



# Parent Handbook

## 2019-2020

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## **Section 1: Introduction**

### **Welcome**

We are delighted to welcome you to our school! Brilliant Star Montessori School is committed to creating an environment that is peaceful and inviting for children, where their natural drive toward self-development and independence is nurtured, supported and celebrated.

Nestled in a house, we provide a safe and familiar environment for the child, giving them a sense of security and safety. We have a beautiful yard and gardens, allowing unlimited and spontaneous opportunities for learning and exploring outdoors for our classes. Our beautiful school setting indoor and outdoor provides children with a gentle sense of wonder and reverence for the natural world.

Our school is fully equipped with Montessori materials and our classroom Directors are Montessori certified with extensive teaching experience. Our facility also has a kitchen and laundry area where the children will be given opportunities to learn these practical life skills. We have a dedicated room for our music and French programs, as well as a movement room, where we will be able to do all types of physical activities such as stretching, Pilates, dance, fitness, skill development, and games. We also have a library and an art room for creative exploration. We will also be taking the older children on excursions into our 'real' world for positive learning experiences related to their curricular themes, as well as opportunities for skilled instruction in physical activities such as gymnastics, swimming, skating, soccer, volleyball, basketball, canoeing, kayaking and rock climbing.

Children at Brilliant Star Montessori experience joyful learning and social interaction throughout their day. Each child is allowed the freedom to explore and develop at his or her own pace in an atmosphere where learning through helping, working and playing is pleasurable.

## **The Montessori Philosophy:**

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) developed her philosophy of education through careful observation of children and through training in medicine, psychology, and anthropology.

Dr. Montessori discovered that children pass through 'sensitive periods' of development in their early years – when they are particularly receptive to certain stimuli. Maria Montessori described the child's mind between the time of birth and six years of age as the "absorbent mind" stating that during these years, the child has a tremendous ability to learn and assimilate from the world around them. The Montessori approach introduces the child to materials, which the child is interested in and which are specifically designed to develop and enhance their senses. The children are also given the freedom to choose the materials they work with which creates a love and joy for learning.

The Montessori Method aims for the fullest possible development of the whole child. Dr. Montessori believed that children who develop a sense of pride, independence, self-discipline and a belief in their own abilities, would be equipped for life-long learning and success.

## **Vision Statement**

To cultivate a life-long love of learning while developing caring and respectful individuals who positively contribute to the world around them.

## **Mission Statement**

Guided by the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project, we will provide a peaceful and caring environment that nurtures the development of every child and their natural curiosity for learning.

## **Montessori Education:**

Montessori Education is based on the belief that each person carries a love of learning within himself or herself, which, given the proper environment, becomes a motivating force to explore the world. A child who has been encouraged to explore and allowed to self-direct from an early age will carry throughout life the tendency to be an active, creative, and broadly focused learner.

The Montessori classroom is a 'child centered community', which facilitates independent learning and exploration and allows the child to experience a sense of both freedom and discipline. This enables the child to act, grow, and develop according to their inner direction physically, mentally and spiritually. The classroom has a distinct sense of order and beauty. Everything in the classroom has a specific use and can be touched and manipulated by the child. The materials are specifically designed to allow the child to learn through their senses and movements. The atmosphere is encouraging, peaceful, caring and safe. All the activities are specifically purposeful, calming, and creative.

Each child is given guidance and support according to their needs and personal capability. This allows for individually paced development in a non-competitive atmosphere. The classroom ideally will have an equal split of boys and girls varying in age. The grouping of these ages together facilitates cooperative interaction, role modeling, and mutual assistance among the younger and older children.

**The goal for the Montessori child is to establish the foundations for a lifetime of creative and joyful learning.**

## **Casa Program:** **(Preschool and Kindergarten)**

Casa students are of preschool and kindergarten age, 3-6 years old, and form a community of a maximum of 19 children all working together or alongside one another. Equal numbers of each age level (3's, 4's and 5's) create an optimum dynamic for learning. Older children are the examples for and mentors to younger children. Children 3 and 4 attend a half-day program and 5/6 year olds attend a full day.

The Director's role is one primarily of guide/facilitator. The child is taken through a sequence of lessons that are designed to create greater skill and independence. Students, once introduced to the materials, have the freedom to move about and choose their own learning activities leading to increased confidence and satisfaction.

Dr. Maria Montessori discovered that children at this age have extraordinary powers of the mind. She called it 'the absorbent mind'. It is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to absorb knowledge with peak receptivity. The Primary Montessori environment takes advantage of this opportunity by creating a classroom rich with material for learning.

The Casa curriculum integrates several focus areas into a fully comprehensive 3-year program. The prepared environment and the guidance of the Director help the child attain the following goals during their Casa school years:

**Practical Life Skills** — in which they learn to care for themselves and the environment. These help develop a sense of order, coordination, concentration, and independence. Practical life activities such as polishing, buttoning, and pouring strengthen motor skills and concentration.

**Sensorial Skills** — by clarifying and putting names to the senses, colour, texture, weight and shape, a child develops knowledge of the real, which is the basis for later abstraction. Many of these materials are precursors to mathematics and geometry.

**Language Skills** — are developed and encouraged at a time when they are highly receptive to sounds, the alphabet, words and stories, reading and writing.

**Mathematical Skills** — internalizing the concepts of numbers, symbols, sequencing, operations, and memorization of basic facts through manipulation of the Montessori mathematics materials.

**Cultural Skills** — understanding and appreciating different peoples of the world, and a fascination for science in the world around them. The world's geography and people are explored through such materials as maps, flags, water and landforms, and books.

**Integrated Art, Music, and Physical Activities** — the Arts are incorporated into our daily classroom activities. The children have access to a variety of musical instruments daily and will be given specialized music lessons as well. They are given the opportunity to express themselves through dance and are exposed to skilled instruction in physical activities. Various mediums and techniques in art are explored while discovering and learning about local and famous artists. We have also implemented art, music and physical activities into our day to stimulate and energize our bodies.

**French** — is introduced at the Kindergarten level. Kindergarten-aged students receive weekly time for French instruction.

**Field trips** — We will be taking the Casa Kindergarten children on a few field trip excursions during the school year with the Elementary students. These field trips enhance the students' education and provide a real-life experience in the outside community. The Casa students will be prepared for these trips after settling into the school year and displaying the maturity and responsibility for these events.

## **Lower Elementary Community:**

As students move from the Casa program into Lower Elementary, academic and developmental needs change. Students move from the sensorial level to the abstract. A turning towards the intellectual and moral sides of life also occurs at this age. There is a great transformation in the child – wanting to explore the world in which he/she lives, wanting to learn what is right or wrong, and wishing to explore meaningful roles in society. Children of this age want to know how everything came to be, the history of the universe, how our world works and why humans behave as they do. They ask the BIG questions and need real answers.

**Montessori Elementary Education** speaks to a child's imagination to begin a life-long voyage of learning and discovery, and balances the imagination with concrete, hands-on materials that help the child understand the abstract. The children are in the same class for 3-4 years permitting the Director to become very familiar with each child's development and follow his or her progress through the years, allowing each child to progress at his or her own pace. The multi-age class encourages younger children to learn from and emulate the older students, while older students can teach and be role models for younger ones.

**Respect for each Individual's learning process**—The Montessori Elementary classroom continues the experience of individualized learning the children benefit from in the Casa years. Respect for each child and his or her process of exploration is paramount as well as the Elementary community as a whole. Social development blossoms with the large age span, as the spirit of cooperation encourages children to create friendships that have greater depth.

**Curriculum**— Our Elementary curriculum follows the Saskatchewan curriculum within the Montessori method and includes all the traditional subjects – Language, Mathematics, Geometry, Geography, History, Art, Music, Physical Education, Drama, French, and the Sciences. The Montessori curriculum is built around the Five Great Montessori Lessons given each year – the creation of the Universe, the coming of life on Earth, the timeline of humans, the development of language, as well as the development of mathematics and inventions. The aim is to inspire and instill a sense of awe and plant the seeds for further investigations. Students are encouraged to seek understanding of a subject through research, discussion, experiments and hands-on experience.

**A Sense of Independence**—The children have daily and weekly requirements for their work periods. They plan their work time and may work alone or in small groups with their younger or older classmates. They learn to think, make decisions and self-direct their study independently and in groups. They learn to become independent, self-disciplined and responsible for their work each day and are accountable for their time through daily and weekly monitoring, with their Director.

**Interrelated Studies**—The Elementary child has an unquenchable thirst for knowledge. Therefore, a Montessori Elementary education is intended to provide an integration of all areas of study rather than a collection of memorized facts. It gives a systematic framework for studying and

researching all things that interest the children. The core academics of reading, writing and mathematics are refined through applied work that starts from the children's own questions from exploring and learning about the world around them.

**World Citizens**—The children work in an atmosphere of kindness and mutual respect. Learning to serve humanity is an integral part of the curriculum. The Elementary classroom is an environment in which children accept responsibility for themselves, and begin to see themselves as people of integrity and character who have a role to play in the global community.

### **The Classroom Director:**

A well-trained, sensitive and caring adult is the key link between the child and the learning environment. In a Montessori classroom, the term “Director” is used to describe the role of the guiding adult. The Director is specifically trained in observing the child's development and demonstrates the use of materials and assesses when to offer new challenges to each child. She assists the child's progress with attentive care and provides a positive, encouraging atmosphere for the child.

**“The Director’s role is to observe and understand each individual child as they pursue their own path, having the freedom to make their own choices and learning to work alone without interruption. In this way, the child will move through the various stages of independence, while the Director will ‘help the child to act, will, and think for himself’”** (North American Montessori Center, 85).

### **Educational Accreditation:**

Brilliant Star Montessori School is registered as a Qualified Independent School with the Saskatchewan Department of Education and meets all the educational requirements of the Saskatchewan Curriculum and the Montessori Curriculum. Brilliant Star is also a registered Charitable Organization.

**Our Administrator, Lower Elementary Senior Directress and Curriculum Advisor, Ms. Julie** is trained and accredited through the North American Montessori Centre for the Lower Elementary, Casa, and Infant/ Toddler programs. She has also attained a B.Sc. and a B.Ed at the University of Saskatchewan. She has taught in a Montessori classroom as a Director since 2004 and has also taught in the public system for 7 years. Ms. Julie is the founder of Brilliant Star Montessori School and has lead our staffing team as our Administrator since our first year. Ms. Julie has also written Montessori articles for the North American Montessori Training Centre and has many of her pieces published on their website. She has nineteen years of experience coaching children (kayak, canoe, swimming, soccer, volleyball, and track and field). She has coached on a local, provincial, and national level for the sport of sprint canoe and kayak. Ms. Julie has also taught as an instructor at the Ecology Club for Kids for three years in Saskatoon and has received her facilitator training and certification in the Virtues Project, which is a course on Character Building Education for families and schools. Ms. Julie's passion and enthusiasm for the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project guides her in her roles in our school.

**Our Lower Elementary Directress, Ms. Esther**, is thrilled to continue working on the Brilliant Star Montessori team this upcoming year. Ms. Esther grew up and studied in Nigeria where she received her first bachelor degree in Science. Ms. Esther moved to Kuwait and worked as a Science teacher for 10 years in an English school, then migrated to Saskatoon with her family. She has a great wealth of experience working with children of various ages. Ms. Esther has two Montessori Casa diplomas through MACTE and NAMC and was a Directress in a Casa classroom in another Saskatoon Montessori school for five years. She proceeded to further her studies and received her Bachelor of Education degree from the University of Saskatchewan and has also completed her NAMC Montessori Elementary teaching diploma. Ms. Esther believes in the Montessori Method of teaching, nurturing children's curiosity and natural inclination and looks forward to providing learning experiences to children in her classroom. Ms. Esther's hobbies include singing, travelling and bowling.

**Our Senior Casa Directress, Ms. Susan**, is trained and accredited through the North American Montessori Centre for the Casa (preschool and kindergarten) program. She has taught in a Montessori classroom since 2001. Ms. Susan has been an integral part of the creation of Brilliant Star Montessori since its inception as cofounder. She has taken training in the

Virtues Program, which is a course on Character Building Education for families and schools and was also involved in volunteer work with the 'Read Saskatoon' Program for illiteracy. Ms. Susan has Advanced level Ballet training in the 'Royal Academy of Dance' and performed with a professional dance company in Montreal. Ms. Susan has fifteen years experience teaching ballet and jazz, including the opportunity of teaching children dance at an International School in Papua New Guinea for a year. Ms. Susan has also operated and taught in her own school, 'The Asquith Dance Workshop', for 8 years. She has lived on a family farm for the last 33 years and has been actively involved in the farm work and is proactive for wildlife and our environment as a member of the Saskatchewan Wildlife Federation.

**Our Casa Assistant and Before Care Supervisor, Ms. Goya**, has completed her Montessori Assistant training as well as certification for Music and Art in Montessori from The Centre for Guided Montessori Studies. Ms. Goya also received her Bachelor of Arts degree from Tamkang University in Taipei, Taiwan and completed her ECE (Early Childhood Education) Certificate through SIAST. She has worked with children since 2000 in Kindergarten and Elementary schools and was also an EFL teacher overseas. Ms. Goya has also had the opportunity to volunteer at Brunskill Elementary School and Saskatchewan Intercultural Association in Saskatoon. She has been working on Decorative Painting for over 12 years and has acquired a teaching certificate. Ms. Goya has also been a Recreation/Fitness Program Instructor for fall and winter Seasons at the Shaw Centre in Saskatoon. This will be Goya's seventh year on our staff at Brilliant Star Montessori School.

**Our Administrative Assistant, Ms. Vikki**, comes to us with great experience as a School Administrative Assistant. This is Ms. Vikki's third year with Brilliant Star Montessori School and we are thrilled to have her continue on our staffing team again this upcoming year. Ms. Vikki also has 8 years working as an administrative assistant in an Elementary school in Prince Albert. Before joining the Prince Albert school division, she operated a private daycare out of her home gaining years of childcare experience. She has volunteered over the years in various roles with her children's activities and spent 5 years serving as secretary on her community club board. She is married with 2 adult children of her own, both who attend the University of Saskatchewan.

**Our Elementary Music Directress, Ms. Jackie,** has her Bachelor of Music in Music Education along with her Bachelor of Education. She has 6 years of experience working in Montessori Schools in Saskatoon as an educational assistant and a Music directress where she worked directly with toddler, preschool and kindergarten aged children. Outside of the classroom, Ms. Jackie runs her own private violin studio of over 30 children, several toddler and preschool Music classes, and string quartets. She also volunteers her time with Saskatoon Summer Players and Cornerstone Theater to help put on large productions such as *Spamalot*, *Little Women*, *Jesus Christ Superstar*, *Next to Normal*, and *Annie*. Ms. Jackie is looking forward to another great year at Brilliant Star Montessori School.

**Our Elementary French Directress, Ms. Eve,** has her Bachelor of French Education as well a Bachelor of Arts in French. Ms. Eve grew up in a bilingual home, attended French Immersion throughout her school years and studied French at the University of Regina and at Université Laval. She also enjoyed spending some time in France. All these experiences have given Ms. Eve and wealth of understanding of the French language and culture. Ms. Eve is very excited to continue on the staffing team at Brilliant Star Montessori again this year and share her passion with our students.

**Our Elementary Physical Education Directress, Ms. Lynzie,** graduated from the University of Saskatchewan with a B.Sc. majoring in Kinesiology with Great Distinction. Through the years, she has been involved with physical activity programs for children of varying ages and abilities. Some of these programs include PAAL (Physical Activity for Active Living), Special Olympics and teaching dance for 7 years. She has taken training through "The National Coaching Certification Program" and "Sports Medicine and Science Council of Saskatchewan" for multi-sport training and safety certifications. Ms. Lynzie has been the Elementary Physical Education Instructor at our school for two years. She is an energetic individual who is passionate about a healthy lifestyle and having fun through physical activity. She is overjoyed to be returning to the Brilliant Star Montessori school community again this fall.

## **Organizational Structure**

**Founding Members:** Both Ms. Julie and Ms. Susan are the founding members of our school and worked alongside each other to build our school to what it is today. Together with the Montessori philosophy and The Virtues Project, they created the vision and foundation of our school.

Brilliant Star Montessori School is a registered Charitable Organization. The corporation has six Board of Directors: Julie Davidsen, Susan Pezderic, Jason Danielson, Bev Pongracz, and Loch Willy.

**Chairperson:**

Susan Pezderic  
Box 202  
Grandora, SK.  
S0K 1V0

**Secretary:**

Bev Pongracz  
1242 Beechmont View Cres.  
Saskatoon, SK.  
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**Administrator:**

Julie Davidsen  
1722 Pohorecky Rise  
Saskatoon, SK.  
S7W 0J1

**Executive Member:**

Loch Willy  
1203 Willowgrove Court  
Saskatoon, SK.  
S7W 0A7

**Executive Member:**

Jason Danielson  
714 Wright  
Saskatoon, SK.  
S7N 4T7

Board meetings are held periodically throughout the year should you like to submit any necessary questions, comments, or suggestions to the board. Parents are encouraged to be involved in our school by joining the Star Community Council and by serving as volunteers for school functions throughout the year.

**The primary functions of the Board** are 1) to establish the school's institutional mission and define the fundamental objectives and core values, 2) to establish policies under which the school will operate, 3) to advise the school administrator who will translate the school's mission and objectives into day-to-day operation, 4) to oversee the on-going operation of the school within board policy and government regulations, and 5) to look to the future and plan for long-term institutional growth and development.

### **Goals and Objectives:**

As previously stated, the goal for the Montessori child is to establish the foundations for a lifetime of creative and joyful learning. Our Montessori School will strive to provide a stimulating and carefully planned environment where children can develop within themselves the foundational skills and attitudes essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning. Our school will further strive to assist the child to attain the following:

- A positive attitude towards school and learning
- Respect for themselves, others, and the environment
- Self-discipline and independence within the context of the community
- A high degree of self-esteem
- Habits of concentration, initiative, and perseverance
- A sense of teamwork
- Environmental and peaceful thinking as world citizens
- Their development as a whole person, mentally, emotionally, and physically

### **Star Community Builders**

The Star Community Builders is a group comprised of Brilliant Star Montessori parents, Directors, board representatives, interested students, and guardians. Each member of our school community is encouraged to become a Star Community Builder. The mandate of this group is to build community within our school and provide fundraising opportunities to enhance the programming and beautification of our school.

## **Section 2: Morning and Afternoon Procedures**

### **School Hours:**

Brilliant Star Montessori School Casa and Elementary programs begin at 8:45 a.m. and 12:45 p.m. respectively. The school day will run until 3:30 p.m. All students are due in class by 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. respectively and all full day students will be expected to stay until class is dismissed. It is a courtesy to students and staff to **arrive quietly and on time. At 8:45, students begin working in both classrooms and a loud entry way is very distracting to them.** Morning class and circles begin at 9:00 am, so the Directors are not available after this time. **Due to a small entry space, we prefer that drop off is quick.** If you need to speak with a Director in the morning, we appreciate short messages. If you need to discuss something at length with a Director, please set up an appointment or speak with them at dismissal time.

**The school cannot be responsible for students who arrive at school earlier than 8:45 a.m. and stay later than 3:40 p.m. unless they are enrolled in the Extended Care Program.**

**Picking your child up early:** Naturally, there will be occasions where you will need to take your child out of school early for a doctor's appointment or similar obligation. To ensure that your child will be ready, please speak to the Directors to let them know the time that you will be picking him or her up with sufficient and reasonable notice.

**Saying Good-bye: Tips For Casa Parents On Separation:** Initially, it can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year. We have found that a short and positive good-bye is easiest for the child. We do not recommend parents bringing their child into the classroom. The prolonged good-bye often makes the separation more difficult. Feel free to call the school for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well.

To eliminate congestion in our small entry space, we would like parents to walk their child(ren) to the door, but say their good-byes before the child enters, as we need to keep the back door entry space clear for

students. A quick farewell for parents and child outside is best. It is fine to come in however, if you have any concerns or messages and need to speak with a staff member in the morning. **New or younger students may also need their parent to walk them into the entry initially,** but we encourage you to help foster their independence as they are ready by saying goodbyes outside the door.

## **Parking**

As a courtesy to our neighbours, we would appreciate if you could **park along our school property** either along Gray Ave. or Dunlop St. and not in front of any neighbour's property if at all possible. Thank you for your understanding and cooperation in this matter. Our neighbours have also asked that you not turn around in their driveway, so we ask you to please respect these wishes. During rezoning, we agreed with the neighbourhood to have quick drop off and pick up times so that there is not limited parking for others. We appreciate your cooperation.

## **Morning and Afternoon Arrivals**

Parents should accompany their child(ren) to the door and say their good-byes outside before the student enters the school. **Please ensure your child is wearing a coat and the necessary winter gear to the door in inclement weather.**

**For the protection and safety of each child, you must escort your child to the back school door and release them into our care. Please do not allow children to cross the roads unattended. Please have them hold your hand and cross safely to the school property. Please ensure the gate is closed and latched behind you each time you enter or leave the yard.**

As a courtesy to all families and to keep traffic moving in regards to parking, quick drop-offs are appreciated. We will have a designated staff member near the back door from 8:45-9:00 a.m. to greet students and deliver any messages to staff members. Any student arriving before 8:45 a.m., will be taken to the extra care room.

**School doors will be locked from 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you should need to enter the school during these times, please call or ring the doorbell.**

### **Morning Arrival:**

Students may be brought to school between 8:45 and 9:00 a.m. Any child that must be dropped off before 8:45 a.m., will be taken to the Extended Care morning program. There will be a nominal charge for this service.

### **Afternoon Arrival**

Parents may bring their Afternoon half day students to school **between 12:45 and 1:00 p.m.**

### **Dismissal**

Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will only release your child to the people that you have specifically indicated on your registration form that every family completes annually. **We must receive a note, or in an emergency, a phone call, from you in order to release your child to someone not on your list.** This rule also applies to students going home with school friends as well.

**We require a photograph of anyone whom you've given permission to pick up your child if he or she is not familiar to our staff. This includes emergency contacts. Please make sure all of your car-pool drivers are listed on your registration form.**

**All students will be dismissed from the back yard each day- weather permitting.**

### **Dismissal for Morning Half-Day Students:**

Casa students who only stay for the morning session will be dismissed from the back playground at 11:30 a.m. **We expect prompt pick-up at 11:30 a.m.** The Director will be going back inside at 11:35 to supervise lunch with the full-day children. The Director is unable to stay outside to supervise the children at this time, so we ask for your cooperation for a quick pick up.

**This is not an outside playtime for children. When we shake the student's hand at dismissal, we are dismissing them to leave in your care.**

**There will be a significant charge of \$2 per minute past 11:40 a.m. if you have not picked up your child. Any child present on school property after 11:40 (with a parent present or not) will be charged this fee.** It is a courtesy to all staff and children to ensure you are on time for pick-up. When parents are late, it worries the children. **Please ensure the gate is closed and latched each time you enter or leave the yard.**

**Dismissal for all Afternoon and Full-Day Students:**

The normal school day will end at 3:30 p.m. for all full-day students.

**This is not an outside playtime for children. When we shake the student's hand at dismissal, we are dismissing them to leave in your care.**

**All students who stay after 3:40 (parent present or not), will be charged extra care fees. When we shake the student's hand at dismissal, we are dismissing them into your care from our care or we are dismissing them into Extra Care.** Parents who have not picked up their child(ren) by 3:40 p.m., will have to pick them up from the Extended Care Program. In such cases, the parents will be charged a nominal fee for this after-school care.

**After School Extended Care ends at 5:00 pm. There will be a significant charge of \$2 per minute past 5:00 p.m. if you have not picked up your child. If you know you will be late, please call the school extra care line at 361-7827.**

The school cannot be responsible for students after 3:40 p.m. unless they are enrolled in the Extended Care Program or are participating in one of the after-school private music lessons.

**As a courtesy to all families and to keep traffic moving, quick pick-up times are appreciated.**

Please encourage your child to use the Montessori farewell by shaking their Director's hand or the Extra Care supervisor's hand and saying good-bye.

**Please ensure the gate is closed and latched behind you as you enter and leave the yard.**

## **Attendance**

All Brilliant Star Montessori students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving on time by 9:00 a.m. each school day.

It is a courtesy to students and staff to arrive **quietly and on time**. **By 8:45, students are already working in both classrooms and a loud entry way is very distracting to them.** Morning class and circles begin at 9:00a.m., so the Directors are not available after this time. Due to a small entry space, we prefer that drop off is quick and goodbyes are said outside the back door. If you need to speak with a Director in the morning, we appreciate short messages. If you need to discuss something at length with a Director, please set up an appointment or speak with them at dismissal time or send a text to the in-school phone 306-361-STAR (7827) or an email to the school email address: brilliantstarmontessori@gmail.com

Even though Brilliant Star is less formal and more flexible than many schools, consistent attendance and prompt arrival are still essential. Students are expected to be in class by 9:00 a.m. or 1:00 p.m. respectively and to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning or afternoon session in the case of younger students enrolled for the half- day option).

Irregular attendance is disruptive to a child's education. Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, but they are especially important for Casa students.

We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is arriving late more than three times in a month, we will need to meet to work out a solution.

**School doors will be locked from 9:10 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you should need to enter the school during these times, please call or ring the doorbell.**

One of the nice things about Brilliant Star Montessori is that we understand that every once in a while, we all love to take a little vacation from school. While we are fairly understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences to a minimum. Please notify the school with either a phone call, note or email with as much advance warning as possible to prepare for your child's absence.

Although our program is individualized, it still depends upon consistency and continuous progress. Every time a child misses school for whatever reason, there is a period of readjustment as he or she tries to get back into the routine of his/her work. The longer the absence, or when a child consistently misses a day or two of school here and a day or two there, the more detrimental it becomes to his/her educational development.

Whenever your child needs to be excused early from school, please speak to the Directors indicating the nature of the absence and the time when you will want them to be excused from class.

### **Extended Care Program:**

We offer an on-site before and after care program to assist our families who require extended care for their children. Extended Care hours are from 7:45 a.m. - 8:45 a.m. and 3:30 p.m. - 5:00 p.m. The Extended Care Program is available for our children enrolled in the Casa and Elementary Programs. While scheduling extra care, please keep in mind that extended school hours can make for a long day for young children and the purpose of this program is to assist working families.

**Please keep in mind that to maintain our student/staff ratios in the Extended Care Program, we cannot always accommodate unexpected students. Parents need to plan ahead and schedule their child in the Extended Care Program. Parents who are not signed up for the Extended Care Program need to contact the school ahead of time to ask if the staff can accommodate their child. Staff may not be answering the phone during school hours, but will check messages before and after school, and during the lunch break. We ask for your consideration to plan ahead as best you can.**

1. **Our staff cannot come in earlier, nor remain later. Please plan to arrive within these time limits.**
2. The Extended Care Program opens at 7:45 a.m. Any students not enrolled in the Extended Care Program who arrive at school before 8:45 a.m., will go to the Extended Care room. There will be a charge for this service.

3. The After School Extended Care Program begins at 3:40 p.m. and closes at 5:00 p.m. Any student not picked up by 3:40 p.m. will be taken to the Extended Care Program. There will be a charge for this service.
4. The After School Extended Care Program ends at 5:00 p.m., at which time Brilliant Star Montessori closes for the day. **It is essential that all children be picked up by this time.** A \$2 / minute late fee will be assessed should any child not be picked up by 5:00 p.m. **Please show consideration to the Extended Care staff member who also leaves at 5:00 p.m. by arriving on time.**
5. Please drop off and pick up your child from the school door. Please make contact with the staff member supervising your child before taking him/her out of the school. All children must be dismissed from the Extended Care Program supervisor.
6. Please don't forget that we cannot allow your child to leave the school with anyone who is not on your registration form unless you give your written permission or a phone call.
7. When arriving and picking up from Extra Care, please ring the doorbell instead of knocking, as we cannot always hear knocking.

### **Cold Weather Policy**

**School Closure:** If it is necessary to close the school due to temperature or weather conditions, it will be announced on our school answering machine and we will do our best to notify the local radio stations. Brilliant Star Montessori School makes this decision independently of the Saskatoon Public School system. We will try our best to announce closings by 7:00 a.m.

**Recess Policy:** When the combined temperature and wind chill is -27 degrees, we do not go outside for recess.

When the combined temperature and wind chill is between -22 and -26 degrees, the staff on duty will make an informed decision, as to whether we go outside. When the combined temperature and wind chill is above -22 degrees, we will go outside for recess and dismissal. **Please send your child prepared to go outside each day!**

If you do not want your child to go outside at recess or dismissal times, please take your child home during these times. Students may not stay in the classrooms during these times, as there is no supervision. There will be no exceptions. If your child is too sick to go outside, then they are too sick to be at school. Thank you for your understanding in this matter!

## **Section 3: Everyday Life at Brilliant Star Montessori**

### **Starting School**

When starting School, many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected.

Parents and students will be invited to our Welcome Celebration before all students start school, so that children can visit the classroom, meet their new Directors and feel comfortable in our school before we start. Returning Elementary students may be invited to help with preparations and setting up their classrooms before the Welcome Celebration.

On the first day of school, please don't linger too long in the class or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is very important to reassure your child where you will be during the day, and by what time you will pick them up. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. The Directors are wonderful in helping children through these situations. Students who are having a hard time saying good-bye to mom or dad are usually quite fine and adjusted within a few minutes of mom and dad leaving.

### **Dress Code**

Students are expected to dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable, and appropriate for school. Younger children should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves (For example: pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc.). Young children usually cannot manage the shoulder fasteners found on overalls, difficult buttons, nor shoelaces.

Please do not allow your child to come to school wearing:

- Clothing with holes or tears
- Outfits with bare midriffs or halter tops (tops and bottoms must generously meet)
- Pocket chains or bandanas
- Hats inside the school buildings

- Fitbits nor smart watches
- Clothing imprinted with commercial images such as cartoon characters, rock bands, violent or inappropriate pictures or words such as skulls and cross bones nor weapons (these are very distracting to students' learning)
- Clothing with flip sequins (these are very distracting to students' learning and hard for students to understand personal boundaries on another child)
- Short skirts, shorts, nor dresses – shorts, skirts and dresses should fall below the fingertips when hands are held at the child's side
- If your daughter prefers to wear skirts or dresses, please have her wear bloomers, shorts, or leggings under them as children do a lot of work sitting in various positions on the floor.

### **Shoes**

Please do not allow your child to come to school wearing:

- Cowboy boots
- Shoes with cleats
- Shoes with laces unless they can confidently tie them by themselves
- Open-toed shoes, backless sandals nor flip-flops
- Shoes with lights (these are very distracting to students' learning)

**Note:** All students must wear socks to school

**All students must bring a pair of inside running shoes to use inside the gym. We ask that you send runners with non-marking soles to use at school please. Each child will also need a pair of slippers to use inside the school each day. Please send a plain pair of slippers that are not flip-flops and do not have cartoon characters on them. Moccasins work very well. Please ensure that slippers fit to their proper foot size and have a back. Please label all footwear.**

### **What all Students Need at School**

- An extra set of clothing (pants, shirt, underwear, socks) to be kept at school during the year (Please bring these spare clothes in a large Ziploc bag labeled with your child's name on the outside and all items labeled

inside)

- **For students who stay for lunch:** An insulated lunch box with a thermos (for hot lunches when appropriate) that the child can open. Please include a reusable freezer block to keep perishables fresh.
- A medium-sized **plain** cup **with their name on** it for Casa students (please do not send a cup with a straw nor a lid on it). A water bottle for Elementary students with their name on it (Elementary students will be asked to take their water bottles home each day to wash).
- A pair of inside non-marking soled running shoes to use inside the gym (labeled with their name). **Please only send tie up shoes only if they are able to tie them successfully on their own please.**
- A pair of slippers to use inside the school each day. Please send a **plain** pair of slippers that are not flip-flops and do not have cartoon characters on them. Please do not send slippers with bobbly parts on them. Moccasins work very well. **Please ensure that slippers fit to their proper foot size and have a back.**
- A functional backpack to take their work home each day. Please do not send backpacks with wheels on them, nor cartoon characters, nor logos that are not peaceful. These should fit an 8 ½ x 11 paper and still be able to fit a pair of snow pants in them; **please try to find a backpack that is the minimum size needed to fit these items so that it is not too large for your child).**

All students pay a supply fee, which covers all their school materials that they will need during the year.

There will be a few costs for optional activities, which are not covered in tuition, such as book club orders, hot lunches, school pictures, private music lessons, or special extra-curricular activities.

**Toys** -Toys or stuffed animals should not be brought to school (even in or on backpacks). They are most often lost, fought over, or broken.

## **Sharing**

**Casa students** are invited to bring a 'News Day item' with them to school on their snack day. They are encouraged to bring in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made, their favourite book, or a theme related item. Again, please do not send toys nor stuffed animals for their news day items. **Elementary students** may have a scheduled sharing day once each month. Elementary students are also encouraged to bring in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, an instrument, something they have made, or their favourite book.

**While we are studying a theme at school, we would love for you to share any related items or books you may have from home any time you can bring one.**

## **Textbooks**

The Montessori curriculum is based on hands on materials and research, rather than the traditional dependence on simplistic textbooks as the primary focus of learning. Much of our students' work in school involves the use of hands-on materials that remain in the classroom or readings in a wide range of reference or source books from the school, public libraries and their individual notebooks.

Naturally, it is essential that the children respect and take care of their books. Students are responsible for lost or damaged schoolbooks or library books. If a schoolbook has been damaged or lost, we ask you replace that book or donate \$20 towards our library.

## **Lost and Found**

A lost and found area is located in the entry at the school. Please come in and check the lost and found should you need to. Please make sure you label your child's clothing and outdoor gear to help in this matter.

## **Lunch**

Brilliant Star Montessori students staying for a full day bring their lunch to school every day in a clearly labeled lunch-box or lunch bag. Please try to

send a lunch kit that does not have cartoon characters nor logos that are not peaceful.

The Brilliant Star Montessori community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness education program. Lunch is a very important part of your child's school day, and of his/her wellness education as well, and we need to count on you to work with your child to teach them about health and nutrition.

Obviously, we all want to pack lunches that our children will eat. The challenge is to help them discover that wholesome, sugar-free foods can taste even better than junk food and don't have the negative effects on our bodies.

We encourage parents to be aware of the food that they pack for their children's snacks/lunches and how they can impact learning. Please be mindful and aware of the following ingredients when packing lunches:

- High levels of sugar (listed in the first three ingredients)
- Hydrogenated oils (also includes shortening)
- Foods containing artificial flavouring or colouring

We discuss nutrition with the students throughout the year and we hope that we can contribute to a healthy lifestyle.

With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters, slicing up fresh fruit, and preparing bite sized slices of cheese.

**We are committed to being a healthy environment; we will not allow sugary items to be eaten during the school day. Please do NOT send your child with sugary desserts nor drinks, pop, nor chocolate milk in their lunches! Any product deemed to be 'sugary', will not be consumed at school and will be sent home.**

Some examples of sugary desserts that are not to be sent to school may include:

Cookies, cakes, pudding, Jell-O, candies, fruit snacks that are not 100% real fruit, nor **any** item with chocolate.

**In our efforts to encourage students to drink more water each day and reduce our plastic consumption, we are only allowing water at school. Please do not send juice nor milk drinks to school. Casa students will have re-usable cups to fill with water in their classroom and Elementary students are asked to bring refillable water bottles each day.**

**Brilliant Star Montessori is a NUT FREE school. Please do not bring ANY nuts nor nut products to school in snacks nor in lunches. Any product not deemed to be nut free, may not be consumed at school and will be sent home with a note.**

### **Litterless Lunches**

Keeping in mind our environment, our school promotes litterless lunches. We encourage all Double session, Kindergarten and Elementary students to pack their lunch/snacks in re-useable containers/packages.

We would like the students to be aware of how garbage can be reduced and how they can help keep our environment clean and healthy. We have a composting program and promote recycling whenever possible.

At our school, we provide the children with cold filtered water to drink. They will be able to pour themselves fresh water to drink in the classroom, as they need. We encourage the children to drink water while at school. The Elementary students need to bring a large water bottle each day to help keep them hydrated.

We recommend lunch boxes with cool packs. All uneaten food, which can be contained, will be sent home. You'll want to monitor your children's lunch boxes to see what they like and dislike, and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. Older children often are very excited to prepare or help with preparing their lunches! We appreciate your care in preparing a good lunch for your child(ren).

**Casa students have lunch at 11:30 a.m. and go outside for recess from 12:30 – 1:00 p.m. Elementary students have lunch at 12:00 and go outside for recess from 12:30 – 1:00 p.m. Our afternoon session begins at 1:00 p.m.**

## **Snacks**

**Casa students** have nutritional snacks in the mornings and afternoons. Parents provide **3 or more washed and cut fruits and vegetables** for the child's class every few weeks. Please wash and cut the fruit and vegetables to child size pieces. These can be brought on a tray or in Ziplocs. Please consult the snack calendar for your snack dates. The classroom Director will give you more information at the beginning of the year.

**In keeping with our healthy environment and fueling our bodies with nutritious foods, we only serve raw fruits and vegetables for our snacks.**

**Brilliant Star Montessori is a NUT FREE school. Please do not bring ANY nuts nor nut products to school for snacks, or in snack trays.**

**Special Dietary Restrictions:** Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the Directors if your child should avoid certain foods. This will be taken into account in planning snacks or on days when the class does some cooking together. Children with excessive allergies may be asked to bring in their own snacks for their own safety.

**Elementary Students** have a morning and afternoon snack as needed. They take a healthy snack from their lunch as they need in the morning and afternoon. Please ensure that they have enough in their lunches for their full day. Elementary students need to bring a water bottle each day to keep them hydrated throughout the day.

We also have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, muffins, etc.

## **Field Trips**

Kindergarten and Elementary classes will periodically take field trips to local points of interest during the year. Field trips are planned to coordinate with subjects being studied by a class or take advantage of special community events. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents often help out with supervision and are welcome to join the class in these activities. If you are interested, please speak with your child's Director. Please see the guidelines for School volunteers below.

Parents will always be notified of any trips scheduled for your child's class. Students are always well supervised on field trips. A signature signed on the registration form at the beginning of the school year will cover all school field trips. We will always notify you in advance of each field trip.

Expenses for field trips are covered in the Activity fees. The Year-end Elementary overnight field trip is not covered in the activity fee and will be covered by parents.

## **Parent Volunteers**

**School volunteers must have a completed Criminal Records Check done and handed in to the school prior to volunteering with our school. We strongly suggest that parents have new criminal records checks done at the beginning of each school year.** This helps parents to be prepared to volunteer when field trips come up throughout the year and also makes our records easier if everyone has these done at the start of each year.

We ask that you do not bring any younger siblings along when you attend a field trip.

We ask our School volunteers to refrain from bringing hot beverages on field trips for the children's safety. We will send a list of ways you can help with supervision and safety on the field trip in advance for you to read when volunteering.

## **Birthdays, a Celebration of Life**

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends.

In the **Casa classroom**, we have a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the birthday child's life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each year of his/her life for this special day. It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honour of your child's birthday. Fruit or vegetables are designated for these times. Parents and family members are invited to attend this special occasion. The Casa Director will discuss birthday circles with parents 2-3 weeks prior to your child's birthday.

**Elementary students** celebrate birthdays with a special Virtues birthday

circle where each student acknowledges a virtue they appreciate in the birthday child and present the birthday child with a written virtue acknowledgement. It is nice to send in a special snack in honour of your child's birthday. Fruit or vegetables are designated for these times. Parents and family members are invited to attend this special occasion.

In both the Casa and Elementary birthday circles, the birthday child may wish to present the class with a small classroom gift in honour of the occasion. This is a means to enhance the school environment and it also enables the birthday child to experience the pleasure and value of giving rather than just receiving. Regarding choice of books or gifts, parents are encouraged to consult their classroom Director. **Please do NOT send treat bags or toys for the children.**

**Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. They should be sent through the mail. You will find the addresses of Brilliant Star Montessori families in the family Directory.**

## **Celebrations**

All classes emphasize celebrations during the course of the year; however, each class may add its own special touch on each celebration. We respect all cultures and religions in our school. We welcome families to share their cultural celebrations if they care to. Some of the annual traditions we may celebrate include:

- **Welcome Celebration:** A reception is held for all families just before school reopens. This gives parents and students an opportunity to meet the faculty, administration, board, and other parents and to view their classrooms.
- **International Children's Festival:** Traditionally held in late October, the school celebrates our diverse cultural backgrounds and the concept of a peaceful world. Ceremonies traditionally include a special assembly, music and dance. Students may dress in traditional clothing that represents either one branch of their family's roots or a cultural tradition that they admire.
- **Thanksgiving:** A time for reflection, giving thanks, and community service.
- **Remembrance Day:** A time to discuss how we can solve problems or conflicts in peaceful ways.

- **Showcase:** In early February, we invite parents to a beautiful music presentation from the students as well as showcase the Elementary students' research projects. This has traditionally been held at The Albert Community Centre.

- **Valentine's Day:** A time to discuss love and friendship.

- **Earth Day:** Celebrating the coming of spring and the importance of stewardship for the Earth, the students become involved in meaningful environmental studies and projects and discuss ways they can care for our Earth.

- **Elimination of Racial Discrimination Day:** On March 21<sup>st</sup>, students will participate in discussing the importance of this day and how our actions and choices can help in the elimination of racial discrimination.

- **Science Fair:** In early June, Elementary students create Science experiments to share with Casa students, parents, and guests.

- **Picnic Day:** On our last school day together, all students who regularly stay for lunch enjoy a picnic lunch outside together (weather permitting).

**Note: As a school, we will not celebrate Halloween. Please do not send children in costumes nor send candy to school.**

## **Section 4: Student Health**

### **When your child is ill**

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call or text the in-school phone 361-STAR (7827) before 8:45 a.m. to let us know that they will be absent, so that we don't worry. Please call or text the

Students with infectious diseases, such as chicken pox, or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the school know your child's doctor's diagnosis as soon as possible.

In the case of a common cold, the student should remain at home as long as a fever is present, or if there is a sore throat, eye infection, or severe nasal excretions. Students with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, or undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also.

**The student must wait 24 hours before returning to school if they have experienced vomiting, fever, diarrhea or an infection.**

**If your child has a rash or unknown skin rash, they may not return to the school until they have seen a doctor to determine if it is infectious. Infectious rashes must be healed (scabbed over) before they return to school. They may not be at the school while the rash is still open. If your child has experienced either a contagious or non-contagious rash, parents are to speak with the Director before they return to school to indicate the doctor's diagnosis. Any student will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while he or she is at school.**

### **If your child gets sick at school**

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will contact you to arrange for him/her to be picked up right away. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, so you may want to make arrangements with a friend or relative in advance for these emergencies.

**Remember:** Because colds, flu's, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school

if he/she has a fever, nausea, or any other symptoms of illness.

Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, he is probably too ill to be at school.

## **Medical Updates**

If your child has any health issues, allergies or has been introduced to new medication, it is important to inform the Director of these new situations. We prefer you speak directly with the Director on these issues and keep them informed.

## **Emergency Care**

All our permanent staff are trained in First Aid and CPR. In the event of any situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your emergency information on your registration form up-to-date. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room at a Saskatoon Hospital. Naturally, we will continue our effort to contact you.

**Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up to date and inform the school immediately if there are any changes in your address or phone number during the academic year.**

## **Medication**

At Brilliant Star Montessori School, we do not administer medication to students.

Please do not send to school any medication with your child, including aspirin, cough medicines, puffers or other over-the-counter drugs in their

backpacks, etc. These medications present a safety issue for other students.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that doses are done during hours when the student is at home (before school and evenings).

When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day.

Please do not send vitamins, cough medicine, ointments or any type of over the counter medicine to school. It is particularly dangerous to send these in lunch boxes, since a child may inadvertently share these with other children.

We cannot assume responsibility for giving medicine for several reasons. First, our Directors are busy looking out for the welfare of all the children. It is too easy to become busy with the group and forget to give the medication at the proper time. Also for the safety of all the children, we prefer not to have medication in the classroom.

If this policy presents an extreme hardship to your child, please contact the school and we will try to accommodate your needs. In extreme situations, authorization may be granted from the administrator to leave medication at the school. Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in a safe place.

**Our preference for a student requiring an epi-pen is for them to wear their epi-pen on them at all times in a securely fastened fanny pack. This is for their safety! We require that 2 current epi-pens are provided to the school in the pack, for us to ensure the child's safety should we have to await EMS. We also ask that emergency information and emergency care be written down and placed inside the pack. Parents are responsible for ensuring the pack is labeled, complete and pens have not expired.**

## **Safe Schools Plan: Creating Cultures and Climate of Safety During Emergencies:**

The Administrator and Directors will provide leadership during emergencies to provide safety, maintain order, and coordinate with outside safety personnel. Staff will work together to ensure students enter their parent/guardian's care safely as soon as possible.

**Media Consideration:** When a Safe Schools Plan is in effect, the Administrator is the sole spokesperson for the school and will provide brief, accurate information keeping in mind to respect the privacy of affected individuals.

### **During a Critical Incident:**

- The Administrator will appoint a Record Keeper to track our responses and organize communication with parents/guardians.
- The Administrator will carry out the role of team leader or appoint a Senior Directress to take on this role or part of the role as needed.
- The Team Leader will communicate as the liaison with police, staff, students, community and services as needed and with the Ministry of Education contact (Kevin Gable).

## **Section 6: Academic Policies**

### **Class Projects, Assignments and Homework in the Elementary Classroom**

Brilliant Star may assign some at home projects beginning in the first grade; not page after page of busywork; but meaningful, interesting assignments that expand on the topics that the children are pursuing in class and which invite parents and children to work together.

It is important to encourage the child to complete these assignments to develop self-motivation and self-discipline to complete assignments. These are important skills for them to learn and develop for later years.

We try to challenge children to think, explore, and pursue tangible projects that give them a sense of satisfaction. At home projects are intended to afford students the opportunity to practice and reinforce skills introduced in the classroom. Moreover, there is a certain degree of self-discipline that can be developed within the growing child through the process of completing assignments independently.

Depending on the child's level, at home projects normally involve some reading, research, writing, and something tangible to accomplish. Some examples of home assignments are: book reports, research assignments, Science Fair projects, poetry, or investigations. The children will have an assigned period of time to complete the project. Students may share their findings in many different ways to the class.

When possible, the Directors build in opportunities for children to choose among several alternative assignments.

Homework should never become a battleground between adult and child. One of our goals as parents and Directors should be to help the children learn how to get organized, budget time, and follow through until the work is completed. Ideally home assignments and projects will give parents and children a pleasant opportunity to work together on projects that give both parent and child a sense of accomplishment. They are intended to enrich and extend the curriculum.

**Elementary Students will have a weekly spelling test on the last day of the week. We ask parents to practice these words with their child throughout**

**the week. This will ensure confidence on the test day as well as develop these important study skills.**

**Occasionally, if the child is not completing their required work at school, we may send some work home to be completed. This usually helps to gently remind the student of the expectations during school work times.**

### **Elementary Day-planners**

**Day-planners:** Elementary students each have their own day-planner. They are for writing upcoming projects, activities, field trips, special events and recording their weekly Spelling words. We ask that each Monday evening, a parent look it over. Day-planners also have a reading log at the end of the planner to record their reading time.

**Year-End Keepsakes:** Even though young children tend to be much more interested in the process of work than in tangible products, even four and five year-olds tend to produce enough to create an impressive collection as the months go by.

As an end of year activity, you could help your child assemble his/her best work from the year into a permanent portfolio binder. You may want to add photographs that you've taken of your child and his friends and Directors over the year, some poetry, or a little note to your child reminding him of the high points of the year.

### **Parent Observation and Parent/Director Interviews**

It is very important for Directors and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the Director's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive time when the Directors are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. **Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum.** If you must speak with a Director in the morning, please make communication brief or make arrangements to speak with them at another time. Otherwise, you can correspond via a text or note and the Directors will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

**December:** There are Parent / Director Interviews and Observations for

Casa Kindergarten and Elementary students and Observations only for Casa Half Day and Double Session students.

**April:** There are Parent / Director Interviews and Observations for Casa Kindergarten and Elementary students and Observations only for Casa Half Day and Double Session students.

Additional conferences can be scheduled upon request.

**Parent Director Interviews:** These are times for parents and Directors to talk about the child's progress in a private room while the children are in the classroom with the assistants.

**Parent Observations:** Parent observations occur on the Interview days. Parents are invited into the classroom and their child may tour them through the classroom and show them some of their favourite activities. This is an exciting time for the child to share with their parents what they have been working on. To be able to focus on your child, we prefer if younger siblings did not attend.

**For Kindergarten and Elementary students:** Once the parents have had a chance to observe in the classroom, the parents and the Director will leave to go to another room for their interview. The child may stay in the classroom with an assistant supervisor during this time.

## **Evaluation of Student Progress**

Brilliant Star's Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the Directors maintain careful records of each student's academic progress.

Because Montessori Schools do not compare students against an arbitrary standard or the performance of their classmates, we do not use familiar letter grades. In Casa, we will send home a written narrative report at the end of the year in June for the Full Day Kindergarten students to review the children's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

In Elementary, we send home three written assessments throughout the year to review the child's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their growth.

## **Standardized Tests**

Brilliant Star students may take standardized tests from the third grade on up. There will be a \$300 fee to cover the cost of these tests and scoring. We hire additional staff to come in during these times to help with supervision and test administering. If you wish to have your child take these tests, please speak with the Elementary Director. We do not place too much emphasis on these tests as a measure of our individual student's progress. After working with the same children for three years, carefully observing their work, our Directors come to know far more about our students' progress than can be revealed on any paper and pencil test.

In our culture, test-taking skills are practical life lessons that children need to master sooner or later. After the students take the tests, we go over the answers with them so they have the opportunity to see how they did. We summarize the students' scores and will report them to the parents. We will be happy to go over your child's individual scores should you like to schedule a conference. All Elementary students will take Montessori tests and quizzes on the concepts and skills that they have been studying. We use these as a feedback tool, at times indicating that a student needs a new lesson or more practice, rather than as a needless competition between children for grades.

## **Promotion from One Level to the Next**

Students at Brilliant Star Montessori do not follow a preset curriculum for each grade level. They proceed at their own pace. As a result, the concept that a child is a first, second, or fourth grader, doesn't have the same meaning as it would in a traditional school.

At the same time, we realize that children in our culture are accustomed to referring to themselves by their grade level.

Brilliant Star has established expectations for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While they may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of skills and knowledge that we expect most Montessori students to display.

**Students will normally be promoted from Casa to Elementary or one grade level to the next at the end of the school year if they have accomplished the goals and norms that we have established.**

Advancement to the next class level (for example from Casa to the Lower

Elementary level) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional, and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits, and maturity. We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

**Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.**

### **Privacy of Student Files**

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Brilliant Star Montessori staff member, and if they disagree with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments.

Officials of the Department of Education may have the right to review student files without the parents' or guardians' permission. However, with a written court order, other government officials may inspect the contents of a student's file without the permission of the student or parent/guardian. In such a case, the school will inform the student and their family in writing that such an inspection has been requested or made.

A copy of the student's file may be sent to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician, if requested in writing by the parent(s), guardian(s), or student if he/she has attained the age of majority, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

## Section 7: Ground Rules

### Brilliant Star Montessori's Fundamental Ground Rules

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we assume that every person deserves respect. Brilliant Star Montessori expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, Directors, and staff.

The goal of all Montessori Education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, rather than to assume that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; and to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

When anyone at Brilliant Star Montessori finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution.

We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, is allowed at Brilliant Star Montessori. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage.

**Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion, endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the administrator.**

We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school's values and character. All students are expected to adhere and respect them to protect one another.

Our ground rules are essentially the same at every level of the school, although the language and emphasis changes somewhat for the older student. This is how we explain them to younger students.

**Please review these rules with your child:**

- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration.
- Please respect each other's personal belongings and ask the owner's permission before touching it. If you accidentally lose or break something, please let them know and please replace it.
- Everyone has the right to feel safe and secure. Please use your tact and gentleness when discussing hurt or upset feelings with someone else.
- Everyone has the right to be physically safe. Please use your peacefulness and gentleness when playing with others.
- Let everyone who wants to play join in your games. Everyone should feel included.
- Play cooperatively.
- We use peaceful games, actions and peaceful language.
- Use the playground equipment as intended.
- We play on the grass and play equipment and stay off the trees, fences, raised gardens or any buildings.
- Please keep sand and sand toys in the sandbox and put the toys away in the toy box when finished.
- Wood chips are to be left in the designated areas and out of the sand box, grass and gardens.
- Sand, mulch, rocks, sticks or snow are to remain on the ground.
- Please stay within your Director or Assistant's supervision at all times.
- Please remain in our schoolyard until dismissed.
- Play tag and ball games in the designated play areas.
- Please put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.

- Please respect our gardens and save play for other designated areas.
- At dismissal time, please have your child shake their Director's hand to dismiss them into your care.

### **Care of the environment:**

The entire school community (Directors, students, parents and administrators) is responsible for helping to maintain the order and neatness of the school environment.

- Everyone is expected to help maintain the cleanliness and order of the school.
- If something is spilled, please clean it up right away.
- Everyone is expected to help keep the school litter free by picking up any trash or belongings that you find strewn around. Do not throw trash on the ground, indoor or out.
- Students are expected to help with the daily cleanup in their class areas.

### **All ground rules can be summed up in our 3 Principle Ground Rules:**

- |   |
|---|
| <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li><b>1. Respect Yourself</b></li><li><b>2. Respect Others</b></li><li><b>3. Respect our Environment</b></li></ol> |
|---|

### **Fire Drills**

The Administrator will conduct scheduled and random fire drills throughout the year. The fire drills are discussed prior to practicing as to ensure the children leave safely and calmly. Students are well prepared for what occurs during our fire drills. We call these 'drills' because we try to exit the school as safely and quickly as possible.

- When the bell rings, all classes will dismiss into their designated

areas and remain in their groups.

- One of the assistants will make certain the room is empty and close the doors.
- Directors will carry emergency backpacks with registration forms, medication and emergency materials.
- Both Casa and Elementary staff will take a walkie talkie and school cell phone for communication when necessary
- Students and staff are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until role call is completed and they are informed that they may return to class.

## **Section 7: Financial Policies**

### **Tuition Policies**

Brilliant Star Montessori is dependent on tuition for income. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Parents are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Report cards cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account. Report cards will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

### **Trials for New Students:**

There will be a trial for all new students for up to 10 school days at the Director's discretion. During this time, Directors will assess the child's readiness and level of development. The Directors will inform the parents how the trial is going and determine if the student is ready for enrolment. If the Director concludes the child is not ready for enrolment at that time, they will notify the parents within the two-week school period. If the trial is not successful, we will refund the last half of the monthly tuition and all post-dated tuition cheques as well as the activity fee (if paid). The registration fee and supply fees are non-refundable.

### **Reenrollment**

Invitations to continue at Brilliant Star Montessori are normally automatic, but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the Administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school.

Reenrollment material will be sent home in December and is due back at

the school by January 15<sup>th</sup> along with the annual registration fee, supply fee and post-dated tuition cheques. If the school has not received a student's reenrollment material by January 15<sup>th</sup>, his or her space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school. No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his or her account.

### **Elementary Grade Level Capacity**

With increased enrolments each year, the board has had to create a policy to ensure our capacity numbers are not exceeded. The total number of students permitted into the Elementary classroom may be no more than 17. As we are committed to ensuring spaces for our Casa Kindergarten students moving into grade 1, the board MAY have to cap the Elementary classroom to include grades 1-3 only. This may fluctuate year-to-year depending on enrolment numbers. We will notify our families by the end of January each year regarding our numbers for the upcoming year. If additional spaces are available in the Elementary classroom, the Administrator may invite grade 4 students to stay for grade 5.

### **Late Fees and NSF Cheques**

If a payment is late, Brilliant Star Montessori School will charge a late fee of 2% per month. Report cards will not be sent home until balances are paid. There will be a \$20 charge for all NSF cheques.

**Extra Care fees are due by the 10<sup>th</sup> of the next month. If fees are not paid by the 15<sup>th</sup>, we will charge a \$20 late fee to cover extra Administrative costs.**

### **Visiting Students:**

From time to time, we may have a student who was once enrolled in our school visit us. We enjoy getting to see our old friends and welcome them to come visit. Please contact the school in advance to check when it is a good day and time for a visit. If a student is visiting for a full day, we will charge a fee of \$50 per day.

## **Tuition Increases:**

Due to inflation rates of school supplies and pay increments for our staff, tuition prices will most likely increase slightly each year. When our board re-evaluates the tuition prices each year, we compare our prices with other Montessori schools and day care providers to ensure we are well within the average reasonable price range.

## **Refunds and Withdrawals:**

**NOTE:** Once registered, the prepaid registration fee, supply fee, activity fee, and the first month's tuition for the upcoming school year are non-refundable. A written notice to withdraw a child from the Brilliant Star Montessori School Corp. must be given. Such written notice of withdrawal shall be delivered to the school Administrator.

### **Withdrawals occurring before Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>:**

Once registered, failure to provide written notice by April 30<sup>th</sup> for the upcoming school year, will also result in the second and third month's tuition cheques being retained by the Brilliant Star Montessori School Corp.

### **Withdrawals occurring after Sept. 1<sup>st</sup>:**

- A.** A minimum of three months' notice prior to withdrawal is required. If three months' notice is not given, we maintain the right to retain said three months of tuition.
- B.** Where applicable, refunds will be issued on the last day of the third month when three month's written notice of withdrawal is made in accordance with this Agreement.
- C.** No refunds will be issued under any circumstances for withdrawals that occur after Feb. 1<sup>st</sup> of the given school year.
- D.** No refunds will be issued in the situation where staffing may change. The board ensures that a quality of education will be maintained no matter whomever is directing our programs.
- E. Refund Exception for ELEMENTARY students:** Once registered, there will be no refunds for fees and/or tuition UNLESS that spot can be filled by another Elementary student. If the spot can be filled, refunds will be in accordance with A-D as stated above.

## **Section 8: Parents and the School**

### **Brilliant Star Montessori — A Community Built on Trust, Friendship and Mutual Respect**

Once, we developed a sense of community simply because we lived together in the same town or neighbourhood. Today, we may only know a handful of our neighbours. Our friends, and, more importantly, our children's friends, move out of one neighborhood to another, or even out of town as our careers dictate. Those of us who cherish the old sense of close-knit community have to create our own by joining together with people with whom we share similar interests, concerns, and values.

This opportunity for continuity, stability, and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to us at Brilliant Star Montessori. Students know that they belong, that they are respected, and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow students, staff, and other families in the school.

Brilliant Star Montessori brings together families who have chosen to identify with a common commitment to the shared concerns, values, and expectations they have for their children. We come from different backgrounds, but our sense of community exists in spite of, or perhaps because of it. Brilliant Star Montessori teaches our children to understand, respect, and appreciate cultural differences and shared human values: peace, independence, human dignity, and a celebration of life.

In a time when it is often difficult to establish the same positive feelings of continuity, unification, and stability in our own neighborhoods, Brilliant Star Montessori strives to re-create a positive sense of identity, mutual caring, trustworthiness and concern among its students, staff, and families.

### **Volunteering the Gift of Time and Talent**

One of the most valuable contributions that families make to Brilliant Star Montessori is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the school,

assisting with classroom programs such as cooking, helping with special projects, guest speaking, planning the next special event, or serving on the school community association.

Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talent share with their family special memories and experiences that last well beyond their years at school.

A few ways in which you can help out at Brilliant Star Montessori:

- Help with yard work
- Lend your time and support to our fund-raising efforts
- Help out with our 'library' book inventory and carding
- Help coordinate the Scholastic Book orders
- Volunteer for the Elementary Reading Program
- Serve on our Star Community Builders team
- Help the Directors organize field trips or special lessons
- Help organize special events, such as International Children's Festival
- Help organize and prepare hot lunch days
- Share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy, or a field that you've studied

**Brilliant Star Montessori depends on our combined talents.**

**Yard Work:** One of the areas we look to our families for help is service with our school yard. We value the sense of community this opportunity provides our families. Each family is given two weeks for yard work care per child that is registered. However, we understand that sometimes our family schedules are busy and we are not always able to volunteer in this area. If you are not able to work your designated weeks, you are welcome to trade weeks with another family or "buy out" at \$25 per week for us to hire someone else to do it. We are in the process of gathering some names of individuals or families who would be interested in working these additional weeks and earning this amount (please let us know if you are interested in working additional weeks for hire or know someone who is interested).

Our school yard is part of the beautiful environment for the children and our yard is very valuable to the full Montessori experience. We hope to continue to build a sense of community, yet allow families who are not

able to volunteer, a chance to contribute to the overall maintenance of our school yard.

## **Star Community Builders**

The Star Community Builders is a group comprised of Brilliant Star Montessori's parents, staff, board representatives, and interested students. Each member of our school community is encouraged to become a Star Community Builder. The mandate of this group is to build community within our school. Participants will gain a much deeper understanding of the school's mission, strengths, and the issues that challenge it. Many of us treasure the opportunity to have a direct voice in the life of the school.

This group will meet on an 'as needed basis' and offers the opportunity to explore issues of community building and fundraising to improve our school programming and beautify our classroom and outdoor environment.

## **School Board**

Brilliant Star Montessori School's board of Directors work closely with the school's Administration and teaching staff to plan and coordinate specific programs and special events, create and oversee all necessary school policies and ensures the safety of all members of the school.

Board members should reflect the particular blend of skills, expertise, perspectives, energy, and enthusiasm best suited to the goals of Brilliant Star Montessori School.

## **Communication Between Home and School**

During the school year, the school will send home letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements through emails. To maintain our environmentally green commitment, we will try to send most of our updates and monthly newsletters by email to all registered families. If you prefer to have a paper copy of our emails, please let us know and we can

print a copy for you.

## **Communication with Second Families**

Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters.

- Copies of progress reports and announcements will be emailed out or sent home to both parents.
- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- When Parent-Director conferences are scheduled, the Directors should not be asked to conduct separate conferences for each parent. We need to communicate the same message to both parents at the same time, as this experience can never be exactly duplicated. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the school to discuss the situation.
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

## **Parent Observations**

Parent Observations occur twice throughout the year, one in December and one in April. Parents are invited into the classroom and the child may tour the parents through the classroom and show them some of their favourite activities. This is an exciting time for the child to share with their parents what they have been working on. To be able to focus on the child, we prefer if younger siblings did not attend. Once the parents have had a chance to observe in the classroom, the parents and the Director will leave to go to another room for their interview. The child may stay in the classroom with an Assistant supervisor during this time.

## **Observing the Classes at Work**

Parents are able to observe the children at work if requested. Please contact your child's Director to let them know when you would like to visit. You will want to see the class at its normal routine. We prefer these observations to occur later in the year when routines are well established. During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during this period.

When you visit, you will be asked to sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. This is a silent observation. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his or her classmates at work.

### **Points to Look for When You Observe:**

As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye?

How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings, and shelves?

Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?

As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following. What do you notice?

Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow their work. How do they spend their time? How do they select work?

Hopefully you will see the Directors present several different lessons during your visits to either small groups or individual children. What do you notice about the way they teach?

What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them?

What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?

Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?

How do the Directors introduce the children to the materials?

Try to catch one child learning from another.

Focus on the control of error built in to several of the materials.

How do they self-correct? Try to observe a child correcting her own work through the built-in control of error.

As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid?

How do you as an adult respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?

What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?

During your observation, did the Directors spend most of their time with the younger or older students? If so, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another?

Do the Directors anticipate that the focus will switch? What conditions are they looking for?

How does your child feel about being in a multi-age classroom?

What advantages and disadvantages do you see to multi-age grouping?

### **So, What Did You Do at School Today?**

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, 'Nothing'? Or possibly they tell you every day that they did the same thing, such as play-dough or spooning beans. Don't

be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his or her development.

Young children often have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They have done so many things that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes they don't remember the names of the materials that they used, such as the binomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board.

In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home. They can be doing sensorial activities, complex Math, word building, writing in a sand tray or on chalkboards, Geography, and Science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paper work to show you their progress.

### **So how can you find out what your child is doing in school?**

1. Ask your child questions that are more specific. "Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with sounds?"
2. Sign up for a family observation time in December and April.
3. Read a Montessori book.
4. Stop in after school and have a brief talk to your child's Director, or set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
- 5. Come to Parent Information Night at the beginning of the year and workshops that we offer.**
6. Be patient. In time, it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning every day.

**"Joy is the indication of internal growth." Maria Montessori**

## Welcome Celebration

At the beginning of the year, parents and students are invited to come to the school for our Welcome Celebration to meet the staff and familiarize themselves with the classroom and school. We will also outline a few classroom procedures on this day. We strongly encourage you to attend to gain a deeper understanding of your child's Montessori environment and experience. This day also provides your child with an opportunity to prepare themselves for beginning school.

## Montessori Education

On our website, we provide Montessori information on various topics. Please visit our website for more information on the Montessori philosophy and education. We will offer parent workshops on various Montessori topics and The Virtues Project throughout the year. **We strongly encourage your participation at all Parent workshops.**

## Website

We have a school website with various information on:

- Montessori philosophy
- School Programs
- Staff
- Tuition
- Registration
- Camps
- Contact Information
- Sponsors
- Parent Handbook

Please feel free to view our website periodically to keep updated on these areas.

## **Sponsors:**

A Sponsor Plaque is hanging on display in our entrance. Thank you to the following sponsors for their generous support and donations. We sincerely appreciate all their kindness and their support of our school.

- Equinox Home Renovations
- Wilderness Roofing
- Fentiman's Handyman Services
- Mineral Pro Water Filtration Systems
- Durabuilt Windows and Doors
- Shercom Industries
- Julie and Kory Davidsen