

# NOVUM

ACADEMY

## STUDENT & PARENT HANDBOOK

**2026-2027 ACADEMIC YEAR**

*A clear vision. Higher standards.*

3510 Bowie Street • Amarillo, Texas • 806.437.1048

**[novumacademy.com](https://novumacademy.com)**

# Welcome to Novum Academy

## Dear Families,

We are thrilled to welcome you to Novum Academy. As Co-Directors, we are honored to partner with you in your child's educational journey and proud to lead a community where curiosity, creativity, and character flourish.

At Novum Academy, every child is celebrated as an individual. Our Modern Montessori classrooms blend child-led learning, carefully prepared environments, and respect for developmental stages with research-informed practices that help children explore, grow, and thrive. Montessori principles guide everything we do, while ethics and a commitment to quality shape our teaching, leadership, and school culture.

### OUR MISSION

To nurture confident, lifelong learners through a high-quality Montessori education that encourages exploration, independence, and responsibility, while honoring our role in the broader community.

### OUR VISION

A thriving community of learners who explore deeply, think critically, and contribute positively to society.

### OUR VALUES

Ethical leadership, educational excellence, and a modern application of Montessori principles. We uphold honesty, transparency, and accountability in all we do - with children, families, and our wider community.

Our passionate educators create classrooms filled with meaningful learning, joyful discovery, and personal growth. Beyond the classroom, our school thrives through partnership with families, shared experiences, and a culture of connection.

Thank you for choosing Novum Academy. We look forward to a year of exploration, growth, and memorable learning experiences!

*With warmest regards,*

**Alexa Ybarra | Co-Director**

**Ashley Reed-Miller | Co-Director**

# Handbook Contents

This handbook is organized to help families quickly understand the Novum experience, daily expectations, and school policies. Keep it available throughout the academic year.

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## FAMILY QUICK REFERENCE

Campus hours: 6:30 AM-6:30 PM | School day: 8:30 AM-3:30 PM | Phone: 806.437.1048 | Website: [novumacademy.com](https://novumacademy.com)

## 01 Our Montessori Foundation

Philosophy, mission, values, and guiding principles

### The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method, a renowned approach to child-centered education, was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori over 100 years ago. This method is founded on the belief that children learn most effectively when they are treated as capable individuals, given the freedom to explore, discover, and learn at their own pace within a carefully prepared environment.

In a Montessori classroom, children select their activities from a variety of hands-on materials that support their academic, social, and emotional development. These materials are intentionally sequenced, enabling children to gradually build skills while fostering independence, concentration, and confidence.

Instead of traditional teacher-led instruction, Montessori educators serve as guides. They observe each child, introduce lessons when the child is ready, and nurture learning through curiosity and intrinsic motivation rather than through rewards or grades. Another essential aspect of the Montessori Method is the mixed-age classroom, which promotes collaboration, leadership, and peer learning. Younger children benefit from observing their older peers, while older children enhance their understanding by mentoring others.

At its core, the Montessori Method emphasizes respect-for the child, for others, and for the world. It not only nurtures academic growth but also cultivates a lifelong love of learning, a strong sense of responsibility, and a global mindset rooted in empathy and community.

### Montessori Methods at Novum Academy

Modern Montessori at Novum Academy honors the foundation laid by Dr. Maria Montessori while recognizing that children today are growing up in a rapidly changing, interconnected world. Rooted in time-tested Montessori Method principles, our approach thoughtfully evolves to meet the social, emotional, and intellectual needs of modern learners.

Through the intentional integration of social-emotional learning, ethical leadership, and contemporary educational strategies, we provide a child-centered education that nurtures the whole child-mind,

body, and heart. Our learning environments celebrate diverse abilities and learning styles, foster inclusion and neurodiversity, and help children build self-awareness, empathy, resilience, and a deep sense of responsibility to themselves and others.

At Novum Academy, academic excellence is paired with meaningful, real-world learning. Students engage in inquiry-driven, project-based experiences that encourage curiosity, collaboration, and problem-solving. Modern technology is used purposefully and sparingly-only when it enhances learning and never at the expense of hands-on exploration and meaningful materials. Alongside strong academic foundations, children develop essential real-world skills such as critical thinking, communication, independence, and adaptability. As a result, students are not only academically prepared but also confident, compassionate, and capable individuals-ready to contribute positively to a global society.

## Core Philosophy and Guiding Principles of Montessori Education

### 1. Respect For The Child

In the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, the principle of "trust the child" is fundamental, emphasizing a child-centered education that recognizes each child's innate ability to learn, grow, and develop independence when provided with the right environment and support. Every child is treated as an individual with unique potential.

### 2. Prepared Environment

Classrooms designed for child-centered education are orderly, accessible, and beautiful, reflecting the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori. These clean and tidy environments help children develop independence, respect, and organization, which are key aspects of the Montessori Method. Materials are child-sized, hands-on, and encourage independent exploration, fostering a love for learning.

### 3. The Absorbent Mind

Children have a natural ability to absorb knowledge from their environment, especially in early childhood, which is a key principle in child-centered education. Our classroom environments are carefully prepared to stimulate this learning, following the principles set forth by Dr. Maria

Montessori. Children learn best through hands-on experiences, exploration, and purposeful activity.

### 4. Sensitive Periods

Children go through phases when they are particularly receptive to learning specific skills, such as language, movement, and order. Recognizing these critical periods is essential in a child-centered education approach, as it allows the education to align with natural development.

### 5. Self-Directed Learning

Children thrive in a child-centered education environment when they engage in activities that truly interest them. In the spirit of Dr. Maria Montessori and her pedagogy, the teacher's role is to guide, observe, and provide resources, rather than impose knowledge.

### 6. Learning Through Discovery

In the Montessori Method advocated by Dr. Maria Montessori, hands-on learning is emphasized over rote memorization. This approach supports a child-centered education where mistakes are viewed as natural learning opportunities rather than failures.

### 7. Independence & Freedom Within Limits

Children are encouraged to perform tasks independently, such as dressing, cleaning, and choosing activities. Dr. Montessori emphasized a balance between freedom and clear boundaries, fostering respect for others. Through the Montessori Method, children build confidence as they discover that their actions have meaningful impacts.

### 8. Intrinsic Motivation & Self-Discipline

On our campus children are encouraged to follow their interests and develop a strong internal sense of responsibility. The Montessori Method minimizes external rewards or punishments, allowing internal discipline to flourish through guided freedom. This way, children can make better choices without the fear of shaming or penalties, ultimately fostering self-discipline and independence.

## 02

**Programs & Daily Experience**

Program levels, schedules, care, and classroom rhythms

## Programs Overview

At Novum Academy, we offer a hybrid learning experience that blends a modern Montessori approach with a curriculum aligned to the Texas Essential Knowledge and Skills (TEKS). This combination allows students to engage in hands-on, self-directed learning while developing the academic skills required by the state. Our approach prepares children to thrive in a Montessori environment or transition confidently to a more traditional educational path, empowering them to explore, think critically, and grow with independence and a lifelong love of learning.

### Program Levels

- Infant (6 Weeks - 14 Months)
- Toddler (15 Months - 23 Months)
- Preschool (2 - 3.5 Years)
- Primary (3 - 6 Years)
- Transitional Kindergarten (5 & 6 Years)

### Infants

Our Infant Program provides exceptional infant care for our youngest students ages 6 weeks to 14 months in a calm, nurturing environment that encourages independence and natural development. With intentionally low teacher-to-child ratios, each infant receives individualized attention and responsive care, which is essential in Montessori programs. Through gentle guidance and purposeful activities, infants build movement, concentration, and trust at their own pace, laying a strong foundation for future programs.

### Toddlers

Our Toddler Program offers exceptional toddler learning for children ages 15 months - 23 months, fostering independence, confidence, and social skills. Through hands-on activities and a carefully prepared environment, we support language development, coordination, and a passion for learning, aligning with our preschool curriculum. Consistent routines and responsive guidance provide the security toddlers need as they explore, make choices, and engage with their world, making this a perfect foundation before transitioning to kindergarten or more advanced Montessori programs.

### Preschool

Our Preschool program for ages 2 to 3.5 years, seamlessly blends early preschool with Primary preparation, emphasizing independence, curiosity, and school readiness. Our preschool curriculum offers children foundational skills in language, math, and practical life through hands-on, developmentally appropriate experiences. In addition, our approach to toilet learning, guided by Montessori techniques and respectful support, is a key aspect of our program. It empowers children to develop confidence, independence, and essential self-care skills at their own pace.

### Primary

Our Primary, or Children's House, program for ages 3 to 6 years, is the cornerstone of the Montessori approach, which is an integral part of our comprehensive campus curriculum. During this critical period of development, children are uniquely capable of deep concentration, independence, and joyful learning. Through self-directed work and meaningful choice, children engage with carefully designed Montessori materials that support language, math, sensory exploration, and practical life, all essential elements in effective toddler education.

Within a thoughtfully prepared environment, children develop focus, confidence, and a strong sense of responsibility for themselves and their community. Mixed-age classrooms foster collaboration, leadership, and peer learning, while consistent routines and respectful guidance support social-emotional growth. These early years not only lay the foundation for academic success but also prepare children for transitional kindergarten, nurturing lifelong curiosity,

self-motivation, and a love of learning, which is echoed in our commitment to quality infant care.

## **TK and Elementary**

Our TK/Elementary classroom is designed for students 4 years-10 years, serving as an intentional hybrid program that bridges Montessori programs with traditional academic standards. This classroom supports children who have mastered Primary skills while preparing them for state benchmarks, should families choose a more conventional path of education for elementary school. By blending Montessori principles with a structured preschool curriculum, the program builds confidence, reinforces school readiness, and ensures a smooth transition to either Kindergarten or a more traditional Montessori Lower Elementary program.

## **8 Guiding Student Pillars**

At Novum Academy, our students are guided by eight core pillars that shape how they learn, grow, and interact with the world around them. These pillars reflect our commitment to nurturing curiosity, independence, creativity, and responsibility, while fostering respect-for themselves, for others, and for the environment. Together, they provide a framework for students to thrive academically, socially, and personally in a supportive and purposeful learning community.

1. We respect ourselves and others.
2. We stay curious and ask questions.
3. We explore, create, and imagine.
4. We learn with our hands and our minds.
5. We choose our work, focus, persevere, and ask for help when needed.
6. We honor achievements and embrace lessons from challenges.
7. We respect animals, nature and the Earth.
8. We care for our classmates, guides, materials, classroom and school.

## **Daily Schedule & Care**

### **Daily Schedule & Care Options**

At Novum Academy, each classroom level follows its own detailed schedule; however, all students share core routines designed to support learning, growth, and well-being.

### **Morning Care (6:30-8:30 AM)**

Supervised care is available for early arrivals. All Preschool and older students should arrive by 9:00 AM to begin the school day promptly.

### **School Day (8:30 AM-3:30 PM)**

The school day includes Montessori work cycles, enrichment activities (art, music, movement, and language), outdoor play, and snack times.

### **Lunch: 12:15-12:45 PM**

### **Nap & Rest Time**

**Infants:** Nap schedules are individualized to meet each child's unique needs.

**Toddler, Preschool, Primary, and TK:** Rest time is from 12:45-2:15 PM. Children who wake early are invited to participate in quiet activities until all students are awake, maintaining a calm and respectful environment.

### **Late Care (3:30-6:30 PM)**

Supervised care is available for families who need extended hours.

## 03

## Learning at Novum

Prepared environments, curriculum, assessment, and enrichment

## Montessori Materials & Classroom Environment

Novum Academy classrooms are thoughtfully designed to inspire exploration, focus, and independence. Each learning material is self-correcting and targets a specific concept, helping children build mastery at their own pace.

Our environments are orderly, beautiful, and child-centered, offering freedom within clear boundaries. Students choose their work and engage in uninterrupted learning cycles, developing concentration, perseverance, and intrinsic motivation. Mixed-age classrooms encourage mentoring, collaboration, and peer-to-peer learning, allowing children to grow both academically and socially.

It is important to recognize that Novum Academy is intentionally different from traditional classrooms or daycare settings. Our Montessori approach is thoughtfully designed to support each child's natural curiosity, independence, and love of learning. The following principles highlight how our classrooms provide a unique environment where children grow academically, socially, and emotionally in ways that go beyond conventional models of education.

### How Montessori Classrooms Differ from Traditional Classrooms

- **Child-Centered vs. Teacher-Led:** Students direct their own learning, choosing activities that match their interests and developmental needs, rather than following a strict teacher-directed schedule.
- **Prepared Environment:** Classrooms are carefully organized, orderly, and accessible, with materials designed to promote exploration, independence, and hands-on learning.
- **Hands-On Materials:** Learning materials are concrete, self-correcting, and focused on one concept at a time, allowing children to learn through experience rather than worksheets or lectures.
- **Mixed-Age Groups:** Classrooms include multiple age levels, fostering peer mentoring, collaboration, and leadership opportunities for older students.
- **Uninterrupted Work Cycles:** Students engage in longer blocks of focused work, supporting concentration, persistence, and intrinsic motivation.
- **Freedom Within Limits:** Children choose their activities while respecting boundaries and expectations, unlike rigid, structured schedules in traditional settings.
- **Focus on the Whole Child:** Social, emotional, practical life, and cognitive skills are developed alongside academics, rather than emphasizing only memorization or test-based learning.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** External rewards and punishments are minimized; children learn to take responsibility for their choices and develop self-discipline.
- **Respect for the Child:** Every child's pace, interests, and abilities are honored, promoting confidence and independence rather than comparison or competition.
- **Integrated Learning:** Subjects are interconnected, and learning is often project-based or experiential, rather than fragmented into isolated lessons.

### What You Won't See in a Novum Academy Classroom

Our Montessori classrooms are intentionally designed to be very different from traditional daycare or preschool/pre-k settings. You won't find battery-operated or plastic toys, unnecessary confinement for infants and toddlers, or many of the features commonly seen in conventional classrooms.

*In addition, you typically won't see:*

- TVs or Excessive Technology - Screens are minimized or eliminated; children learn best through real-world, hands-on experiences.
- Rows of Desks or Teacher-Directed Seating - Children work at child-sized tables or on the floor, moving freely within the classroom.
- Teacher-Led Lectures or Constant Instruction - Educators guide, observe, and facilitate rather than directing every activity.
- Unnecessary Worksheets and Excessive Rote Memorization - Learning is meaningful and self-directed, not repetitive or paper-based.
- External Rewards or Punishments - Stickers, prizes, or penalties are replaced by intrinsic motivation and natural consequences.
- Loud, Chaotic Environments - Even with freedom of movement, classrooms are calm, orderly, and intentionally designed to support focus.
- Overstimulation - Materials are purposeful, limited in quantity, and designed to engage the senses without overwhelming them.
- Unstructured Group Activities or Forced Participation - Children choose their work and engage in uninterrupted work cycles based on their interests.
- Artificial or Flashy Toys - Materials are natural, durable, and designed to teach concepts or develop skills rather than just entertain.
- Early Academics Pushed Too Quickly - Children learn concepts when developmentally ready, not according to a rigid schedule.

These intentional choices create a learning environment where children develop independence, concentration, self-discipline, and a love of learning-qualities that set Montessori education apart from traditional daycare or preschool classrooms.

## What You Will See in a Novum Academy Classroom

Montessori classrooms are filled with thoughtfully designed, hands-on materials that help children explore concepts, build skills, and develop independence. Each material is purposeful, self-correcting, and focused on a specific concept, allowing students to learn through discovery.

### ***Some examples include:***

- Practical Life Materials - Tools for pouring, spooning, dressing frames, sweeping, and other daily activities that build coordination, independence, and responsibility.
- Sensorial Materials - Items that refine the senses, such as color tablets, sound cylinders, geometric shapes, and texture boards.
- Math Materials - Hands-on manipulatives like number rods, golden beads, bead chains, and fraction circles that make abstract concepts concrete.
- Language Materials - Sandpaper letters, movable alphabets, and phonetic objects to support reading, writing, and language development.
- Cultural & Science Materials - Maps, globes, plants, animals, and other resources that encourage exploration of geography, biology, history, and the natural world.
- Art & Creative Materials - Paints, clay, paper, and other media that foster self-expression, creativity, and fine motor skills.

In addition to the materials themselves, Montessori classrooms are intentionally designed to support independent, self-directed learning:

- Caring, Engaged Teachers - Educators guide, observe, and support each child, fostering curiosity, confidence, and a lifelong love of learning.
- Child-Sized, Accessible Materials - Shelves and learning tools are within reach, allowing children to select activities independently.
- Orderly, Beautiful Environments - Classrooms are clean, organized, and aesthetically inviting, promoting calm, focus, and respect for the space.
- Uninterrupted Work Cycles - Students engage in extended periods of focused work, developing concentration, perseverance, and intrinsic motivation.

- **Mixed-Age Classrooms** - Children of different ages learn together, mentoring younger peers and collaborating with older students.
- **Connections to Nature and Life** - Plants, animals, and sensory experiences bring the natural world into daily learning.
- **Respectful Interactions** - Students practice respect for themselves, others, classroom materials, and the environment.
- **Creative Expression** - Opportunities for art, music, movement, and dramatic play are seamlessly integrated into the curriculum.
- **Calm and Focused Atmosphere** - While children move freely, the classroom maintains structure to support deep engagement and meaningful learning.

Together, these materials and practices create an environment where children develop independence, curiosity, focus, and a lifelong love of learning-hallmarks of a Montessori education.

## Montessori Work Cycles & the Importance of Timely Arrival

A Montessori work cycle is an extended, uninterrupted period during which children choose activities that interest them and engage deeply in hands-on learning. During these cycles, students develop concentration, independence, problem-solving skills, and intrinsic motivation.

Arriving on time is essential because the work cycle relies on a calm, continuous environment. When students arrive late, it can disrupt their own focus and the flow of the classroom, making it harder for all children to engage fully in self-directed learning. Being present from the start ensures that each child can benefit from the rhythm and structure of the Montessori environment and fully participate in the day's learning experiences.

### Montessori Work Mats

Montessori work mats are an essential tool in creating a structured, focused learning space for each child. They define a personal workspace, whether on a table or on the floor, helping children organize materials and maintain order while they explore independently.

- **On the Floor:** Mats create a designated area for hands-on activities, giving children a clear boundary for their work while allowing freedom of movement and choice of materials.
- **On Tables:** Mats serve the same purpose, helping students keep materials organized, protecting surfaces, and supporting concentration during focused work.

By using mats consistently, children learn to respect their workspace, care for materials, and develop self-discipline, independence, and concentration, all central to the Montessori approach.

## Materials & Classroom Presentation

In Montessori classrooms at Novum Academy, materials are intentionally displayed to encourage exploration, independence, and discovery.

- **Open and Accessible:** Materials are arranged on low, child-sized shelves so every student can see and choose activities freely.
- **Orderly & Inviting:** Each material has a designated space, making it easy for children to return items and maintain a neat, organized environment.
- **Regular Rotation:** Classroom materials are rotated frequently based on activity, season, holiday themes, and lesson plans to keep learning fresh, engaging, and developmentally appropriate.
- **Purposeful Selection:** Every item on the shelf is chosen for its educational value, fostering hands-on learning, skill development, and conceptual understanding.

### Extension Materials

At Novum Academy, some materials go beyond traditional Montessori items to enhance learning and align with a theme or a child's developmental stage. These extension materials are carefully selected to complement Montessori principles while keeping exploration meaningful and hands-on.

- **Thematic & Developmental:** Extension materials are chosen to match classroom themes, seasonal lessons, or the specific developmental needs of the children.
- **Natural & Authentic:** Whenever possible, materials are made of wood or other natural materials, or reflect practical life tools, maintaining the Montessori emphasis on quality, tactile experiences.
- **Hands-On Learning:** These items encourage creativity, problem-solving, and exploration in a way that aligns with Montessori philosophy, while providing variety and enrichment.
- **Seamless Integration:** Extension materials are incorporated into the prepared environment so children can engage with them independently, just like traditional

By thoughtfully integrating extension materials, we expand learning opportunities while preserving the core Montessori values of independence, responsibility, and hands-on discovery.

## Caring for the Classroom and Materials

At Novum Academy, students are active participants in maintaining their learning environment. From a young age, children are encouraged and expected to care for the classroom and materials. This includes tasks such as:

- Returning materials to their proper place after use
- Cleaning up spills and tidying work areas
- Caring for plants, animals, and classroom tools
- Respecting peers' work and shared spaces

These responsibilities help children develop respect, independence, responsibility, and a sense of community. Caring for the classroom is an integral part of Montessori education, reinforcing

the idea that learning is not only about knowledge, but also about contributing to a supportive, orderly environment.

## Using Real-Life Materials

At Novum Academy, children work with real, functional materials rather than toy versions whenever possible. This approach is a core principle of Montessori education, helping children develop practical skills, confidence, and independence.

- **Practical Life Activities:** Children use real utensils, pitchers, brooms, and cleaning tools to practice pouring, sweeping, food preparation, and self-care.
- **Everyday Skills:** Dressing frames, washing stations, and gardening tools allow students to develop coordination and life skills that they will use beyond the classroom.
- **Authentic Experience:** Using real materials fosters respect for tools, careful attention, and a deeper understanding of how the world works.

By engaging with genuine, functional items, children gain meaningful, hands-on experience that builds independence, responsibility, and confidence—key goals of the Montessori approach.

## Calm, Respectful Environments

At Novum Academy, we intentionally create a calm, orderly, and respectful classroom environment to support learning, focus, and emotional development. A calm environment doesn't mean silence—it means spaces where children can move freely, explore, and engage in meaningful work without unnecessary distractions or chaos.

*Examples of a calm environment include:*

- Soft voices and gentle guidance from teachers
- Clearly defined work areas using mats, shelves, and organized materials
- Natural lighting, plants, and uncluttered spaces to create visual and sensory order
- Smooth transitions between activities, minimizing interruptions and overstimulation
- Gentle background music supports auditory learning, rhythm, and mood regulation.

- Seasonal aligned natural items like leaves, shells, pinecones, or fruits to reflect seasons, inspiring curiosity and observation.

## Simplicity and Beauty in the Classroom

Montessori classrooms are intentionally designed to be simple, orderly, and beautiful, creating an environment that supports focus, calm, and meaningful learning. Thoughtful details help children feel engaged and respected, while minimizing distractions.

*Examples of how we bring beauty and simplicity to our classrooms include:*

- Area Rugs - Define work and play spaces, adding warmth and comfort.
- Non-Toxic Plants - Connect children to nature and provide sensory experiences.
- Fresh Flowers Arrangements - Bring a touch of the natural world indoors.
- Classroom Animals - teach care, responsibility, and respect for living things.
- Art and Student work - artwork is displayed at children's eye level to inspire creativity, celebrate individuality, and enhance the beauty of the learning environment.
- Natural Light - promotes focus and calm.
- Invitation to Learn Areas- foster choice, curiosity, and self-directed learning.

By maintaining an aesthetically pleasing and uncluttered environment, children can concentrate more deeply, take pride in their classroom, and enjoy a sense of calm and inspiration throughout their day.

## Modern Montessori Adaptations for Safety and Well-Being

At Novum Academy, we honor the core Montessori philosophy while intentionally adapting certain practices to meet and exceed state safety and well-being requirements. These modifications ensure that all students can learn and explore in a safe, healthy, and supportive environment without compromising the Montessori approach.

*Examples of adaptations include:*

- **Enhanced Supervision:** While Montessori classrooms encourage independence and freedom of movement, staff-to-student ratios are maintained to exceed licensing requirements, ensuring every child receives close attention and support.
- **Childproofing & Safety Measures:** Classrooms, materials, and outdoor areas are regularly inspected and modified for safety, including secure shelving, safe tools, and protective equipment where necessary.
- **Health & Hygiene Protocols:** Handwashing, sanitization of materials, and routine cleaning exceed state standards, promoting a healthy environment for all students.
- **Outdoor Play Safety:** Outdoor and sensory activities follow strict safety guidelines, including supervision, safe equipment, and adaptations for extreme weather using our multi-purpose indoor area.
- **Emergency Preparedness:** Staff are trained in CPR, first aid, and emergency procedures, with regular drills and clear protocols to ensure student safety.
- **Inclusive & Supportive Practices:** Activities and classroom layouts are adapted to meet diverse developmental needs, ensuring that all children-including those with special needs-can fully participate safely and meaningfully.
- **Technology & Screen Guidelines:** While authentic, hands-on learning is prioritized, any use of technology is limited, purposeful, and supervised, exceeding typical early childhood standards.
- **Pest Control & Campus Maintenance** - Regular inspections and proactive pest management, along with ongoing maintenance of facilities and outdoor spaces, ensure a safe, clean, and inviting environment for learning and play.

These thoughtful adaptations allow Novum Academy to preserve the benefits of Montessori education-independence, exploration, and responsibility-while ensuring the highest standards of safety, health, and overall well-being for every student.

## Small Class Sizes & Lower Ratios

At Novum Academy, we intentionally maintain staff-to-student ratios that are lower than state requirements. This ensures that every child receives the individual attention, guidance, and support they need to thrive.

### *Smaller ratios allow teachers to:*

- Observe and support each child's unique learning style and pace
- Foster strong relationships and a sense of community within the classroom
- Maintain a calm, orderly environment that promotes focus, independence, and self-discipline
- Provide meaningful guidance during Montessori work cycles, practical life activities, and outdoor play

By keeping class sizes small and ratios intentionally low, we create a learning environment where students feel seen, valued, and supported, and teachers have the space to facilitate authentic Montessori experiences with care and attention.

## Consistency Across Classrooms

At Novum Academy, we maintain consistency in materials and classroom setup across all classrooms on campus to ensure every child has equitable access to learning opportunities.

- **Aligned Materials:** Core Montessori materials and extension items are carefully matched across classrooms by age group, developmental stage, and learning objectives.
- **Familiarity & Confidence:** Consistent availability of materials allows children to build on prior knowledge, move between spaces with ease, and feel confident in their choices.
- **Smooth Transitions:** When children progress to a new classroom, familiar materials and similar classroom layouts support seamless transitions and continued independence.
- **Shared Philosophy:** All classrooms reflect the same principles of order, beauty, accessibility, and self-directed learning, creating a cohesive learning experience.

This approach ensures that every student, no matter their classroom, benefits from a thoughtfully prepared environment that encourages exploration, responsibility, and a love of learning.

## Curriculum Designed for Our Students

At Novum Academy, our curriculum is intentionally created by our Directors in collaboration with the Guides to ensure it meets the developmental needs of each child and reflects our Modern Montessori approach.

- **Expertly Crafted:** Directors and Guides work together to design lessons, select materials, and structure activities that align with Montessori principles while exceeding state educational standards.
- **Tailored to Students:** The curriculum is thoughtfully tiered and developmentally appropriate, allowing children to build skills and knowledge as they progress through each program.
- **Campus-Wide Consistency:** This collaborative design ensures alignment across classrooms, so students experience continuity and cohesion while still having their individual learning needs honored.

By designing the curriculum in-house, we ensure that every activity, lesson, and material supports independence, exploration, and a love of learning, preparing students for success both within Montessori environments and beyond.

## High-Quality, High-Value Education Across Novum Academy

At Novum Academy, we are committed to ensuring that every teacher, every classroom, and every program delivers the highest quality and value for your child.

- **Excellence in Every Classroom:** Whether in preschool, elementary, or enrichment programs, each classroom is carefully prepared to provide meaningful, hands-on learning experiences that foster curiosity, independence, and growth.
- **Highly Skilled Guides:** Every teacher is trained in Montessori principles and guided by our Directors to maintain consistency, rigor, and care across all age levels.

- **Program-Wide Consistency:** Our curriculum, materials, and teaching practices are intentionally aligned to ensure that every child receives a cohesive, developmentally appropriate, and enriching learning experience.

This commitment guarantees that no matter which classroom your child is in, or which program they participate in, they are receiving an education that is thoughtful, engaging, and designed to prepare them for lifelong success.

## Outdoor Learning and Play

Time outside is an essential part of our program. When possible children play outside multiple times a day. Children engage in sensory play, explore natural materials, and enjoy physical activity that supports healthy development. On very cold, hot, or windy days, students use our multi-purpose indoor area so they can still enjoy active, hands-on experiences beyond the classroom.

Novum Academy follows all state regulations regarding outdoor time, including appropriate duration and weather conditions, to ensure the safety and well-being of all children.

## Enrichment Activities

At Novum Academy, learning extends far beyond traditional academics. Our campus fosters a love of learning, confidence, and respect for others, guiding each child to reach their fullest potential in a warm, inspiring environment. Enrichment activities are an integral part of our curriculum, supporting students from Young Infants through Elementary. Teachers collaborate across the campus to ensure every child experiences a rich variety of learning opportunities.

Art - Students explore materials, techniques, and personal expression, developing creativity and an appreciation for beauty.

Spanish - Early language exposure comes alive through conversation, songs, and playful activities that spark curiosity about new cultures.

Yoga & Mindfulness - Activities that cultivate body awareness, focus, and inner calm, helping children build concentration and emotional regulation.

Literacy - Children dive into stories, ideas, and concepts, nurturing literacy, imagination, and a lifelong love of reading.

Music - Through songs, instruments, and movement, students engage with rhythm, sound, and expression, fostering musical awareness and joy.

## Community Learning

Beyond our structured curriculum, students participate in Community Learning experiences that connect them to the world around them. Local programs, organizations, and businesses provide hands-on, real-world learning opportunities that expand knowledge and spark curiosity.

These activities help students develop practical knowledge, social awareness, and a sense of responsibility while complementing their classroom learning.

## Student Work Portfolios

At Novum Academy, each student maintains a personal portfolio documenting their learning journey throughout the year. Portfolios provide a clear record of growth, creativity, and mastery, emphasizing learning as a process, celebrating achievements, and encouraging students to take pride in their work.

## Key Features

- **Individualized Documentation:** Portfolios include samples of work, projects, and teacher observations that reflect the student's progress and interests.
- **Holistic Growth:** Portfolios highlight academic skills, practical life activities, creativity, social-emotional development, and problem-solving abilities.

- **Ongoing Review:** Guides update portfolios regularly based on observations and completed work, providing a dynamic snapshot of learning.
- **Family Engagement:** Portfolios are shared with families during parent-teacher conferences and upon request, giving parents a clear view of their child's accomplishments and areas of growth.

### Student Progress

- Progress is shared with families through conferences, written reports, and regular updates.
- Parents are invited to observe their child's learning during classroom visits or special events.
- This approach emphasizes holistic development, encouraging independence, curiosity, and self-motivation.

At Novum Academy, the goal of observation-based assessment is to support each child's unique learning journey while fostering confidence, responsibility, and a lifelong love of learning.

### Student Assessments

At Novum Academy, we follow the Montessori approach, which does not rely on traditional grades or standardized tests. Instead, student learning is assessed through careful observation by trained guides.

### Observation in the Montessori Classroom

- Guides observe students daily as they engage with materials, work independently, and collaborate with peers.
- Observations focus on skills, understanding, interests, and developmental progress rather than letter grades or numeric scores.
- Teachers document individual growth, noting strengths, areas for support, and milestones in practical life, academics, social-emotional skills, and creativity

Novum Academy holds parent-teacher conferences in October and April.

## 04

## Guides & Classroom Staffing

The role, preparation, and support of Novum educators

### Teachers as Guides

At Novum Academy, our teachers are called Guides because their role goes beyond traditional instruction. Rather than directing every activity, Guides observe, support, and facilitate learning, helping each child follow their curiosity and develop independence.

Most Guides go by their first name, such as “Ms. Annie”, to foster warm, approachable relationships while maintaining respect and professional boundaries. However, this may vary depending on each Guide’s personal preference.

#### Guides

- Set up the environment with carefully prepared materials to encourage exploration and discovery
- Observe students to understand their needs, interests, and developmental progress
- Offer guidance and support without taking over the child’s learning
- Foster self-discipline, problem-solving, and confidence by allowing children to learn through experience and natural consequences
- Encourage collaboration, mentorship, and social development in mixed-age classrooms

By acting as Guides, our educators create an environment where children are empowered to take ownership of their learning, develop intrinsic motivation, and grow as confident, capable individuals.

#### Classroom Staffing

In every Novum Academy classroom, students are supported by a team of dedicated educators who work together to create a safe, engaging, and purposeful learning environment.

- **Lead Guide:** The primary educator responsible for planning, preparing, and guiding the classroom. They observe each child’s progress, introduce new materials, and support independent learning.
- **Assistant Guide:** Works alongside the Lead Guide to support students, help maintain the environment, and provide individualized attention when needed.
- **Support Guides / Aides:** Additional staff who assist with classroom activities, supervise work and outdoor play, and help ensure smooth daily routines.

Guides are specifically hired to work with the age group or classroom they are assigned to, ensuring expertise and consistency. The only exceptions are floaters and substitutes, who provide support across the campus as needed.

### Novum Classroom Staff Coverage

Novum Academy classrooms are staffed throughout the day to ensure students are supported, safe, and engaged in meaningful learning:

- **Morning Care / Openers (6:30-8:30 AM):** Morning openers and Assistant Guides supervise early arrivals, welcoming students, supporting morning routines, and preparing the classroom for the day.
- **School Day (8:30 AM-3:30 PM):** Lead and Assistant Guides lead Montessori work cycles, enrichment activities, outdoor play, and all classroom routines. Support Guides or aides may assist as needed.
- **Late Care / Closers (3:30-6:30 PM):** Designated staff supervise students after the regular school day, encouraging free-form activities, additional outdoor or indoor play, and ensuring a safe and calm environment until families arrive.

This structure ensures that students are supported and engaged from arrival through dismissal, and that classrooms maintain the calm, purposeful, and organized environment central to the Montessori approach

## Happy Guides, Thriving Classrooms

At Novum Academy, we know that happy, supported Guides create thriving classrooms. We care deeply about our educators and staff, ensuring they are:

- **Competitively Paid:** We offer salaries and benefits that reflect their expertise and dedication.
- **Emotionally Supported:** Our staff receive ongoing mentorship, professional development, and a positive work environment that prioritizes well-being.
- **Valued & Appreciated:** Every Guide's contributions are recognized, celebrated, and respected as essential to the success of our students and the school community.
- **Supported by Low Ratios:** Classes are intentionally smaller than state requirements, allowing Guides to give individualized attention while maintaining a calm, engaging, and manageable environment.

By investing in our Guides, we ensure that students benefit from enthusiastic, confident, and motivated educators who are fully equipped to provide a high quality learning environment.

We kindly ask all parents to treat Novum staff with courtesy and professional respect. If you have any concerns regarding a staff member, please contact a director."

## Guide & Staff Training

At Novum Academy, we are committed to ensuring that every Guide and staff member is highly trained, knowledgeable, and prepared to provide a safe and enriching learning environment.

- **Montessori & Educational Training:** All Guides receive extensive Montessori training and ongoing professional development to ensure they are skilled in child-centered teaching, curriculum implementation, and developmentally appropriate practices.
- **Safety & Emergency Preparedness:** Staff are certified in CPR, First Aid, and other safety protocols, with regular drills and clear procedures to keep students safe.
- **Continuous Learning:** Guides participate in ongoing workshops, mentorship, and collaboration to stay current with best practices in early childhood education and Montessori methodology.

By investing in the training and well-being of our Guides, we ensure that every child experiences a safe, nurturing, and high-quality learning environment every day.

## Our Commitment to High-Quality Montessori

At Novum Academy, we are deeply committed to providing authentic, high-quality Montessori education for every student.

- **Montessori Training:** We are actively working to ensure that all Lead Guides are Montessori-certified, and that every employee participates in regular Montessori training.
- **Ongoing Professional Development:** All staff engage in continuing education and professional growth to maintain excellence in Montessori methods and child-centered teaching.
- **AMS Accreditation:** Novum Academy is working toward full American Montessori Society (AMS) demonstrating our dedication to meeting the highest Montessori standards.

This commitment ensures that students benefit from skilled, knowledgeable Guides and a classroom experience that truly reflects Montessori principles, supporting independence, curiosity, and a lifelong love of learning.

## 05

**Enrollment, Tuition & Communication**

Enrollment requirements, accounts, and family communication

## Admission and Enrollment

### Enrollment Process

Before a child can be enrolled at Novum Academy, a completed application form and a \$300 enrollment fee must be submitted prior to the intended start date. This fee includes administrative processing, classroom supplies, a Novum Academy T-shirt, and a Montessori mat for each student. New students begin on Mondays, and the official start date will be confirmed once enrollment is complete.

### Waitlist Policy

A one-time fee of \$100 is required for students to be placed on the waitlist. This fee applies to all classroom waitlists. Please note that being added to the waitlist and paying the fee does not guarantee enrollment for the preferred start date or specific classroom request. However, we always work to accommodate preferences as best we can.

### Withdrawal Policy

If you wish to withdraw your student from Novum Academy, a two-week notice prior to the student's expected last day is required. A withdrawal form must be submitted to the office to ensure compliance with Texas State teacher/student ratios.

**Important:** Failure to provide the required notice will result in tuition being charged for two weeks past the date the withdrawal request is received. Additionally, supply fees are non-refundable under any circumstances.

### Tuition Due Date

Tuition is invoiced through ProCare on the first day of each month and is due by the 7th.

- A 10% late fee will be assessed for any account not paid in full by the 15th of the month.
- If a payment is returned due to insufficient funds, a \$50 fee will be charged.
- Accounts that remain unpaid for more than one month may result in withdrawal from Novum Academy enrollment.

### Tuition Policy Agreement

A signed copy of the most recent Novum Academy Tuition Policy Agreement must be on file for every enrolled student. Failure to provide a signed copy upon request from the Novum front office will result in immediate unenrollment from Novum Academy.

### Tuition Communication Policy

At Novum Academy, we recognize that unforeseen circumstances may occasionally affect tuition payments. If you anticipate a delay, we encourage you to notify us promptly. We are committed to working with families to develop a mutually agreeable solution or payment arrangement whenever possible. Proactive communication helps ensure that your child's enrollment continues without interruption.

### Daily Communication

#### ProCare

Novum Academy utilizes the ProCare app to facilitate seamless communication and real-time documentation of your child's daily care and development. Through ProCare, staff share updates on your

child's growth, including eating habits, sleep patterns, and classroom activities. The platform also supports paperless billing and provides timely reminders about school events. ProCare helps maintain consistent, efficient communication between teachers and parents, keeping you informed and connected every step of the way.

## **Novum Academy Front Office**

The Novum Academy office is available to assist parents Monday through Friday, 6:30 AM - 6:30 PM. Our staff are happy to answer questions, address concerns, and provide support whenever needed.

## **Novum Academy Office Contact Information**

- **Phone:** 806.437.1048
- **Email:** novumacademyamarillo@gmail.com
- **Address:** 3510 Bowie Street, Amarillo, Texas

## 06

**Attendance & Daily Logistics**

Arrival, departure, supplies, transitions, and rest

## Attendance & Punctuality

### Punctuality

#### Infants & Toddlers

For our youngest students, Infants and Toddlers, drop-off times are flexible to accommodate family schedules and each child's needs. While consistent attendance is encouraged, our staff work closely with families to support smooth transitions and individualized care.

#### Preschool - Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

We request that students enrolled in Novum Academy's Preschool, Primary and TK programs attend regularly and arrive on time to maximize learning and social development. Consistent attendance supports classroom routines, fosters independence, and ensures each child benefits fully from the program.

### Attendance

Novum Academy does not maintain formal attendance records; however, we encourage regular and consistent attendance to support each child's learning and social development.

- **Short absences:** If your child will be out due to illness, please notify both the lead teacher and the office.
- **Extended absences:** For longer absences, such as illness or family vacations, please inform the lead teacher and a director in advance.
- **Family support:** We will work with your family to ensure your child stays on track and continues to feel connected during any absence.

### Daily Schedule

**Novum Academy Hours:** 6:30 AM - 6:30 PM (Monday-Friday)

- **Morning Care:** 6:30 AM - 8:30 AM
- **Instructional Day:** 8:30 AM - 3:30 PM
- **Half-Day Pick-Up:** 12:00 PM - 12:30 PM\*
- **Late Care:** 3:30 PM - 6:30 PM

\*Students enrolled in the half-day program are picked up between 12 PM and 12:30 PM. To protect the Montessori 3-hour work cycle, we request early pick-ups are avoided when possible.

### Late Pick-Ups

In accordance with Texas State licensing standards, students may not remain on campus after 6:30 PM. To ensure compliance, Novum Academy doors will be locked promptly at 6:30 PM.

Students who remain on campus after 6:30 PM will incur a \$5.00 per minute late fee, per student, which is due at the time of pick-up.

For students enrolled in the School Day program, pick-up is scheduled between 3:30 PM and 4:00 PM. Any School Day student picked up after 4:00 PM will incur a \$20 late pick-up fee per student.

Timely pick-up is essential to ensuring student safety, maintaining the smooth operation of our classrooms, and remaining in compliance with state licensing staffing ratios.

## What Students Should Bring

### Infants

- Bottles (formula or breast milk)
- Soothers/teethers
- Diapers, wipes and diaper cream
- Non-weighted sleep sacks
- Nasal aspirator
- Change of clothing

### Toddler and Preschool

- Lunch box (ice pack recommended)
- Lidded sippy cup
- Nap mat
- Extra change of clothing
- Diapers and wipes (if applicable)

### Primary and Transitional Kindergarten (TK)

- Lunch box (ice pack recommended)
- Lidded cup with sip top or reusable straw
- Nap mat
- Extra change of clothing

### Nap Mats

Nap mats are required for designated rest periods and must be used during naptime for students in our Toddler - Transitional Kinder programs.

- Each student will receive one jumbo storage bag at no charge for nap mat storage and transport.
- Replacement jumbo storage bags are \$10 each if lost or damaged.
- Use of the provided jumbo storage bag is mandatory to meet Texas State Licensing standards.

Nap mats are sent home weekly and must be washed and dried each week to help maintain a clean and healthy classroom environment.

**Please note:** All personal items, including lunchboxes, cups, sleep mats and other personal items **MUST** be labeled to ensure the safety and well-being of our students.

## Transitioning to a New Program

When a student is identified as academically, emotionally, and physically ready to transition to the next program at Novum Academy, families will be notified and the transition process will be discussed in detail.

We have found that a gradual transition best supports a child's confidence and sense of security. Prior to any move, the student's lead teacher will complete a formal observation to ensure that all necessary developmental milestones and classroom readiness skills have been met. Following this, a member of the Novum Academy administrative team will conduct an additional observation.

The results of both observations will be reviewed and discussed with the student's parents. If it is determined that the student is ready to advance, transition documentation will be completed, and families will receive a clear outline of the transition schedule.

If the program a student is transferring to has more than one classroom, the Novum Academy administration team will honor family requests whenever possible to accommodate preferences, while maintaining balanced classroom ratios and staffing requirements.

Transitions are typically scheduled starting on a Monday and span over a five-day period, allowing each student the time needed to adjust to their new classroom environment and teacher. During this process,

students gradually spend time in both classrooms, easing into their new setting while maintaining a sense of continuity and support.

Please note that no transition will occur without proper documentation, adherence to established procedures, and prior parental approval.

## Toilet Training

At Novum Academy, we support each child individually in the toilet training process, working closely with families to ensure consistency and success. Children who are toilet training are treated with dignity, patience, and encouragement-never pressure or shame.

- Children are encouraged and guided with patience and positive reinforcement.
- Three-year-olds remain in the preschool classroom until they are fully potty trained to provide appropriate support and maintain a comfortable, safe environment for all

students.

- Teachers collaborate with families to develop strategies and celebrate milestones, fostering independence and confidence.

Students who are toilet training must have an adequate supply of diapers, pull-ups, or training pants, multiple sets of extra clothing, and enough wipes to support daily needs and any accidents that may occur.

Soiled clothing will be sent home each day. Updates regarding your child's toilet training progress will be communicated daily to ensure consistency between home and school.

## Safe Sleep

At Novum Academy, the safety and well-being of all infants is our highest priority. We follow state standards and evidence-based best practices to ensure safe sleep environments for every child.

- **Sleep Position:** Infants are always placed on their backs to sleep, unless otherwise directed by a licensed healthcare provider.
- **Sleep Surface:** Babies sleep on firm, flat surfaces with a fitted sheet, in approved cribs or bassinets.
- **Bedding:** No soft objects, pillows, blankets, toys, or bumper pads are allowed in the sleep area.
- **Temperature & Clothing:** Infants are dressed appropriately for the room temperature; overheating is avoided.
- **Supervision:** Staff monitor infants closely during sleep, following all state safety regulations.
- **Shared Guidelines:** Parents are encouraged to follow the same safe sleep practices at home to maintain consistency and safety.

These practices are in place to reduce the risk of sleep-related incidents and ensure a safe, nurturing environment for all children.

## 07

**Health, Safety & Nutrition**

Wellness practices, emergency procedures, meals, and feeding

## Wellness on the Novum Academy Campus

### Health & Safety

At Novum Academy, the health and safety of our students is our highest priority. We follow all regulations set forth by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to ensure a safe, nurturing, and legally compliant environment.

### Illness Policy & When to Stay Home

To maintain a healthy school community, please keep your child home if they exhibit any of the following:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher (must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning)
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Persistent coughing or difficulty breathing
- Unexplained rash
- Contagious illnesses such as pink eye, strep throat, flu, or COVID-19
- Lethargy or behavior changes that indicate illness

If a child becomes ill during the school day, a Director or member of the administrative staff will assess the situation and determine if the child must be sent home. Parents or guardians will be contacted and are expected to pick up their child promptly (within 30 minutes). Depending on the nature of the illness, a doctor's note may be required before the child may return to school.

### Immunization Requirements

All students must have current immunization records on file in accordance with Texas law. Required vaccinations include:

- DTaP
- Polio
- MMR
- Hepatitis A & B
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Hib and PCV (for infants and toddlers)

**Medical Exemptions:** Valid medical exemptions are accepted with documentation signed by a licensed physician. Non-medical exemptions must be filed through the Texas DSHS and are subject to state approval.

### Medication Administration

At Novum Academy, all medications are administered safely and in accordance with licensing regulations:

- Only lead or assistant guides may administer medication.
- Administration is monitored by a second staff member, either a Director or administrative support staff, to ensure accuracy and safety.
- Prescription medications must be in the original labeled container with the child's name, prescribing physician, dosage, and instructions.
- Over-the-counter medications require written consent from a parent or guardian and must also be in the original packaging.
- All medications are stored securely and administered according to approved procedures.

## Emergency Medication

If a child requires emergency medication, such as an EpiPen or asthma inhaler, parents or guardians must notify a Director to discuss care, storage, and administration procedures. This ensures the child's safety and that staff are fully prepared to respond in an emergency.

## Emergency Procedures

### Safety Drills

Novum Academy conducts regular safety drills to ensure students and staff are prepared for emergencies, consistent with standard school practices. Drills include:

- **Fire drills:** conducted monthly
- **Tornado/severe weather drills:** held at least twice per year
- **Lockdown and active shooter drills:** practiced twice per year in coordination with local emergency responders

Families will be notified the week prior and the day before each drill. These exercises help students learn safe and appropriate responses in a calm, structured manner and ensure staff are trained to maintain a secure environment.

## Campus Cameras & Monitoring

For the safety and well-being of all students, Novum Academy has cameras installed in every classroom, throughout campus areas, and on the playground.

- Video feeds are monitored by Directors and administrative support staff to ensure student safety and security.
- Families with questions or concerns regarding campus monitoring are encouraged to notify the administration immediately so we can address the matter and continue to support a safe learning environment.

## Campus Security & Student Pick-Up

Novum Academy is a secure campus, and student safety is a top priority.

- Students may only be released to individuals listed on the pick-up list provided at registration.
- Photo identification is required for anyone picking up a student for the first time.
- All students will have their photo taken at registration and entered into our ProCare system. These photos are secure and not shared outside the system, ensuring that staff can accurately and quickly identify students when needed.

## Nutrition & Meals

### Snacks

Novum Academy provides three healthy snacks daily for students from Toddlers through Transitional Kindergarten (TK). Monthly snack calendars are shared with families and posted online.

Families may provide replacement snacks if desired. Please notify the assistant or lead teacher if you would like a specific snack substituted.

If a substitution is required due to a food allergy, Novum Academy will provide an appropriate alternative snack. To ensure safety, please make sure that all food allergies are current and accurately documented in your child's student file.

## Packed Lunches (Toddlers - Elementary)

All full-day students in Toddler through Elementary programs must bring a packed lunch each day. To promote healthy eating and independence, please follow these guidelines:

- Include whole foods, such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein
- Lunches must be complete and balanced; candy, soda, and highly processed foods are discouraged
- Pack in containers children can open independently
- Include an ice pack, as refrigeration is not available
- Classrooms have microwaves for teachers to heat lunches as needed

If a student does not have a complete, balanced meal, Novum Academy will contact the parent or guardian immediately. Parents must either:

- Provide a meal for the student to be delivered promptly, or
- Pick up the student from school before nap time

## Pizza Fridays

Each Friday, Novum Academy offers Pizza Friday for students. Orders are placed in advance and brought in from a local pizza provider.

- **Cost:** \$5 per student
- **Includes:** cheese pizza and a fruit (such as applesauce, fresh fruit, or a fruit cup)
- Families may also pack additional food to accompany the pizza if desired.
- **Order Deadline:** Pizza orders must be submitted by 6:00 PM on the Thursday before the scheduled lunch.

Families may place orders in advance for their child if they wish to participate. Pizza Fridays are optional, and students who do not order will need to bring a packed lunch.

If your child has an allergy that prevents them from participating in Pizza Fridays, please contact a director. We will work with you to provide a safe alternative meal so your child can still enjoy the day. Unfortunately, preferences cannot be accommodated on Pizza Fridays.

## Infant Feeding Guidelines

At Novum Academy, we strive to follow each infant's home feeding routine as closely as possible to ensure consistency and comfort.

- **Labeling:** All breast milk, formula, and baby food must be clearly labeled with the child's name and date prepared.
- **Provision:** All bottles and food items must be provided daily.
- **Formula & Milk:** Adequate formula or milk must be provided each day. If supplies are unavailable, parents must provide them promptly when contacted by staff. Failure to provide formula or milk will require immediate pick-up. Staff are unable to substitute or purchase formula/milk for students.

## Infant Feeding Safety

- All formula and feeding instructions must align with current best practices for infant care. Novum Academy reserves the right to refuse any feedings that are deemed unsafe, inappropriate, or uncomfortable for the infant to ensure the child's health and well-being.
- Any misalignment between provided feeding instructions and best practices will require a member of the administration team to call parents for clarification of feedings to ensure their safety and to maintain compliance with state standards for infant care.

## Infant Snacks

Novum Academy does not provide snacks for infants due to the wide range of dietary needs, schedules, and potential allergies in this age group.

- Families should provide snacks that are safe and familiar for their child.

## Breastfeeding & Pumping

Novum Academy provides a private, comfortable space for mothers who wish to breastfeed or pump while on campus. Families should contact a director to arrange accommodations or discuss any specific needs.

**Important:** If an infant does not have adequate care items provided including: supply of milk/formula, diapers, or wipes for the day, Novum Academy will require immediate pick-up to ensure the child's health, comfort, and compliance with state care standards.

## Allergies & Dietary Restrictions

Families are required to inform Novum Academy of any allergies or dietary restrictions and provide a physician's note if medical accommodations are needed.

- **Documentation & Posting:** Allergy information is clearly posted in classrooms and food preparation areas to ensure staff awareness.
- **Accommodations:** Reasonable accommodations are made for religious, cultural, or personal dietary preferences with proper documentation and planning.
- **Communication:** Parents are encouraged to maintain open communication with administration and teachers regarding special diets or required substitutions to ensure consistency and safety for their child.

## Providing Classroom Snack For Student's Classroom (Holidays & Birthdays)

9. Check First - Confirm with the teacher about allergies or dietary restrictions.
10. Pre-Packaged Only - Snacks must be store-bought with ingredient labels.
11. Portions for All - Bring enough for the whole class; single-serve treats are ideal.
12. Healthy Options Welcome - Fruit, veggies, and low-sugar snacks are encouraged.
13. Coordinate Timing - Work with the teacher on the best time for distribution.
14. Respect Diversity - Consider cultural or religious dietary needs.
15. Clean-Up - Provide napkins/plates and help students tidy up.

Questions or Concerns - Please see your student's lead guide or a director.

## 08

## Student Life & Guidance

Dress, behavior support, conflict resolution, and technology

### Student Dress Code

There is no uniform or strict dress code at Novum Academy; please dress your child in clothing that allows them to move, explore, and learn safely.

However, students at Novum Academy should wear clothing that is:

- Comfortable and allows full movement throughout the day
- Free of offensive language, violent imagery, or inappropriate messaging
- Weather-appropriate, including jackets, hats, and other outerwear for outdoor activities
- Easy for children to manage independently (e.g., elastic waistbands)
- Pants or shorts should be worn under dresses or skirts
- Well-fitting and appropriately covering to ensure comfort, modesty, and safety during all classroom and playground activities

**Please note:** All personal items, including jackets, hats, and extra clothing, should be clearly labeled.

Clothing that is ill-fitting, wet, or heavily soiled may be changed during the day to ensure your child's comfort and hygiene. We kindly request that families provide an extra set of labeled clothing in case a change is needed.

#### School Spirit Fridays

Students are encouraged to wear their Novum Academy t-shirt each Friday to celebrate school spirit and foster a sense of community on campus.

### Discipline & Conflict Resolution

At Novum Academy, our approach to discipline is rooted in Montessori principles: respect, guidance, and the belief that children develop self-control and responsibility through supportive experiences rather than punishment. Our goal is to help each child build inner discipline while understanding how their actions affect themselves and others.

#### Role of the Guide and Support Staff

Educators serve as guides and observers, stepping in to redirect behavior, offer choices, or help children reflect when needed. Mistakes are viewed as learning opportunities, and children are supported with patience, consistency, and empathy. This approach fosters confidence, empathy, and self-awareness, essential skills for lifelong success and emotional well-being.

### Positive Redirection & Natural Consequences

In our classrooms, behavior is guided through positive redirection and natural consequences, rather than punishment or shaming.

- **Positive Redirection:** When a child is struggling or making an unsafe choice, teachers guide them toward a better choice or a more appropriate activity. For example, if a child spills water, a teacher might calmly show them how to clean it up and encourage care next time.
- **Natural Consequences:** Children learn from the natural outcomes of their actions in a safe, supportive way. For instance, if a child forgets to return a material to its shelf, it may not be available the next time they want it—helping them understand responsibility and cause-and-effect without shame.

This approach teaches self-discipline, accountability, and respect for others, while nurturing confidence and intrinsic motivation. Children learn that mistakes are part of learning, and they are empowered to make thoughtful choices in a safe and supportive environment.

## Core Principles of Our Discipline Philosophy

16. **Respect for the Child** All children are treated with kindness, dignity, and understanding. Discipline is never punitive; instead, teachers model respectful communication and problem-solving, guiding children gently and consistently.
17. **Freedom Within Limits** Children are given freedom to explore and move within clearly defined boundaries. This structure provides security, clarity, and the opportunity to make responsible choices, supporting independence and self-confidence.
18. **Natural and Logical Consequences** Children learn best when they experience the natural outcomes of their actions. For example, a child who spills water may be encouraged to help clean it up. Consequences are real-life, respectful, and empathetic, helping children understand cause and effect while reinforcing responsibility.

## Conflict Resolution & Redirection

At Novum Academy, when a child experiences difficulty with behavior or interpersonal interactions, our goal is to support emotional regulation and self-reflection rather than punish. Novum staff use a variety of strategies to guide students, including:

- **Redirection:** Guiding the child toward an appropriate activity or behavior while maintaining respect and understanding
- **Emotional Regulation Support:** Helping the child identify and manage feelings, teaching strategies for calm and constructive responses
- **Short Reflection Breaks:** If needed, a student may take a brief break in the office or a designated quiet space. This is not intended as punishment, but rather to allow the child time away from a challenging situation to reset and regain composure.
  - Breaks are generally 1 minute per year of the student's age (e.g., a 4-year-old would have a 4-minute break)

These practices reinforce self-awareness, problem-solving skills, and empathy, while ensuring that all students remain safe, supported, and respected.

## Montessori Grace and Courtesy

Grace and courtesy are integrated into all interactions at Novum Academy. Children are taught and encouraged to:

- Greet others politely and use kind language
- Take turns, share materials, and respect personal space
- Express needs and feelings constructively
- Offer apologies and resolve conflicts respectfully

Through these practices, students develop empathy, self-awareness, and social responsibility, building the skills necessary for lifelong emotional well-being and positive relationships.

## Ongoing or Escalated Behavior

If a student exhibits continued or escalated behavioral challenges, the child's parents or guardians will be contacted by a member of the Novum Academy administration team. Together, we will:

- Discuss the observed behavior and its impact
- Identify strategies and supports to help the student succeed
- Collaborate to ensure consistent guidance both at school and at home

Our goal is to provide a supportive, consistent approach that helps each child develop self-regulation, responsibility, and positive social skills.

Novum Academy is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful environment. Behaviors that threaten the safety, well-being, or dignity of students, staff, or visitors are strictly prohibited. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Physical aggression (hitting, biting, kicking, or fighting)
- Threats or acts of violence
- Bullying, harassment, or intimidation
- Any behavior that endangers the safety of others

Violations of this policy will result in immediate intervention by the administration. Depending on the severity of the incident, consequences may include:

- Removal from the classroom
- Parent/guardian conference
- Suspension or permanent dismissal from Novum Academy

This policy is intended to ensure a safe, nurturing environment for all children and staff while supporting the Montessori values of respect, responsibility, and community.

## **Technology & Media**

At Novum Academy, technology is used intentionally, age-appropriately, and in alignment with Montessori principles. Technology complements hands-on, experiential learning rather than replacing it.

### **Infants**

In accordance with state standards technology use is limited exclusively to audio experience.

### **In Toddlers-Elementary**

Music and movement - singing, rhythm, and coordinated activities.

Interactive storytime and language experiences - fostering early literacy and communication skills.

Educational videos - used to enhance learning experiences, including:

- Fitness videos (large-movement activities, yoga) with prior administrative approval and used in limited, intentional sessions.

All technology use is supervised, purposeful, and balanced with hands-on materials. Students are taught digital citizenship, including responsible, safe, and ethical use.

### **General Guidelines**

- Personal devices (phones, tablets, smartwatches) are not permitted during school hours unless authorized for a class project or special need.
- Internet access is filtered and monitored.
- Staff model responsible and limited use of technology in the classroom.

### **Technology Accommodations**

If a student requires special accommodations or modifications related to technology use, please contact a Novum Academy Director to discuss options and ensure appropriate support.

## 09

**Family Partnership & School Policies**

Communication, privacy, involvement, and handbook updates

## School Policies & Legal Information

**Use of School Photos/Videos:** Parents may request that their child not be photographed via a “No Photo” list posted in each classroom. Photos are used for educational purposes, school communication, social media and marketing with parental permission.

### Grievance Procedures

Novum Academy values open, ongoing, and respectful communication between families and staff. If a concern arises, we encourage the following steps:

19. **Initial Discussion:** Speak directly with your child’s lead guide. Most concerns can be resolved through open dialogue.
20. **Administrative Support:** If the issue remains unresolved, request a meeting with a Director to discuss the concern further.
21. **Formal Grievance:** For ongoing concerns, submit a written grievance to the Director. The school will review the matter and respond with a resolution plan.

Our goal is to maintain a collaborative, solution-focused environment that supports each student’s success and well-being.

### Confidentiality & Privacy

- Child and family records are secure and accessible only to authorized staff.
- Personal information is never shared without consent, except as required by law.
- Classroom photos/videos are taken or shared only with parental permission.
- All conversations regarding children or families are conducted respectfully and privately.

### Mandated Reporting Policy

All staff are mandated reporters under Texas law. Suspected abuse, neglect, or exploitation must be reported to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) within 48 hours. Reports are confidential and aimed solely at protecting the child.

#### MANDATED REPORTING

Texas Abuse Hotline: 1-800-252-5400 (available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week).

### Student Nondiscrimination Policy

Novum Academy provides a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment. We do not discriminate based on race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other legally protected status. Harassment, intimidation, or bullying is strictly prohibited. Students or parents who witness or experience discrimination are encouraged to contact the Director at novumacademyamarillo@gmail.com.

## Get Involved at Novum Academy

Novum Academy warmly invites parents, guardians, and community members to play an active role in our school community. Your involvement makes a meaningful difference in the lives of our students and strengthens our modern Montessori environment. Some ways to get involved:

**Parent Organization** Join our Parent Organization to help plan events, support school initiatives, and foster connections among families.

**Volunteering on Campus:** Share your time and talents by volunteering in classrooms, at special events, or assisting with school projects.

**Advisory Board** Bring your professional expertise and perspective to our Advisory Board, a non-governing group that provides guidance and insight to support the growth of our modern Montessori community.

Learn more or sign up at [novumacademy.com](https://novumacademy.com).

## Handbook Updates

Novum Academy LLC reserves the right to add, remove, enhance, or modify any part of this handbook at any time. Families will be notified of significant changes, and an updated agreement or contract will be provided when necessary.

Please keep this handbook for your personal reference. A complete and current copy can also be found on our school website at [novumacademy.com](https://novumacademy.com)

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## Handbook Acknowledgment

Please sign and return this page to Novum Academy

I acknowledge that I have received, read, and understand the Novum Academy LLC Student & Parent Handbook. I agree to follow the policies, procedures, and guidelines outlined in this handbook. I understand that Novum Academy LLC may revise the handbook and will notify families of significant changes.

### KEEP FOR YOUR RECORDS

The current handbook is available at [novumacademy.com](https://novumacademy.com). Please contact a Director if you have questions about any policy or procedure.

CHILD'S NAME

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PARENT/GUARDIAN NAME

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PARENT/GUARDIAN SIGNATURE

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DATE

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