countries, cultures, attending events, visiting with family members, etc. and which is coordinated with the Lead and the Director in advance of the trip.
- Any student with doctor-endorsed, perpetual health and/or illness-related issues that prevent the student from attending school in-person. Under this circumstance, homework and schoolwork will be provided to the student and attendance will be credited for the at-home work completed.

Unexcused Absences: Excessive unexcused absences will be subject to attendance investigation and can result in penalty as imposed by the Compulsory Education Law (O.C.G.A. 20-2-690.1), which can be found at <https://law.justia.com/codes/georgia/2022/title-20/chapter-2/article-16/part-1/subpart-2/section-20-2-690-1/>.

School Operations will notify by letter parents/guardians of students ages 6-16 who have accumulated ten (10) unexcused absences and will report violations to the Director to determine if court action will be pursued for formal intervention.

Penalties: Subject to:

- Fine – not less than \$25 and not greater than \$100.00
- Imprisonment – not to exceed 30 days
- Community Service or any combination of such penalties, at the discretion of the court.

TARDIES

Students who are not in their classroom within 15 minutes of the class start time will be considered tardy. Five (5) unexcused tardies in a month will result in one (1) unexcused absence. Our doors lock after 15 minutes of starting time (8:30 a.m. for Sr. Elementary and 8:45 a.m. for Toddler, Primary and Jr. Elementary). Parents and the child must go to the office to receive a tardy slip before being let in the school buildings.

Gates are locked at 8:40 a.m. All arrivals after that must park and walk down to the office for a tardy slip before reporting to the classroom. No child will be admitted after 8:59 a.m. without a provider's note excusing the tardy.

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Toddler and Primary students must be signed in on arrival and dismissal to comply with the standards set forth by Bright from the Start. Class start and dismissal times vary. No child is allowed in school 10 minutes prior to class time if they are not enrolled in Enrichment.

All Toddler children will be dropped off in front of their building. Circle to the right of the flagpole area. All Primary parents will drop off their child(ren) by forming one line in front of the breezeway ramp and signing them in. Do not block the inner circle which is for the Jr. Elementary students. Two staff members will receive your child and escort them to their classroom. This is not the time to ask questions about your child, etc. Our line must move quickly to get all students to class on time. If it is necessary for your child to arrive more than 10 minutes early, prior arrangements must be made through the Office.

Student dismissal will use the same procedure as in the morning. At any time, **do not park on the left side of the tree line.** Students who request to leave school early must bring a note or call the office requesting such early dismissal. Parents should not go directly to the classroom to get their child but to the After Care room where the student will be dismissed from at the requested time, unless early dismissal is for a Sr. Elementary student; they may be picked up directly from their classroom.

OBSERVATIONS

Parents are invited to come into the classroom to observe, once the child has had time to adjust to the Montessori classroom. This usually occurs in mid-late fall, and the child's teachers will contact parents directly for scheduling.

GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Rising Star Montessori Academy has clear, simple rules to be followed in class. These rules are discussed and explained the first day of school, along with the daily schedule. We use constructive disciplinary methods that teach positive self-esteem. For a behavior problem, the child is given two (2) choices. If the child cannot make the choice after talking about it, the teacher will make the choice for them.

Example: Disruptive behavior must stop or go to the table and sit. **Inappropriate behavior can lead to a one-, two- or three-day suspension. Any incident occurring after a three-day suspension, the student will be expelled and will not be able to return to RSMA as a student.** No refund will be given to the parents.

All Elementary students are required to do homework. Standard homework is given on Mondays and due on Fridays. This homework is mainly given to teach responsibility. After three infractions of not turning in assignments, the student and parent will have a meeting with the Director and Teacher. For each infraction after the meeting, the child will be subject to suspension for one, two or three days. Any new infractions occurring after a three-day suspension will result in the student being expelled for the remainder of the school year. No refund will be given to the parents.

HOLIDAYS

Rising Star Montessori Academy observes holidays throughout the school year. We do not follow the Fayette County Public Schools calendar. There will be no class or Enrichment program available during October, Thanksgiving, Christmas, winter and/or Spring Breaks. A school calendar is included at the end of this Handbook.

WEATHER

In case of inclement weather, Rising Star Montessori Academy will follow the action of the Fayette County School system. Watch all local television channels or go to their websites for information.

HEALTH RECORDS

To comply with state requirements, all health records and enrollment forms must be completed at the time of the child's entry to the school. Immunization Record Form 3231 must be signed by the child's physician or by a Georgia Health Department. If a current health record is not on file with the school by 30 days, the child will not be allowed to return to school until the record is rectified.

ILLNESS

A child shall not be accepted nor allowed to remain at school if they have the equivalent of one hundred (100) degree Fahrenheit or higher oral temperature **or** other contagious symptoms, such as, but not limited to, a rash or diarrhea, throwing up, extreme sore throat, or a severe cough. Any child with these symptoms will be isolated and parents will be called to pick up the sick child immediately. **We are not staffed to care for an ill child in the classrooms or office, so it is expected your child will be picked up within the hour of being notified.** If a parent is non-responsive, the Emergency Contact and Authorized Pick-Up Persons on file will be contacted to pick up the child.

No child will be released to a person other than a parent or a person on the authorized emergency list. Your child is not allowed back in school if he/she has any of the following symptoms:

1. Has a fever or has had one during the previous 24 hours without taking fever-reducing medication;
2. Is in the first 24 hours of an antibiotic treatment;
3. Has a heavy nasal discharge that is not clear;
4. Has a constant cough; and/or
5. Has had diarrhea (2 occurrences) or vomiting in the previous 24 hours.

If your child is showing any two symptoms of illness including, but not limited to, the following: fever, lethargy, lack of appetite, headache, stomachache, cough, congestion, non-clear nasal discharge, etc., you will also be contacted to pick up your child.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASE

Parents **MUST** notify the school if their child acquires a communicable disease that is listed on the current GEORGIA DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN RESOURCES Communicable Disease Chart posted on the bulletin board and available electronically online. Notices of possible exposure will be posted within 24 hours of the school learning of any disease. Re-Admission to the school will depend on the recommendations by the Georgia Department of Human Resources and may require a signature from a physician.

INJURY/EMERGENCY MEDICAL CARE

Parents will be notified of any incident requiring professional medical attention. Under previously signed parental medical authorization, which is part of the child's application packet, Rising Star Montessori is authorized to transport the child to Piedmont Fayette Hospital in Fayetteville.

MEDICATION

With written permission, updated on a weekly basis, the staff will administer medication to children who require it. Medication must be clearly labeled and in its original container with the child's name and dosage instructions on the pharmacy label and must not be expired. A medication form must be filled out for each medication to be administered. Adverse reactions will be recorded on this form. Parents must hand the medicine to the child's teacher or designated person when bringing the child to school and take it home daily.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Emergency procedures have been developed in the event of Tornado, Hurricane, Fire, Bomb Threat and Structural Damage. They are posted for viewing on our information board located in the main hallway by the Enrichment room.

LUNCHES

Parents must provide a nutritious lunch for their child(ren) each day including beverages.

Carbonated/red drinks (Red40) not allowed. NO PEANUTS/PEANUT PRODUCTS. No candy or cookies allowed and minimal sweet snacks are allowed in lunches.

Pursuant to requirements by Bright from the Start, any lunch food in an open container will not be saved. If food is pre-packaged and remains unopened, it will be sent home. It is the responsibility of the parents to make sure that lunches meet the guidelines published by the Georgia Department of Human Resources. These guidelines are posted on the bulletin board. If they are not met, Rising Star Montessori will complete the meal and the parent will be charged \$6.00. If your child forgets their lunch and the parent realizes this, it can be brought in until 11:30 a.m. You must take it to the office and not to the classroom. If we see that the student did not bring in their lunch and it is 11:30 a.m. or after, we will provide their lunch and a \$6.00 fee will be charged. The school will provide a morning and afternoon snack and beverage except for the weeks that parents are providing them. Due to limited spacing, if you want to eat with your child, you will need to call the office in advance to schedule a time.

Alternatively, you may order lunches for your child from the restaurants and/or catering company each month.

SNACKS

All parents are required to sign up to bring snacks three times a year for their child's class. This sign up is available at the first parent orientation meeting, or when the student's supplies are dropped off just before the start of the school year. The parent is sent a reminder the week before the snack is due. If the snack is not brought in on the date requested, there will be a penalty fee of \$50.00 billed to the parent.

BIRTHDAYS

Birthdays are special and important occasions. Each child is asked to bring in a nutritional snack like a fruit bowl, etc. No cakes, cupcakes or cookie cakes. They are also asked to bring in a picture for each year to lay out the timeline of their life.

FIELD TRIPS

The children will have the opportunity to take various trips throughout the year. Parents will be requested to sign permission slips each time for any field trips away from the school. We rely on parents to assist on our field trips with transportation and supervision. We try to give at least one month's notice in order for you to take time off to accompany us. One parent from each family must participate in at least one field trip during the year, unless enough parents volunteer to chaperone. Five to six parents are needed for each field trip.

OUTSIDE PLAY TIME

The State requires that students over the age of two must be allowed at least one to one and a half hours of outside play time each day. We will not go outside if the weather is too cold, below freezing, too hot, above 100, and too windy, 15 MPH. This will be done in the morning and afternoon.

CONFERENCES

There will be two conferences during the school year, January and May. Sign up times will be posted or listed on Sign Up Genius or through the office. Your teacher will tell you how to sign up or schedule the appointment. We strongly encourage each parent to attend these conferences to better understand the Montessori classroom and how their child is doing. Our doors are always open for any questions or concerns that might arise throughout the school year. Communication is important between the teacher and parent and for your child to have a rewarding experience with Rising Star Montessori School.

ABUSE & MOLESTATION POLICY

Please see attached Appendix A, which is our all-encompassing Abuse / Molestation policy.

PROGRAM CURRICULUMS

PRIMARY CURRICULUM

(3 to 6 years)

The Montessori Materials in the classroom can be divided into three main groups. The Practical Life exercises, which are the beginning activities for children aged three and four, the Sensorial materials, which can be used by all ages in the class; and the Academic materials, which await each child's moments of interest in reading, arithmetic, geography and science.

PRACTICAL LIFE

- Helps the child grow in self-knowledge
- Helps the child grow in independence
- Helps the child grow in an understanding of the environment
- Helps the child develop a good self-image
- Helps the child develop motor perception and perfection of movement
- Helps the child develop a sense of responsibility
- Helps the child develop a spirit of helpfulness
- Helps the child develop power of concentration
- Helps the child to establish order
- Helps the child to appreciate his/her culture

SENSORIAL

- Helps the child to learn dimension, indirect preparation for writing (Cylinders)
- Prepares the child for the cube root, 2x2x2 (Pink Tower)
- Prepares the child for square root, 2x2 (Broad Stair)
- Helps the child understand linear measurement (Red Rods)
- Helps the child learn colors, shapes, textures, weight
- Helps the child educate the sense of smell and sound (Smelling and Sound Bottles)
- Prepares the child for geometry (Constructive Triangles)
- Helps the child learn additional vocabulary: tall-short, thick-thin, large-small, etc.

MATHEMATICS

- Helps the child learn basic concepts of mathematics by using concrete materials to represent all types of quantities
- Helps the child learn 0-9 through muscular memory (Sandpaper numbers)
- Helps the child learn odd and even numbers
- Helps the child learn "teen numbers" (Sequin Board A)
- Helps the child learn numbers 21-99 (Sequin Board B)
- Helps the child learn the decimal system (Golden Beads)
- Helps the child to skip count by 2's, 3's, 4's, 5's, 6's, 7's, 8's, 9's, & 10's

- Helps the child learn squaring and cubing (Bead Cabinet)
- Helps the child learn fractions
- Helps the child learn addition, subtraction, multiplication and division
- Helps the child learn common factors (Factor Board)
- Helps the child learn square root (Square Root Board)

LANGUAGE

- Sandpaper letters help the child learn the shape and phonetic sounds of the Alphabet. Tracing these shapes helps the child learn to write through muscular memory.
- Once the child learns all sounds of the alphabet, he/she is ready to blend the sound to make phonetic three letter words. This is known as the Pink Scheme in the Montessori classroom.
- The child learns to match pictures with words.
- The child learns to read word lists.
- The child learns to read phrases.
- The child learns to read sentences.
- The child learns to read phonetic books.
- The child learns 4-5 letter words. This is known as the Blue Scheme in the Montessori classroom.
- Child repeats 3-6.
- The child learns phonograms. This is known as the Green Scheme in the Montessori classroom.
- The child learns from Journal writing on a daily basis.
- The child learns about the Parts of Speech (Article, Noun, Adjective and Verb).
- The child learns from Spelling - Alphabetical order, definition, research and sentences.
- The child learns Punctuation.

HISTORY

- Helps the child learn Time Lines
- Helps the child learn Stages of Civilization
- Helps the child learn Past, Present and Future
- Helps the child learn Famous People and Ancient Cultures
- Helps the child learn History of Art and Music

SCIENCE

- Zoology – Helps the child learn the five classes of vertebrates – Fish, Amphibian, Reptile, Bird, and Mammal
- Botany – Helps the child learn Plant Classification and parts of a leaf
- Helps the child learn about Planets in Our Solar System
- Helps the child learn about Volcanoes

GEOGRAPHY AND CULTURAL STUDIES

- Helps the child learn Continents, Countries, Culture (Cooking Activities)
- Helps the child learn Land and Water Formations, example: island, lake, etc.

SPANISH

- Helps the child learn basic Spanish and language structure through song, action games, activities etc.
- Themes: Animals, food, family members, numbers, alphabet, colors, holidays, etc.

ELEMENTARY CURRICULUM

(Grades 1–8)

The Elementary program emphasizes critical problem solving and research development. Students expand their knowledge in a wide range of academic subjects, building on the skills and social abilities that they developed in the Primary classrooms. Their interests now soar into all areas of learning and our classroom reflects that exciting new stage of development.

Throughout the Elementary years, students are guided from concrete learning through the use of manipulative, concrete materials, to reasoning, questioning and thinking abstractly. The materials engage the children visually, auditory, and kinesthetically. Students are given a great deal of free choice in determining their educational paths with supportive limits.

Academic subjects are integrated into a comprehensive program designed not to teach but to allow children to learn at their own pace. The Elementary curriculum includes the following areas:

THE FIVE GREAT LESSONS

Each year, our work in the Elementary class begins with five important studies, called the Great Lessons. These stories dramatize known facts about the universe and the progression of human civilization. Through dramatic stories, experiments, charts, timelines, and illustrations, we center the children's interests by helping them create a picture of the whole universe at work. From here, our classroom opens up to endless possibilities as students follow their own interests with a large measure of freedom. This unit of study forms the backbone that integrates our daily curriculum. The Great Lessons are part of Montessori called "Cosmic Education". This is the child's gradual discovery of how all things on earth in the past, present, and future, are interrelated. Through this work, the children develop a greater global vision of their world.

LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE

The language and literature curriculum emphasizes creative and expository writing, interpretive reading of literature and poetry. We focus on word study, spelling, grammar, punctuation, penmanship and capitalization. Research skills are introduced, practiced through individual project work and refined as students work with a wide range of research materials.

Students practice and use their reading and writing skills throughout the curriculum. Students further enhance their reading, critical thinking, and writing skills through participation in the Accelerated Reading Program.

MATHEMATICS

The mathematics curriculum is presented with concrete materials, which reveal arithmetic, geometric and algebraic connections. Working with Montessori mathematic materials ensures that mathematics is not simply memorized but understood.

We extend the children's knowledge of the decimal system as they explore its quantities and qualities. Students practice operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. We study the number hierarchy, fractions, decimals, negative numbers, squaring and cubing. Throughout math work, we are continuously applying what we learn to how it relates in daily situations.

GEOMETRY

Elementary students continue exploring geometry on a sensorial level. Students gain a strong understanding of fundamental geometric concepts through consecutive lessons with Montessori materials. Students begin with a study of congruency, similarity and equivalence, preparing them for later area and theorem work. We introduce the study of lines, measurement of angles and the construction of geometric figures.

HISTORY

History work in the Elementary class begins with the development of the Solar System and early life on earth. Students study aspects of early civilizations, the development of humankind, and recorded history. Students learn how the contributions of humankind throughout history have brought us to where we are today.

GEOGRAPHY

Elementary students extend their knowledge of continents and countries with further research about the people, language and culture of different lands. Map work continues with the study of geographical features and landforms.

SCIENCE

In this area, the children's natural curiosity is stimulated through discovery projects and experiments, from which they draw their own conclusions. The first experiments are designed to give the children basic knowledge which will help them understand the development of the solar system, the earth, and its configurations, life on earth and the needs of plants and animals.

SPANISH, MUSIC AND PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Specialists in Spanish, Music and Physical Education also instruct all Elementary students on a weekly basis. Elementary students learn to trust their own initiative and abilities, take responsibility for their work and become self-motivated learners. By gaining respect for themselves, others and the environment, children develop the desire and ability to continue learning throughout their lives.

2026-2027 CALENDAR



Rising to Stardom with Education

AUGUST

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

SEPTEMBER

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30		

OCTOBER

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

NOVEMBER

M	T	W	T	F
2	3	4	5	6
9	10	11	12	13
16	17	18	19	20
23	24	25	26	27
30				

DECEMBER

M	T	W	T	F
	1	2	3	4
7	8	9	10	11
14	15	16	17	18
21	22	23	24	25
28	29	30	31	

JANUARY

M	T	W	T	F
				1
4	5	6	7	8
11	12	13	14	15
18	19	20	21	22
25	26	27	28	29

FEBRUARY

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26

MARCH

M	T	W	T	F
1	2	3	4	5
8	9	10	11	12
15	16	17	18	19
22	23	24	25	26
29	30	31		

APRIL

M	T	W	T	F
			1	2
5	6	7	8	9
12	13	14	15	16
19	20	21	22	23
26	27	28	29	30

MAY

M	T	W	T	F
3	4	5	6	7
10	11	12	13	14
17	18	19	20	21
24	25	26	27	28
31				

2026

Aug 4-5	Staff Pre-Planning
Aug 6	First Day of School
Sept 4	Teacher Workday (Half Day)
Sept 7	Labor Day (No School)
Oct 12-16	Fall Break
Oct 30	Teacher Workday (Half Day)
Nov 20	Thanksgiving Feast (Half Day)
Nov 23-27	Thanksgiving Break
Dec 11	Staff Retreat (No School)
Dec 18	Last Day of 1 st Semester (Half Day)
	Christmas Party with Santa
Dec 21-31	Christmas Break

2027

Jan 1-4	Christmas Break
Jan 4	Staff Pre-Planning Day
Jan 5	First Day of 2 nd Semester
Jan 19	MLK Jr. Day (No School)
Jan 29	Teacher Workday (Half Day)
Feb 15-19	Winter Break
Mar 5	Student Holiday (Half Day)
Mar 26	Easter Party (Half Day)
Apr 5-9	Spring Break
May 7	Teacher Workday (Half Day)
May 27	Kindergarten & Elementary Graduation (in Evening)
May 28	Last Day of School (Half Day) Toddler Graduation (in Morning)

11:30 AM – Half Day Dismissal Time

THE FALL PUMPKIN PATCH FIELD
TRIP AND SPRING FIELD TRIP(S)
WILL BE SCHEDULED WITH
AT LEAST 2 WEEKS NOTICE.

SPEECH NIGHT WILL BE
HELD IN THE SPRING (TBA)

-  1st/Last Day of School
-  1st/Last Day of Semester
-  No School (Vacation/Break)
-  No School (Staff Pre-Planning Day)
-  Half Day (Party / Teacher Workday)
-  Graduation

ABUSE/MOLESTATION POLICY

General Definitions - Types of Abuse

1. Physical abuse is injury that is intentionally inflicted upon a student.
2. Sexual abuse is any contact of a sexual nature that occurs between a student and an adult or between two students. This includes any activity which is meant to arouse or gratify the sexual desires of the adult or the other student.
3. Emotional abuse is mental or emotional injury to a student that results in an observable and material impairment in the student's growth, development, or psychological functioning.
4. Neglect is the failure to provide for a student's basic needs or the failure to protect a student from harm.

Policies

Policies define the bandwidth of acceptable behavior in an organization. Because offenders often violate policies to gain access to students, when employees know and understand policies, they can identify, interrupt, and report policy violations. Simply interrupting a policy violation can prevent a false allegation of abuse or put an offender on notice that no one works in private, the rules apply to everyone, and violations will be detected.

Descriptions of Abuse or Molestation

Physical Contact – Rising Star Montessori Academy's physical contact policy promotes a positive, nurturing environment while protecting students, employees and volunteers. Our organization encourages appropriate physical contact with students and prohibits inappropriate displays of physical contact. Any inappropriate physical contact by employees or volunteers towards any student(s) will result in disciplinary action, up to and including termination of employment.

The organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate physical interactions include, but are not limited to, the following:

Appropriate Physical Interactions	Inappropriate Physical Interactions
Contact initiated by the student such as: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Side hugs • Shoulder-to-shoulder or "temple" hugs • Pats on the shoulder or back • Handshakes • High-fives and hand slapping • Pats on the head when culturally appropriate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Full-frontal hugs • Kisses • Showing affection in isolated areas or while one-on-one • Lap sitting • Piggyback rides, wrestling • Tickling • Allowing a student to cling to an employee's or volunteer's leg

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Touching hands, shoulders, and arms • Arms around shoulders • Holding hands (with young children in escorting situations) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allowing students older than kindergarten to sit on an employee or volunteer's lap • Any type of massage given by or to a student outside of accepted and documented medical treatment • Any form of affection that is unwanted by the student, employee or volunteer • Touching bottom, chest, or genital areas that is outside authorized and documented personal care assistance
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Verbal Interactions - Employees and volunteers are prohibited from speaking to students in a way that is, or could be construed by any observer, as harsh, coercive, threatening, intimidating, shaming, derogatory, demeaning, or humiliating. Employees and volunteers must not initiate sexually oriented conversations with students. Employees and volunteers are not permitted to discuss their own sexual activities with students.

Our organization's policies for appropriate and inappropriate verbal interactions are:

<i>Appropriate Verbal Interactions</i>	<i>Inappropriate Verbal Interactions</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Positive reinforcement • Appropriate jokes • Encouragement • Praise 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Name-calling • Discussing sexual encounters or in any way involving students in the personal problems or issues of employees and volunteers • Secrets • Cursing • Off-color or sexual jokes • Shaming • Belittling • Derogatory remarks • Harsh language that may frighten, threaten or humiliate students • Derogatory remarks about the student or his/her family

Supervisors and Administrators Monitoring On-Site and Off-Site Programs:

Keep a record. Document your supervision visits. Include information like your arrival and departure times, which students and parents/guardians were present, and a summary of the information collected. Provide employees with feedback about visits.

Vary your observation times. Do not develop a predictable pattern of observation. Drop in at different times each day. Occasionally leave and come back immediately.

Arrive before employees. Check punctuality and the routine that employees follow to prepare for the students to arrive.

Survey the physical environment. Is this a suitable location for the activity (e.g. size of area for number of students, ability to supervise all areas used by students, landscaping that may inhibit supervision)?

Watch activities. Are they planned and organized? Are the employees actively involved? Ask to see the schedule of activities and compare with what is actually going on at a given time.

Observe bathroom and locker room activities. Observe bathroom and locker room activities to ensure that the employees are complying with the established policies and procedures.

Responding:

How an organization responds to suspicious or inappropriate interactions, policy violations, and incidents or allegations of abuse can dramatically affect the harm to the individuals involved and the damage to the organization. Once an employee's member, volunteer, student, or parent/guardian has expressed a concern or made an allegation about the treatment of a student, swift and determined action must be taken to reduce any subsequent risk to the student, to the accused employees member or volunteer, and to the organization. Organizations must establish precise, unequivocal requirements for reporting to the authorities and for adhering to a serious-incident response plan.

Responding to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors or Policy Violations

Because our organization is dedicated to maintaining zero tolerance for abuse, it is imperative that every employee actively participates in the protection of student. In the event that employees observe any suspicious or inappropriate behaviors and/or policy violations on the part of other employees or volunteers, it is their personal responsibility to immediately report their observations.

Remember, at our organization, the policies apply to everyone.

<i>Examples of Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors Between Employees/Volunteers and Student</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Violation of the abuse prevention policies described above• Seeking private time or one-on-one time with students• Buying gifts for individual students• Making suggestive comments to students• Picking favorites

All reports of suspicious or inappropriate behavior with students will be taken seriously. Our procedures will be carefully followed to ensure that the rights of all those involved are protected.

1. Employees and Volunteer Response:

If employees witness suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from another employees or volunteer, the employees or volunteer is instructed to do the following:

<i>Guidelines for Employees/Volunteers Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interrupt the behavior.• Report the behavior to a supervisor, director, or other authority.• If you are not comfortable making the report directly, make it anonymously.• If the report is about a supervisor or administrator, contact the next level of management.• Document the report but do not conduct an investigation.• Keep reporting until the appropriate action is taken. |
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2. Supervisor and Administrator Response:

In the event that a supervisor or an administrator receives a report of suspicious or inappropriate behaviors or policy violations from an employee or volunteer, the supervisor is instructed to do the following:

<i>Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Response to Suspicious or Inappropriate Behaviors and/or Policy Violations</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Report to the next level of administration and determine the appropriate administrator to respond to the concern.• Determine the appropriate response based on the report.• Speak with the employees or volunteer who has been reported.• Review the file of the employees or volunteer to determine if similar complaints were reported.• Document the report on the appropriate form.• If at any point in gathering information about a report of suspicious or inappropriate behavior, a concern arises about possible abuse, contact the state authorities and file a report.• If appropriate, notify parents and/or guardians.• Advise the person who reported the behavior that the report is being taken seriously. |
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Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- a. Increase monitoring or supervision of the employees, volunteer, or program.
- b. If policy violations with students are confirmed, the employees or volunteer must be subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination and prosecution. Disciplinary action will follow the Progressive Disciplinary Process outlined in this manual.

3. Organizational Response:

<i>Guidelines for Organizational Response</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the need for increased supervision.• Review the need for revised policies or procedures.• Review the need for additional training. |
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Responding to Suspected Abuse by an Adult

1. Employees or Volunteer Response to Abuse:

As required by mandated reporting laws, employees and volunteers must report any suspected abuse or neglect of a student—whether on or off organization property or whether perpetrated by employees, volunteers, or others—to state authorities. Reports may be made confidentially or anonymously. A person who mistakenly reports suspected abuse is immune from civil or criminal liability as long as the report was made in good faith and without malice.

**Refer to state specific mandated reporting requirements for definitions of abuse more specific reporting information.*

In addition to reporting to state authorities, employees and volunteers are required to report any suspected or known abuse of students perpetrated by employees or volunteers directly to leadership so that immediate and proper steps may be taken to ensure the safety of alleged victims and others who may be at risk. Reports of suspected or known abuse may be made confidentially to the following:

- a. Immediate supervisor
- b. Directors
- c. Administrators

<i>Additional Guidelines for Employees/Volunteer Response to Incidents or Allegations of Abuse</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• If you witness abuse, interrupt the behavior immediately.• If abuse is disclosed to you, assure the individual disclosing that he or she was correct to tell you.• Protect the alleged victim from intimidation, retribution, or further abuse.• Immediately report the allegation or incident to the proper organization authorities (based on mandatory reporting requirements) and the designated authority.• Be sure to document the incident, disclosure, or any circumstances causing your suspicion of abuse. State only the facts.• It is not your job to investigate the incident, but it IS your job to report the incident to your supervisor in a timely manner.• Check back to make sure appropriate steps were taken. If not, report again to your supervisor or the designated organization authority. |
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2. Supervisors and Administrators Response to Abuse:

In addition to the above response procedures, supervisors and administrators should ensure the following:

<i>Guidelines for Supervisor and Administrators Responding to Allegations or Incidents of Abuse</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• First, determine if the student is still in danger and if so, take immediate steps to prevent any further harm.• Gather as much information about the allegation as you can. For example, who made the report, who was allegedly abused, who was the alleged abuser, what was the nature of the alleged abuse, where and when did the alleged abuse occur, etc.• Accurately record everything you learn in as much detail as you can. Remember your notes may be read by others. Stick to the facts.• Contact the appropriate local authorities as indicated by your mandatory reporting procedures. Make sure you get a case number and the name and contact information of the person with whom you speak at the reporting agency.• If the alleged abuse involves an employee or volunteer, notify your crisis management team and follow your crisis management plan.• Suspend the accused employees or volunteer until the investigation is completed. |
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Responding to Student-to-Student Sexual Abuse and Sexualized Behaviors

The thought that one student may sexually abuse another student does not occur to many people. Unfortunately, abuse between peers has increased 300% in the past few years. Student -to- Student sexual activity and sexualized behaviors often remain unreported in organizations because employees and volunteers are not comfortable documenting these situations or may not know how.

1. Student -to- Student Interactions:

Most serious incidents of student -to- student abuse are preceded by more subtle incidents such as name-calling, taunting, or roughhousing. Interrupting these interactions early and establishing and communicating standards of conduct can keep the program environment safe. Our organization recognizes that the following interactions are high risk and should be prohibited:

<i>Prohibited Student -to-Student Interactions</i>

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Hazing• Bullying• Derogatory name-calling• Games of Truth or Dare• Singling out one child for different treatment• Ridicule or humiliation |
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In order to adequately respond to and track incidents within the organization, all sexual activity between students and sexualized behaviors of students must be consistently documented.

Employees and Volunteer Response:

Student -to- Student sexual behaviors can include inappropriate touching, exposing body parts, using sexualized language, making threats of sexual activity, engaging in sexual activity, and similar types of interactions.

If employees witness student -to- student sexual behaviors, they are instructed to follow these guidelines:

Guidelines for Employees and Volunteers Responding to Student-to-Student Sexual Activity

- If you observe sexual activity between students, you should immediately separate them.
- Calmly explain that such interactions are not permitted and separate the students.
- Notify your supervisor.
- Complete the necessary paperwork including what you observed and how you responded.
- Follow your supervisor's instructions regarding notifying the authorities and informing the parents/guardians of the student involved.
- In some cases, if the problem is recurring discipline may be required including not allowing one or both students to return to the program.

Supervisors and Administrators Response:

In the event that a supervisor or administrator receives a report of a student's sexualized behavior or student -to- student sexual activity, the supervisor should do the following:

Guidelines for Supervisors and Administrators Responding to Student-to-Student Sexual Activity

- Meet with the employees who reported the sexual activity to gather information.
- Confirm that the students involved have been separated or placed under increased supervision.
- Review the steps taken by the employees on duty.
- Review the incident report to confirm it is accurately and thoroughly completed.
- Meet with parents/guardians of the students involved.
- Determine what actions should be taken to make sure there is no recurrence, including assessing the suitability of the program for the children involved.
- Notify the proper authorities.
- Develop a written corrective action or follow-up plan in response to the incident

Based on the information gathered, the following may be required:

- c. Review the need for additional supervision
- d. Review the need for revised policies or procedures
- e. Review the need for additional training
- f. Alert others in the organization

Organizational Response:

After the internal review of the sexualized behavior or student -to- student sexual activity, the organization will determine what can be done to prevent a reoccurrence, such as:

<i>Guidelines for Organizational Response</i>
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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review the need for additional supervision.• Review the need for revised policies or procedures.• Review the need for additional training.• Alert others in the organization. |
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Critical Incident Management Plan

Prior to Allegation/Incident

- Determine all members of the Critical Incident Management Team in advance.
- Educate all employees and volunteers on what to do if someone alleges current or historical abuse involving an Organization member, employee or volunteer.
- All employees and volunteers should know how to fulfill their duties as mandated reporters.
- All employees and volunteers should be trained on how to complete the appropriate critical incident forms for your Organization.

Immediate Safety

- Follow all mandated reporting requirements and contact the authorities as appropriate.
- Where applicable, prevent the accused from having further access to children until a thorough incident review is completed. Before beginning an internal incident review, verify with local authorities that this will not interfere with their investigation.
- If the accused person is an employee, follow progressive discipline procedures accordingly. This may involve suspending the accused during the investigation.
- When applicable, notify other employees.

Initial Communication Plan

- Designate a point person to respond to all inquiries from parents, the media, and other stakeholders.
 - Prepare a short media statement in advance of getting a media inquiry.
 - All oral and written communication should speak with a voice of compassion and confidence.
 - All employees and volunteers should know how to refer media inquiries to the appropriate person.
- As soon as possible, meet in person (not over the phone) with identified victims and their parents/guardians.
 - Reassure them that you are taking this seriously.
 - Find out what response they expect and be prepared to explain support you will offer, such as counseling.

- Consider reaching out in writing to parents/guardians of all children currently attending your Organization as well as those with past contact with the accused offender.
 - The message should communicate:
 - **Empathy:** Begin by stating that such incidents run counter to your Organization's values.
 - **Facts:** Include a summary of the incident, including information about the arrest, suspension, investigation, etc.
 - **Contact Request.** Ask parents to contact you or the specified authorities if they suspect their child may have been abused.
 - **Your Response:** Explain that you are fully cooperating with the authorities. Describe proactive steps you are taking such as offering resources to parents, hosting a parent meeting, training employees, and conducting an independent investigation to learn from this incident so you can prevent it from happening again.
- Host a parent/guardian meeting to speak directly with concerned families and directly answer any questions before rumors or misinformation is spread.
 - Communicate as much information as you can about the incident.
 - Provide information regarding the proactive steps leadership is taking in response to the incident.
 - Describe resources you are providing families and give parents a chance to ask questions.
 - Provide parents with information about how to talk to their children about abuse.

Ongoing Communication and Response

- Determine how to manage ongoing relations with authorities, parents, the community, and media.
 - Consider adding a page to your website with updated details about the incident.
 - Designate specific individuals in your organization to handle various communications and outreach efforts.

Promote Prevention at All Levels of the Organization

- Educate parents on abuse prevention. Offer a workshop during which parents can learn how to protect their children from abuse. This is an educational session that is different from the parent meeting described above.
- Provide a student education program to all students involved with your Organization on how to protect themselves from abuse and how to express concerns.

Train (or re-train) all employees and volunteers on how to identify and report "red-flag" behaviors that do not rise to the level of suspected abuse. This is an important part of the overall response and ongoing prevention effort.