



Bella Montessori FAMILY HANDBOOK

2023-2024 School Year



WELCOME

Dear Bella Family,

Welcome to the Bella Montessori Community for the 2023-2024 school year. We are excited to embark on another year of growth and learning. We hope this handbook brings you an outline and structure for how our school operates. We firmly believe that structure builds safety, and this handbook is a gift of structure to you as a part of this community.

This handbook is comprehensive but may not be all inclusive. If you have questions, please do not hesitate in reaching out on Brightwheel or via email at mary@bellamontessori.com

Thank you for choosing **Bella Montessori**. We look forward to partnering with you as we learn and grow together.

Wishing You Well,

Mary Navarro, M.Ed.
Director
mary@bellamontessori.com

Tessie Perez
Assistant Director
tessie@bellamontessori.com

ABOUT US

Certification

Bella Montessori is an American Montessori Society Member School. More information about what it means to be an AMS school can be found on our website.

Bella Montessori also takes part in the First Things First, Quality First program.

Definition of Family

In this handbook we refer to family as a parent, legal guardian, sponsor or anyone else who provides for the well-being, best-interest and responsibility of the child in our care.

Hours of Operation

Child care services are provided from 7:30 AM to 5:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

The full school day is from 8:30AM-3:00PM.

Infant and Toddler Programs also offer a half day schedule from 8:30AM-12:00PM.

Before and aftercare are offered at an additional fee and are available from 7:30AM-8:30AM and 3:00PM-5:00PM.

Holidays

Bella Montessori operates on year round school year schedule. We are closed for federal holidays and for two week seasonal breaks throughout the school year. Please refer to the school calendar located on the website at bellamontessori.org.

We also have monthly half days where all school closes at 12:00PM with no aftercare provided. This time allows for staff to engage in Professional Development and community building as a full staff.

Admission & Enrollment

All admission and enrollment forms must be completed and enrollment fee and first tuition payment paid prior to your child's first day of attendance.

An annual enrollment fee of \$290 is due at the time of enrollment. This fee is non-refundable.

Based on the availability and openings, our facility admits children from six weeks old to nine years of age.

Children are admitted without regard to race culture, sex, religion, national origin, or disability. We do not discriminate on the basis of special needs as long as a safe, supportive environment can be provided.

Inclusion

Bella Montessori believes that children of all ability levels are entitled to the same opportunities for participation, acceptance and belonging in child care. We will make every reasonable accommodation to encourage full and active participation of all children in our program based on his/her individual capabilities and needs.

If your child has an identified special need, please let our Director know. We encourage you to share any documentations and evaluations with the school. The more information we know, the more we can assist your child and family at their own developmental pace.

Non-Discrimination

At **Bella Montessori** equal educational opportunities are available for all children, without regard to race, color, creed, national origin, gender, age, ethnicity, religion, disability, or parent/provider political beliefs, marital status, sexual orientation or special needs, or any other consideration made unlawful by federal, state or local laws. Educational programs are designed to meet the varying needs of all students.

Family Activities

Each family is a child's first teacher. We value families as partners in the growth and development of children in our program. We encourage parents and other family members to be involved in the program, visit children's classrooms, participate in events, and provide feedback on the program. We offer a variety of ways in which families can participate in helping us establish and reach our program goals.

Please see the list of Family Activities at the end of this booklet.

Confidentiality

Unless we receive your written consent, information regarding your child will not be released with the exception of that required by our regulatory and partnering agencies. All records concerning children at our program are confidential.

Staff Qualifications

Our staff are hired in compliance with the state requirements and qualifications as a base minimum. These requirements are set forth based on the Arizona Department of Health Services.

As a Montessori School, our teachers also hold training and certifications from various Montessori Programs throughout the country including Arizona Montessori Teacher Education Program, Houston Montessori Center, CMTE- New York, Age of Montessori, and North American Montessori Center.

Caregivers participate in orientation and ongoing training in the areas of child growth and development, healthy and safe environments, developmentally appropriate practices, guidance, family relationships, cultural and individual diversity, and professionalism.

We pride ourselves in providing excellent care from highly trained staff. We strongly discourage families from entering into employment arrangements with Bella Montessori staff or former Bella Montessori staff (i.e. babysitting). Such arrangements may lead to dismissal of the employee and/or family from our school community. Any arrangement between families and our caregivers outside the programs and services we offer is a private matter, not connected or sanctioned by **Bella Montessori**.

Child to Staff Ratios

Children are supervised at all times. All caregivers receive scheduled breaks which reduce fatigue and help to ensure alertness.

We maintain the following standards for child to staff ratios:

Age	Child to Staff	Maximum Group Size
≤ 12 months	<u>3 to 1</u>	<u>6</u>
Transition/Toddler	<u>6 to 1</u>	<u>13</u>
Primary, 3-6 years old	<u>13-1</u>	<u>30</u>
Elementary, 6-9 years	<u>15 to 1</u>	<u>30</u>

Communication & Family Partnership

For the most effective communication regarding classroom or individual issues, please talk to your child's guide. If you need to talk with your child's guide at any time, please do not hesitate to send a Brightwheel messages to schedule a time.

A child's behavior at school can be affected in many ways by changes or difficulties at home. In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform us. All information will be regarded as confidential. Common causes of distress are either one or both parents being away from home, any hospitalization, accident, illness or death of a loved one. Children often act as barometers of family well-being. So that we can offer a little extra TLC when an occasional upset occurs, please keep the lines of communication open.

Arrival and departure times are not appropriate Parent/Guide discussion times. Please do not try to engage the guides or students in conversations during this time. Guides may still be preparing the classroom for daily activities or directing their attention to the students. Children separate from parents more readily and prepare themselves for the classroom routine if an efficient and consistent parental departure is practiced.

In our Infant and Toddler programs, daily updates regarding feeding, napping and toileting can be found within the Brightwheel app. For Infant- Elementary programs, a general weekly update regarding ongoing classroom activities will be messaged in the Brightwheel app.

Montessori Education Events

These events occur throughout the year and are meant to share our Montessori Educational Philosophy with families so that you can gain a better understanding of what your child does and why we do what we do. Please see the Family Calendar and Brightwheel messages for more details of these events.

Classroom Observations

Parents may sign up for 30-minute observations. These observations offer the opportunity to view the children at work during their work cycle. Prior to entering the classroom, observers will be given Observation Guidelines to read. All observations must be scheduled ahead of time by calling the office. Observations will end immediately if your child cannot handle the disruption and we can reschedule at a later date. Observations will begin in October and run through the end of April.

Caregiver Conversations

Caregiver Conversations are formally scheduled twice a year. These conversations afford an opportunity for caregivers to meet with their child/ren's guide to discuss all aspects of their student's whole child development. Sign-ups are done online with a 'link' provided via email at the appropriate time. Caregiver Conversations are for caregivers and guides only, no children please. Complimentary childcare is provided during conferences.

Volunteering

Volunteering will be scheduled at least two months after your child's start date for the sake of the child. Volunteers in the classroom must meet with the lead guide prior to coming into the classroom. Classroom volunteers will be scheduled by the lead guide. Volunteers for social activities are scheduled and meet with the director or the guides in charge of the event.

Open Door Policy

We are delighted to have family members participate in our program. Parents/Guardians are welcome to visit the program any time during regular program hours. The infant room welcomes parents/guardians to nurse or feed their infants.

Open Door Policy does not mean the doors will be unlocked. For the safety and protection of the children, external doors will be kept locked at all times.

Publicity

Bella Montessori staff and outside contracted photographers do take photos and videos throughout the day. These images and videos are used to be sent to parents, uploaded to Brightwheel, to be used and printed in the classroom (name tag, photo frame, etc.), posts on school website, school social media and other publicity and public relations materials.

Unless the family indicates via email to the Director, mary@bellamontessori.com, that they do not want their child to participate in photographs/videos, Bella Montessori reserves the right to use photographs/videos for the uses named above.

CURRICULA & LEARNING

Learning Environment

We provide a rich learning environment that are developmentally appropriate to the specific ages in each classroom. We have a flexible day routine that allows children to advance at their own pace. We strongly believe that learning happens through exploration. Learning and exploring are hands-on and are facilitated through interest areas. Our program is designed to enhance children's development in the following areas: creativity, self-expression, decision-making, problem-solving, responsibility, independence, and reasoning. We encourage openness to that which is different from us, and the ability to work and play with others.

Our learning environments are prepared to be authentic Montessori environments. We encourage our families to attend family educational opportunities throughout the year to learn more about why we practice what we practice.

Assessment/Screening

Bella Montessori uses the Ages and Stages Questionnaire to gather information about each child's developmental abilities and evaluate progress so we can modify and adjust what we are doing in our classroom so as to deliver the best individualized instruction for each child. This evaluation is communicated to families periodically during the school year using various formal and informal tools, forms, and resources.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism is vital for all children because it sets social goals and promotes respect for all people and the environment we inhabit. We utilize books, music, games, and a wide range of activities as aids to teach our children respect for our world and the diversity of life upon it.

Celebrations

Our holiday policy encourages an enhanced understanding of and respect for different cultures and beliefs of children, families, staff and community.

The School acknowledges holidays and celebrations are an exciting part of a child's life and sometimes want to share that excitement at school. As a school, we are mindful to honor this social need while minimizing distractions from the classroom. As a school, we come together as a community to celebrate various events throughout the year. If your family has a special holiday or tradition they would like to share, please reach out to your lead guide and let them know!

Toilet Training

The most important factor in making the toilet learning experience successful and as low-stress as possible is a family/teacher partnership that supports the child. Research indicates that children cannot successfully learn how to use the toilet until they are physically, psychologically, and emotionally ready. Many pediatricians say that most children under 24 months of age are not physically capable of regulating bladder and bowel muscles. Most positive toilet training occurs only after children show signs of physical control or awareness of their bodily functions and when they demonstrate an interest or curiosity in the process. We are committed to working with you to make sure that toilet learning is carried out in a manner that is consistent with your child's physical and emotional abilities and your family's concerns.

Toilet learning often occurs in the Toddler Environment. Your lead guides will work with you and guide you through the experiences.

GUIDANCE

General Procedure

Bella Montessori is committed to each student's success in learning within a caring, responsive, and safe environment that is free of discrimination, violence, and bullying. Our center works to ensure that all students have the opportunity and support to develop to their fullest potential and share a personal and meaningful bond with people in the school community.

Thoughtful direction and planning ahead are used to prevent problems and encourage appropriate behavior. Communicating consistent, clear rules and involving children in problem

solving help children develop their ability to become self-disciplined. We encourage children to be fair, to be respectful of other people, of property, and to learn to understand the results of their actions.

Discipline Policy

We have created a discipline policy that reflects our philosophy of Conscious Discipline with families and children.

Challenging Behavior

Children are guided to treat each other and adults with helpfulness according to their own developmental appropriate needs. We believe in positive intent and that every human does the best they can with the tools they have at any given moment. When children demonstrate unsafe or unhelpful behaviors, adults use their skill set to help children develop alternative helpful and safe tools. This often comes in the form breathing, describing/naming/and acknowledging the child, providing choices, role playing and any other skill the adult may deem helpful in the moment.

Notification of Unhelpful or Unsafe Behaviors to Families

If a child's behavior/circumstance is of concern, communication will begin with the parents as the first step to understanding the child's individual needs and challenges. We will work together to evaluate these needs in the context of our program.

On rare occasions, a child's behavior may warrant the need to find a more suitable setting for care. Examples of such instances include:

- A child appears to be a danger to others.
- Continued care could be harmful to, or not in the best interest of the child as determined by a medical, psychological, or social service personnel.
- Undue burden on our resources and finances for the child's accommodations for success and participation.

TUITION AND FEES

Important Notice

All payment and fee processing will be completed by Brightwheel on behalf of Bella Montessori. If you have a question or concern regarding a payment or fee, please contact the Director, Mary Navarro, at mary@bellamontessori.com

Tuition Rates

Program	School Day	Annual Tuition	Monthly Tuition
Infant/Walkers 6 weeks- 18 months	Half Day	\$10,753	\$978
	Full Day	\$13,340	\$1,213
Toddlers 18 months- 3 years	Half Day	\$10,178	\$925
	Full Day	\$11,903	\$1,082
Primary 3-6 years old	Full Day	\$11,040	\$1,004
Elementary 6-9 years old	Full Day	\$11,040	\$1,004
Additional Services	Before Care	7:30AM-8:30AM	\$90
	After Care	3:00PM-5:00PM	\$230
	Extended Care	7:30AM-5:00PM	\$320
	Drop In AM/PM		\$25/day

Families contract for a annual period as indicated on the *Enrollment Agreement Form*. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every month, year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather.

Payment

Payment is always due in advance with no deduction for any absences, holidays, or closures due to inclement weather, power outages, or other situations beyond our control. Payment is due monthly by the 15th on the month prior to attendance (June 15th payment for July Enrollment, as outlined in the *Enrollment Agreement*).

A non-refundable registration fee of \$290.00 is due annually upon enrollment. This fee will not be pro-rated.

Methods of Payment

Several methods of payment are available for families' convenience. Families can pay by automatic electronic funds transfer or credit card. Families are required to set up automatic, reoccurring payments via Brightwheel.

Late Payment Charges

Late payments can pose serious problems for our programs and as a result, the business does not have the latitude to allow families to accrue a balance. **Late payments will result in the imposition of late payment fees. Failure to pay child care payments will result in child care services being terminated.**

If payment is not received on the day that it is due, a late fee of \$50 will be added to your next tuition payment for each day that it is late.

Any payments made will be applied to the oldest charges and late fees may still apply if the account is not paid in full by the next tuition due date.

If payment is more than 20 business days past due, we may attempt to recover payment in small claims court and/or your account may be sent to a 3rd party collections agency. You will be responsible for all expenses associated with these actions including all court and attorney fees.

Returned Checks/Rejected Transaction Charges

All returned checks or rejected ACH (automatic debits) or credit card transactions will be charged a fee of \$50. This charge may be collected electronically.

Late Pick-up Fees

Late pick-up is not a normal program option and will only be considered as an exceptional occurrence. A flat rate late fee of \$25 will occur between 3:15PM-5:00PM. Late fees of \$10 per minute will be assessed beginning at 5:00 PM and will be due upon arrival. **Repeated late pick up may result in child care services being terminated.**

Other Fees

- From time-to-time there will be additional fees associated with special activities or field trips. These fees are due prior to the event, activity or trip.

Credits & No Credits

- **Families contract for a specific schedule** as completed on the *Enrollment Agreement* Form. Payment for this contracted schedule is required every month year-round whether or not your child attends; this enables us to pay teachers a stable salary every week all year. No credits are given for sick or vacation days, holidays, staff training closure or closure due to inclement weather, infectious disease (except as noted below), or weather-related or environmental issues.
- **Weather-related or Environmental Disaster or Pandemic** – in the event of a serious crisis during which we are prohibited from operating, families shall pay

their tuition in full. Payment of your Tuition allows us to retain staff, pay operating expenses, and hold open your child's spot for when we are safely able to reopen.

ATTENDANCE & WITHDRAWAL

Absence

If your child is going to be absent or arrive after 8:45 AM, please send us a Brightwheel message. We will be concerned about your child if we do not hear from you.

Withdrawal

A written notice, 30 days in advance, is required by the center when a child is being withdrawn.

Transfer of Records

Whether transitioning to the next program setting or to a new classroom, your child's records will be transferred internally.

If your child is transitioning to a new school, a written request from you with instructions to where the records should be sent is required.

Closing Due to Extreme Weather

Should severe weather or other conditions (i.e., snow, storms, floods, tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes, blizzards, loss of power, loss of water) prevent us from opening on time or at all, notification to the families will be announced on Brightwheel.

If it becomes necessary to close early, we will contact you or your emergency contacts as soon as possible. Your child's early pick-up is your responsibility to arrange.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP

General Procedure

We open for the school day at 8:30 AM. Please do not drop-off your child prior to the opening. Parents are expected to accompany their children and sign them in via Brightwheel using their own code and full signature with a legible first initial and full last name.

The regular school day ends at 3:00 PM.

Cell Phone Usage

The times you spend in the center dropping off and picking up your child are the primary windows of time we have to communicate with you about your child. In order to make the best use of these opportunities, as well as to be attentive to your child and other children, we ask that you NOT use your cell phone at any time while visiting the center. If you arrive to pick up while using a device, a staff member will ask you to finish your call before picking up your child.

Authorized & Unauthorized Pick-up

Your child will only be released to you or those persons you have listed as Emergency and Release Contacts. If you want a person who is not identified as an Emergency and Release

Contact to pick-up your child, you must notify us in advance, in writing. Your child will not be released without prior written authorization. The person picking up your child will be required to show a picture ID as verification and use their own Brightwheel code. Please notify your pick-up person of our policy.

In order to safeguard your child we will need copies of any court ordered custody agreements. Without a custody agreement, we are not able to prevent the release of your child to a parent.

If a child has not been picked up after closing and we have not heard from you, attempts will be made to contact you, and the contacts listed as Emergency and Release Contacts.

Right to Refuse Child Release

We may refuse to release children if we have reasonable cause to suspect that any person picking up a child is under the influence of drugs or alcohol, or is physically or emotionally impaired in any way that may endanger the child. To protect your child, we may request that another adult listed as an Emergency and Release Contact pick-up the child or we may call the police to prevent potential harm to your child. Reoccurring situations may result in the release of your child from the program.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

What to Bring

Refer to each classroom's welcome letter for what to bring. Please label all items brought from home with your child's name (i.e., clothes, bottles, diapers, pacifiers, crib sheet, blanket, etc.) to prevent items from becoming misplaced or lost. We are not responsible for lost or damaged items. Sheets and soiled clothing will be sent home on an as-needed basis for laundering and return to the center.

Dress Code

Bella Montessori is a school with a uniform dress code and expect the children must come groomed, modestly and neatly dressed in the policy appropriate for their age group. Clothing and shoes must fit properly in order for safety and comfort during the school day.

- **Toddlers:** blue t-shirt, khaki shorts or pants, socks and tennis shoes (must completely enclose the foot).
- **Children's House:** blue uniform t-shirt (for sale in school office), khaki shorts (girls-mid-thigh, boys knee length), socks and tennis shoes (no Velcro, no lights, no sound effects).
- Clothing should allow the child to use the bathroom without help, in other words your child should be able to unsnap, snap, unbutton, button, unzip and zip their own clothing. ***This clothing is essential for the toddler room.***
- An extra set of clothes (top, bottom, underwear and socks) is required to have at school in case of an accident. We will send these back occasionally if we see they no longer fit your child and when we do, we will need a replacement right away. Please label your child's clothing and placed in a Ziploc gallon bag.
- Violations to the dress code will be addressed via email.
- After three violations, you will be called to bring in a compliant article of clothing that day.

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- Non-compliant articles include but not limited to shoes that are not tennis shoes, bottoms that are not khaki, not wearing socks and non-uniform t-shirt (children's house students).
 - Tattoos, distracting jewelry, make-up, lip gloss, distracting hairstyles or hair coloring are not permitted.
 - **Cold weather:** label your child's jackets, hats and gloves as there may be duplicates.
 - **Hot weather:** apply sunscreen and your child may bring a hat to shield away the sun during recess.

Toys/Treasures from Home

Please do not allow your child to bring unnecessary items from home. This includes backpacks, jewelry, money, candy and toys. Their presence is distracting to our classroom environments as well as a choking hazard. We ask that you respect our learning environment and teach your child to do the same, by leaving all toys and treasures at home.

NUTRITION

Foods Brought from Home

Lunch

We ask that each child bring a healthy, balanced lunch each day. We do not have refrigerator space or microwaves so please send lunch containers with ice packs and hot food in thermoses.

The State guidelines require a balanced meal to including a fruit, a vegetable and a protein. Uneaten food will be sent home so that you may monitor how well your child is eating based on what comes back in the lunch container.

Depending on allergies in each specific environment, you may ask to refrain from bringing certain items. For the safety of our students, please respect and stick to such guidance.

The Montessori area of Practical Life includes the setting and cleaning of tables. The School provides napkins, plates, bowls, utensils and glasses for this work. It also provides an opportunity for the practice of Grace and Courtesy – how to serve, accept or decline drinks and/or food items.

Please DO NOT send:

- Any type of beverage, including drinkable yogurts
- Squeezable yogurts, applesauce, etc.
- Lunchables
- Candy or dessert
- Water bottles

If children come to school with these items, we will set them in a safe place and return them at the end of the day.

For the safety of all, children will not be permitted to share another child's lunch or 'trade' with another child. We encourage families to involve their child as they plan and prepare the daily lunch menu. Please label your child's lunch box and recyclable containers.

Classroom Snack

Snack is provided by the School and posted on the Event/Snack Calendar (on website and office). If your child has specific food allergies, please send a comparable snack for them. Consult your lead guide for any questions or concerns.

Birthday Snacks

We enjoy sharing in the celebration of your child's birthday. Each environment has their own way of celebrating! Check with your child's lead guide for more information.

Education

Our school proudly follows the Feeding Littles Philosophy. Please refer to feedinglittles.com for more information.

Infant Feedings

Infant feedings follow these procedures:

- Infants will be held for bottle-feeding until able to hold his or her own bottle. Bottles will never be propped.
- Infants are fed "on cue" to the extent possible (at least every 4 hours and usually not more than hourly) and by a consistent caregiver/teacher.
- Breastfeeding is supported by providing a place for nursing mothers to feed their babies. Expressed breast milk may be brought from home if frozen or kept cold during transit. All breast milk and formula shall be returned to the child's home or discarded at the end of each day. Previously frozen, thawed breast milk must be used within 24 hours. Bottles must be clearly labeled with the child's name and the date the milk was expressed. Frozen breast milk must be dated and may be kept in the freezer for up to 30 days.
- Breast milk and formula brought from home must be dated and labeled with the child's name.
- Labels on all milk/formula containers should be resistant to loss of the name and date/time when washing and handling.
- Solid foods will only be introduced after a consultation with the child's family.

HEALTH

Immunizations

Immunizations are required according to the current schedule recommended by the U.S. Public Health Services and the American Academy of Pediatrics, www.aap.org. Our state regulations regarding attendance of children who are not immunized due to religious or medical reasons are followed. Unimmunized children are excluded during outbreaks of vaccine preventable illness as directed by the state health department.

All caregivers, teachers, and staff are required to be current with all immunizations routinely recommended for adults by the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices (ACIP) of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC).

Illness

We understand that it is difficult for a family member to leave or miss work, but to protect other children; you may not bring a sick child to the center. The center has the right to refuse a child who appears ill. You will be called and asked to retrieve your child if your child exhibits any of

the following symptoms. This is not an all-inclusive list. We will try to keep your child comfortable but he/she will be excluded from all activities until you arrive.

- Illness that prevents your child from participating in activities.
- Illness that results in greater need for care than we can provide.
- Illness that poses a risk of spread of harmful diseases to others.
- Fever (100°F or higher under the arm, 101°F or higher in the mouth, 102°F or higher in the ear) accompanied by other symptoms.
- Diarrhea – stools with blood or mucus, and/or uncontrolled, unformed stools that cannot be contained in a diaper/underwear or toilet.
- Vomiting – green or bloody, and/or more than 2 times during the previous 24 hours.
- Mouth sores caused by drooling.
- Rash with fever, unless a physician has determined it is not a communicable disease.
- Pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, until on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Strep throat, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Head lice, until treatment and all nits are removed.
- Scabies, until 24 hours after treatment.
- Chickenpox, until all lesions have dried and crusted.
- Pertussis (Whooping Cough), until 5 days of antibiotics.
- Hepatitis A virus, until one week after immune globulin has been administered.
- Tuberculosis, until a health professional indicates the child is not infectious.
- Rubella, until 6 days after the rash appears.
- Mumps, until 5 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 4 days after onset of rash.
- Has a physician or other health professionals written order that child be separated from other children.

Children who have been ill may return when:

- They are free of fever, vomiting and diarrhea without medication for 24 hours.
- They have been treated with an antibiotic for 24 hours.
- They are able to participate comfortably in all usual activities.
- They are free of open, oozing skin conditions and drooling (not related to teething) unless:
 - The child's physician signs a note stating that the child's condition is not contagious, and;
 - The involved areas can be covered by a bandage without seepage or drainage through the bandage.
- If a child had a reportable communicable disease, a physician's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and may return to our care is required.

Allergy Prevention

Families are expected to notify us regarding children's food and environmental allergies. Families of children with diagnosed allergies are required to provide us a letter detailing the child's symptoms, reactions, treatments and care. A list of the children's allergies will be posted in the main area and kitchen. We are trained to familiarize ourselves and consult the list to avoid the potential of exposing children to substances to which they have known allergies.

Medications

All medications should be handed to the Director in the front office with specific written instructions for administration. Medications should never be left in the child's cubby or with the child to administer on their own. Our staff will ensure that the medication is recorded along with the directions and proceed to dispense the medication as directed.

- **Prescription medications** require a note signed by the family and a written order from the child's physician. The label on the medication meets this requirement. The medication must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and the name and phone number of the physician. All medications must be in the original container (you may request pharmacies to fill your prescription in two labeled bottles). Please specify the dosage and time(s) to be administered for each medication.
- **Non-prescription medications** require written permission and instructions signed by the child's primary care physician. The written permission must include your child's name, dosage, current date, frequency, and all medications must be in the original container. Non-prescription medication should not be administered for more than a 3-day period unless a written order by the physician is received.
- (C) **Non-prescription topical ointments** (e.g., diaper cream or teething gel), sunscreen and insect repellent require a note signed by the family, specifying frequency and dosage to be administered as well as the length of time the authorization is valid which cannot exceed 12 months.

Communicable Diseases

When an enrolled child or an employee of the center has a (suspected) reportable disease, it is our legal responsibility to notify the local Board of Health or Department of Public Health. We will take care to notify families about exposure so children can receive preventive treatments. Included among the reportable illnesses are the following:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Botulism
- Chicken Pox
- COVID-19
- Diphtheria
- Hemophilus Influenza (invasive)
- Measles (including suspect)
- Meningococcal Infection (invasive)
- Poliomyelitis (including suspect)
- Rabies (human only)
- Rubella Congenital and Non-congenital (including suspect)
- Tetanus (including suspect)
- H1N1 Virus
- Any cluster/outbreak of illness
- Tuberculosis

SAFETY

Clothing

Please dress your child in practical clothing that allows for freedom of movement and is appropriate for the weather. Your child will be involved in a variety of activities including: painting, outdoor play, sand, weather, and other sensory activities. Our playground is used as an extension of the environment, and daily programs are conducted outside whenever weather permits.

One particular aspect of concern is the risk associated with children's clothing that may become entangled with climbing or sliding equipment that could lead to choking or other serious harm.

Sandals and flip-flops are not appropriate for center play and make it difficult for your child to participate in some activities.

Injuries

Safety is a major concern in child care and so daily safety inspections are completed inside and outside the center area in order to prevent injuries. First aid will be administered by a trained caregiver in the event that your child sustains a minor injury (e.g., scraped knee). You will receive an incident report outlining the incident and course of action taken via Brightwheel. If the injury produces any type of swelling or needs medical attention, you will be contacted immediately. Our center is equipped with a first aid kit meeting the state regulations.

In the event of a serious medical emergency, the child will be taken to the hospital immediately by ambulance, while we will try to contact you or an emergency contact.

Biting

Biting is a normal stage of development that is common among infants and toddlers – and sometimes even among preschoolers. It is something that most young children will try at least once.

When biting happens, our response will be to care for and help the child who was bitten and to help the biter learn a more helpful skill. Our focus will not be on punishment for biting, but on effective behaviors that address the specific reason for biting.

Notes will be written to the family of the child who was bitten and the biter's family. We will work together with the families of each to keep them informed and to develop strategies for change.

Helpful Adult Behavior

All children and families will be treated with respect and dignity. In return, we expect the same from all of our families. We will not tolerate hostile or aggressive behavior toward our staff. If this occurs, we reserve the right to ask for a later conversation. If repeated offenses occur we may ask the family to remove your children from our care.

Smoking

The poisons in secondhand smoke are especially harmful to infants and young children's developing bodies, therefore the indoor and outdoor center environment and vehicles used by the center are non-smoking areas at all times. The use of tobacco in any form is prohibited on the center's premises.

Prohibited Substances

The use of alcohol or illegal drugs is prohibited on the center's premises. Possession of illegal substances or unauthorized potentially toxic substances is prohibited.

Any adult who appears to be inebriated, intoxicated, or otherwise under the influence of mind-altering or polluting substances is required to leave the premises immediately.

Dangerous Weapons

A dangerous weapon is a gun, knife, razor, or any other object, which by the manner it is used or intended to be used, is capable of inflicting bodily harm. Families, children, staff or guests (other than law enforcement officers) possessing a dangerous weapon will not be permitted onto the premises.

In cases that clearly involve a gun, or any other weapon on our premises, the police will be called and the individual(s) involved will be immediately removed from the premises. This policy applies to visible or concealed weapons.

Child Custody

Without a court document, both parents/guardians have equal rights to custody. We are legally bound to respect the wishes of the parent/guardian with legal custody based on a certified copy of the most recent court order, active restraining order, or court-ordered visitation schedule. We will not accept the responsibility of deciding which parent/guardian has legal custody where there is no court documentation.

Suspected Child Abuse

We are required by law to report all observations of child abuse or neglect cases to the appropriate state authorities if we have reasonable cause to believe or suspect a child is suffering from abuse or neglect or is in danger of abuse or neglect, no matter where the abuse might have occurred. The child protective service agency will determine appropriate action and may conduct an investigation. It then becomes the role of the agency to determine if the report is substantiated and to work with the family to ensure the child's needs are met. Our center will cooperate fully with any investigation and will maintain confidentiality concerning any report of child abuse or neglect.

EMERGENCIES

Fire Safety

Our center is fully equipped with fire alarms, sprinkler system, and fire extinguishers. We undergo an annual fire inspection annually to ensure we are following all regulations and guidelines of The Town of Gilbert in order to keep our children and staff safe.

Our fire evacuation plan is reviewed with the children and staff on a monthly basis. Fire evacuation routes are in every classroom.

In the event of a fire, families will be notified via Brightwheel once everyone is outside of the building and away from harm.

Emergency Transportation

In the event your child needs to be transported due to a medical emergency, if no other authorized person can be contacted and the need for transportation is essential, an ambulance will be called for transportation. A proper escort will accompany and remain with the child until a family member or emergency contact arrives.

CENTER POLICIES

Our center policies not included in this handbook are reviewed annually and updated as needed. They are available for review upon request to the center director.

Family Handbook Acknowledgement

Please sign this acknowledgement, detach it from the handbook, and return it to the center prior to enrollment.

This handbook may be updated from time-to-time, and notice will be provided as updates are implemented.

Thank you for your acknowledging the policies and procedures we have established for the safety and welfare of all children in our care. We look forward to getting to know you and your family.

I have received the **Bella Montessori Family Handbook**, and I have reviewed the family handbook with a member of the **Bella Montessori** staff. It is my responsibility to understand and familiarize myself the Family Handbook and to ask center management for clarification of any policy, procedure or information contained in the **Bella Montessori Family Handbook** that I do not understand.

Recipient Signature

Date

Center Staff Signature

Date

FAMILY ACTIVITIES

We offer a variety of ways for families to participate in the growth and improvement of our program. We encourage families to take an active role.

Family Events: We have several events throughout the year that bring our entire community together. Watch for the announcements!

- Meet the Teacher
- Ice Cream Social
- International Day of Peace
- Movie on the Lawn
- Earth Day Celebration
- Fall Festival

Classroom Activities: Enjoy and help your child's class with these special activities.

- Share a meal with your child
- Chaperone field trips
- Read to children at arrival or pickup
- Volunteer in the classroom
- Donate requested items
- Serve as a parent representative
- Welcome new families
- Contribute to class Pot Luck Meal
- Caregiver Conversations

Family/Parent Workshops: Our menu of family workshops changes annually. Below is a list of workshops we typically offer. We try to offer these in the early evening or on Saturdays. See the monthly calendar for scheduled topics. We welcome requests for workshop topics.

- Brain Based Parenting
- Toilet Training
- Montessori in the Home
- Baby-Led Weaning
- Supporting Your Child in Times of Stress
- The Beauty of Bella
- The Importance of the Three Year Cycle
- Where it Leads, Montessori Elementary