



A Love of Learning Starts Here

COMMUNITY GUIDE

2024-2025

Primary Head of School/Primary Lead Teacher: Lindsay Tenaglio

Primary Assistant Teacher: Tammy Platt

Primary Assistant Teacher: Stefanie Logsdon

Primary Assistant/Aftercare Assistant: Josh Horevay

Elementary Head of School/Lower Elementary Lead Teacher: Jaclyn Sagal

Upper Elementary Lead Teacher: Therese Will

Elementary/Administrative Assistant/After Care Coordinator: Sara Clark

School Address:

15 N. Smallwood St.

Cumberland, MD 21502

Telephone:

(240)580-3315

Email:

beginningsm@gmail.com

Website:

www.beginningsmontessori.com

Welcome, Beginnings Families!

We are so glad to have you as a member of our community. We hope to share love and light with each and every one of you.

Beginnings is proud to be the only AMS member school in the tri-state area. We strive to offer an extraordinary learning environment that gives children the tools to become lifelong learners. Beginnings offers a quality, authentic Montessori experience to students ages 3 through grade 6.

Our school is a community of children, families, and supportive adults working together to meet the needs of every child. We encourage open communication among all community members. Our staff and board are always available to lend an ear to questions, concerns, or feedback.

We ask that you please take a moment to read over our Community Guide and familiarize yourself with our policies. If anything is unclear to you, feel free to reach out for clarification.

We are looking forward to a wonderful year of learning, laughter, and a celebration of community!

All the best,

Lindsay Tenaglio
and Jaclyn Sagal
Heads of School
Beginnings Montessori

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History of Beginnings Montessori School

Beginnings Montessori was founded in 1978 by a group of interested educators, themselves parents of preschool children. The founders, Mr. and Mrs. John August, Mr. and Mrs. Terry Gaston, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Barry, Mr. Peter Erwin and Mr. W. Larry Brauer, chose to bring the Montessori teaching method of preschool and Kindergarten teaching to Western Maryland and based much of the school curriculum and philosophy for learning on what Maria Montessori discovered. Over the years, we have developed and changed by fully committing to the Montessori teaching method exclusively. To that end, we have taken the necessary step to become an American Montessori Society (AMS) member school, which means we strictly comply with and follow AMS standards for teacher qualifications and Montessori teaching methods for our students.

Beginnings Montessori primary classes operate under the direction of the Allegany Association for Childhood Education, Inc. Our elementary program is accredited by the Maryland State Board of Education through sixth grade. We operate as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Funding for the school comes from tuition, limited public funding, fundraising, gifts, and donations. Gifts to the school are tax deductible.

Beginnings Montessori is governed by an elected nine-member Board of Directors in accordance with the school's by-laws. However, all parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the educational process by attending Board meetings and volunteering with the Parent Teacher Organization.

Purpose

Beginnings Montessori strives to meet the needs of our young children, aged 3 through 12 years old. Its primary purpose is to provide a supportive, nurturing, and stimulating environment that promotes academic, social, and emotional growth.

The school offers an individualized, child-directed learning program which includes group situations intended to help the child develop socialization skills and self-esteem. The entire program of learning at Beginnings Montessori is purposefully structured to take advantage of a child's natural curiosity and interests. The classroom offers freedom within limits to promote problem solving and reasoning, develop logic, and encourage the development of self-confidence, independence, and agency.

Goals and Objectives

Our main objective is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop the underlying habits, attitudes, skills, and ideals that are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend Beginnings Montessori are as follows:

- To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning
- To develop a sense of agency and competence
- To build habits of concentration for lifelong study skills
- To develop and foster an abiding curiosity of the world
- To develop habits of initiative and persistence
- To foster inner discipline and a sense of order
- To develop sensory motor skills that sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge
- To acquire the basic skills necessary for a lifetime of learning
- To help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations
- To develop socially acceptable behavior

Board of Directors

Beginnings Montessori is governed by a Board of Directors elected by its members. The Board of Directors will meet on a regular basis. Advance notice of the meetings will be

provided to all parents. Parents are encouraged to attend.

President: Rebeccah McCauley

Vice President: Tim Warner

Secretary: Seth Wilson

Treasurer: Jeremy Wilson

Director of Fundraising: Darron Jones

Director of Facilities:

Director of Growth and Development:

Director of Quality: Jessica Hook

Director of Parent/Family Relations: Annie Kilcoyne

Programs Offered

The following program options are offered for the 2024-2025 school year:

HALF DAY PRIMARY 8:30am – 11:30am

For children aged 3 – 4 years old. The child attends the primary class two, three or five mornings a week.

FULL DAY PRIMARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children aged 3 - 4 years old. The child attends the primary class two, three, or five days a week.

KINDERGARTEN 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children who turn 5 years old prior to September 1, 2024. In Montessori, Kindergarten is not the beginning of elementary, but the graduation of primary. These students are the oldest in our primary classroom.

LOWER ELEMENTARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children aged 6, 7 or 8 years old prior to September 1, 2024. Montessori focuses on age groups, rather than grades. In the traditional school, these would be children in first through third grades.

UPPER ELEMENTARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children aged 9, 10 or 11 years old prior to September 1, 2024. Montessori focuses on age groups, rather than grades. In the traditional school, these would be children in fourth through sixth grades.

Before and After Care

After Care services are available for additional fees of \$9.00 an hour and billed monthly. Before Care is available for an additional fee of \$9/hour. Before and After Care are only available for students of Beginnings Montessori School.

Summer Camps

Summer camps are available for six weeks during the summer break. These camps are open to the public, so bring a friend. Families of Beginnings Montessori have a priority registration until such time as it becomes open to the public. Then, registration is on a first come, first served basis. More information on summer camps can be found at www.beginningsmontessori.com/camp after March.

Absences

Please call, text, or email the school to inform them of any absences. This will help the teachers plan for the day more efficiently.

Only ten (10) absences will be tolerated in any given school year for a kindergarten or elementary student, unless special arrangements have been made with your teacher. After eight (8) absences, a conference will be scheduled with the teacher and parents. After fifteen (15) absences, the family will be reported to the Maryland State Department of Education in accordance with Maryland truancy laws.

In accordance with Maryland State law, an excused absence from Kindergarten or elementary school at Beginnings Montessori School is because of:

1. Death in the immediate family.
2. Illness of the student. A parent may submit a note to document the illness of a child for up to and including the tenth (10th) cumulative day of absences for the current school year. The school shall only require a doctor's note from the parent or guardian if the student accumulates more than ten (10) absences during the current school year.
3. Illness of the student documented by a doctor's note.
4. Court summons.
5. Vacation approved by your child's teacher.
6. Hazardous Weather Conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
7. Observance of a religious holiday.

Please submit a note to your teacher if your child is absent for any of these reasons.

Any absence without an appropriate note will be considered an unexcused absence.

Arrival Procedures

Your child is now forming habits that last a lifetime. Punctuality and respecting the time of others are two qualities that we want to promote for future success in life. If you happen to be running late or stuck somewhere, please be courteous and give us a call or send a text. Doors open at 8:05 a.m. for students not utilizing before care services. We ask that if you need to exit your vehicle for ANY reason, including unbuckling a car seat belt, that you please park in a parking space and proceed to walk your child to the door. Please use caution in crossing the parking lot, and do not allow children to cross the lot alone. The drop off lane is to be utilized by parents who do not need to exit their vehicle for any reason. If you must enter the school for ANY reason, you must park in an appropriate parking space.

At 8:30 a.m. a teacher or assistant will lock the door and the security system will be engaged. Anyone arriving after this time will be considered late (See tardy policy). Class promptly begins at 8:30 a.m. and we ask that you make every effort to be here on time to ensure that your child has a full three-hour work cycle. We recommend arriving as early as possible as this will ensure your child has adequate time to transition. We strongly encourage consistency in this process as it will help your child acclimate to the expectations of coming to school.

Your child will be considered late after 8:30 a.m.

Any late arrival, whether the school is notified or not, will be counted as tardy. This includes doctor's appointments and other pre-scheduled commitments. We realize it is not always possible but please try to schedule appointments after school hours.

Roles of Children, Parents and Teachers:

The teacher's role in the morning is to greet your child/children. Teachers will greet the children at the classroom doors. The Montessori philosophy is that children are capable and should be responsible for hanging their outerwear and to put lunches/backpacks away without assistance from the staff, except for those with special needs. Parents are asked to allow their children to attend to these tasks on their own. This develops your child's independence and basic skills of inner discipline and a sense of order. Allow this to be a positive time between teacher and student, school, and learning.

Tardy Policy

We understand that sometimes unfortunate circumstances happen, and occasional tardy arrivals are unavoidable. However, excessive tardiness makes for a challenging start for both your child and the classroom. Punctuality, like all manners, is taught from the beginning. You are setting an example for your child. Please set a lovely example by arriving at school on time.

At 8:30 a.m. the doors of the school will be locked.

If you are tardy more than 5 times, the appropriate Head of School will be notified and documentation about the tardiness will be made in your child's records. Your child's teacher will notify you and request a conference. In serious cases of excessive tardiness, you will also be expected to have a conference with the Head of School.

Dismissal Procedure

Children enrolled in the half-day primary program will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m. from the gymnasium.

Primary and Lower Elementary children will be dismissed at 3:00 p.m. from their classroom to an adult designated by parents/guardians. Upper Elementary students will be dismissed from the gymnasium so that they may have more independence and responsibility with this routine.

Children still in the school at 3:15 pm will be escorted to the After Care Program and families will be charged fees accordingly.

If someone other than the designated person is planning to pick up the child, the parent or guardian must send a note. Please tell your pickup person the rules. Telephone notification may only be used for emergency arrangements and the caller will be asked to verify their identification by responding to questions from the staff about personal data on file at Beginnings Montessori. The individual picking up the child will be asked to show identification.

Roles of Children, Parents and Teachers:

When picking up your child please wait outside of their classrooms. Your child's classroom teacher and assistant will send your child to you in the hallway. You and your child may then make your way to his/her cubby to retrieve items needed to take home. The Montessori philosophy is that children are capable and should be responsible for leading the way to

their cubby, donning their outerwear, and to retrieve lunches/backpacks without assistance from the adults, except for those with special needs. Parents are asked to allow their children to attend to these tasks on their own. This develops your child's independence and basic skills of inner discipline and a sense of order. Allow this to be a positive time between adults and students, school, and learning.

Supplies

Primary and Kindergarten: We ask that each family bring in a box of tissues and a container of Clorox wipes at the beginning of each semester of the school year. Other items that can be donated as they are in constant need are Crayola Washable markers, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, large bottles of white glue, glue sticks, dry erase markers, construction paper, and white copy paper.

All children need a backpack with a seasonally appropriate change of clothing. For those staying for lunch, bring a lunch containing an ice pack.

Kindergarten: Your teacher will send you a specific supply list for additional materials prior to the start of the school year.

Elementary: We ask that each family bring in a box of tissues, a container of Clorox wipes, and a large bottle of white glue at the beginning of each semester of the school year. Other items that can be donated as they are in constant need are Crayola Washable markers, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, glue sticks, dry erase markers, construction paper, and white copy paper.

All children need a backpack with a change of clothes, and a lunch with an ice pack. Please see below for complete lunch requirements. Your teacher will send you a specific supply list for additional materials prior to the start of the school year.

Required on the First Day of School for ALL Students: Updated health record, tuition payments up-to-date, field trip form, photo release form, updates emergency card, and Your Smile!

Celebrations

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated with a special activity that is different for each classroom and learning level. In Primary, the child will learn about his/her family background and growth.

At the lower elementary level, we expand upon the child-centered idea of a birthday to explore how the child's birth impacts important people in their lives and the world around them. **Parents are welcome to observe their child's birthday celebration.** Summer birthdays will be celebrated during the school year as well. We ask that private parties be held outside of school and school hours. Invitations may be placed in cubbies or folders only when ALL children are invited, otherwise please mail, or deliver invitations outside of school. Including all children conforms with the inclusive practices of the Montessori environment and helps to avoid hurt feelings.

Holiday Celebrations

Beginnings Montessori celebrates two holidays with parties at school, Halloween and Valentine's Day. We commemorate Thanksgiving with Friendship Soup, a meal that the children prepare together. Children also participate in a winter holiday program.

Graduation

Students moving up from kindergarten, third grade, and sixth grade are honored at the end of the year with a graduation exercise called a "Bridging Ceremony." The children put on a small presentation that may include a reading, a skit, or other activities.

Inclement Weather Policy

If Allegany County Public Schools are closed for weather-related reasons that impact safe travel, Beginnings Montessori is closed. If Allegany County Public Schools are closed for extreme cold or any other weather-related reason that does not impact safe travel, Beginnings Montessori will notify parents that we are operating with normal hours, or possibly a delay, at the discretion of Heads of School.

If Allegany County Schools are on a two-hour delay, Beginnings Montessori opens at 10:05 a.m., and half-day primary is dismissed at 12:00 p.m. If Allegany County Schools are on a three-hour delay, Beginnings Montessori opens at 11:05 a.m., and there will be no school for half-day primary students.

Closure of the Mountain Ridge School District does not affect Beginnings Montessori. An email will be sent regarding the closure/delay of school no later than 6:30 AM. An announcement will also be posted to our Facebook page, as well as being listed on the Allegany Radio Corporation's "Allegany Communications News" Facebook page. Please tune your radio to 100.5, 106.5 FM, or 94.1 FM for updated information regarding school closings and delays.

Dress Code

Please label all of your child's clothes, jackets, mittens, hats, etc. with your child's name. When selecting school clothes, help your child choose pants that they can get up and down easily. We will be gardening, painting, and using scissors, so it is best to send children to school in practical work clothes. Children should be dressed appropriately for all weather conditions. All classes play outdoors daily except on extremely cold or rainy days.

Please, NO flip flops, as they are slippery outside, noisy inside, and dangerous. We recommend a sports shoe for school, so that the children can run and play safely.

It is also important for grace and courtesy that hats be removed when entering classrooms. We request that you refrain from using pull-ups for toddlers in the primary program. All children in the primary program are expected to be toilet trained and therefore wear cloth underwear. Please talk with your teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

Outerwear Policy

Outside play, exercise and fresh air are essential to a child's development. **It is imperative that your child have a jacket, sweater, or other appropriate outerwear at school each day.** In cold weather, mittens should be provided, and boots should also be available to make the children as comfortable as possible while outside. To encourage independence, all clothing should be easily manageable by the child. Please avoid overalls or clothing with excessive snaps or buttons.

Change of Clothes Policy

All children must have one complete, labeled change of clothes at Beginnings Montessori. Please send them in a labeled plastic bag. Please remember to update clothing for seasonal changes or when the bag has been sent home after use.

Food Policy

Snacks

The children will have a daily snack in the classroom. Please remember that we are a peanut-free school and refrain from sending snacks that contain peanuts. Other allergies

may be present in individual classrooms, and the classroom teacher will notify parents if other precautions with snacks should be considered. The menu for snacks should ideally consist of food from two different food groups; however, we recognize that it may not be possible to supply that variety due to financial or time constraints. Typical examples of snacks served are vegetables and dip, apple slices and cheese, and crackers and carrots. Effort is made to present the students with a snack they can prepare themselves. Parents will be assigned at least a day per month to bring in the daily snack. This helps the school financially and the children love to be the one providing the snack for the day. Please see the snack calendar sent home with your child.

Please notify the teachers if your child has any food allergies or other food restrictions.

Lunch

Children who are staying through the day must bring a packed lunch containing an ice pack to school. This policy is subject to change as our school lunch program evolves. Carried lunches should contain a drink that is NOT milk. **Maryland law prohibits children from bringing milk from home.**

Please remember that we are a peanut-free school and refrain from sending anything in lunches that contains peanuts.

Communication

Parent/Teacher Notes

Good communication with your child's teachers is highly desirable and should be the principal vehicle for discussing any questions or concerns. During the school year, please send a note to school with your child for any of the following reasons:

1. When your child returns after an absence, stating the reason, type of illness or travel.
2. When a major change occurs at home, i.e. moving, separation, divorce, death, new family members.
3. When your child is absent from school for more than three days due to illness or travel.

Enrollment List

For your convenience in arranging carpools, birthday parties, parent notices, etc., we can provide a classroom enrollment list that includes each child's first name, phone number, email address and parents' names. If for any reason you prefer to be excluded from this list, please inform your child's teacher. This list will be maintained privately for school use only

and no information will be shared to outside agencies, groups, or people so that privacy is protected.

Conferences

All students receive an evaluation twice a year. There will be an informal conference set up in the Fall and a more formal conference and written progress report in the Spring. However, feel free to schedule a conference with your teacher when needed.

Phone Communication

Beginnings Montessori staff are all directly working with students during the regular school day (8:00 am until 3:00 pm). Late arrivals may text the school phone to announce their arrival and wait for staff to be available to respond and open the keypad door. For all other phone communication, Beginnings Montessori has a voice mail system. Please leave the teacher a message. Unless the matter requires attention before the end of the school day, teachers will respond to your non-emergency voice mail when they have time at the end of the day after dismissal until 4 p.m. Our administrative assistant will have office hours from 1:00 pm until 3:00 pm and will also return calls during that time.

Discipline Policy

At Beginnings Montessori School, we see discipline as helping the children to develop an internal focus and control that enables them to make positive choices. The Montessori materials assist the child to develop concentration, and through concentration comes inner discipline. We establish necessary boundaries and consistently model dealing constructively with problems to give the children methods and techniques to control their own behavior. We strive for a balance of freedom and structure, linked with a high level of responsibility. That balance is individualized based on the needs of the child. Our goal is an internalized level of discipline, wherein the child behaves because it is the right thing to do, whether or not the teacher is in the room. This is the kind of citizen we hope for in the world. Positive discipline is a process that takes time; it begins at birth, and continues through the four planes of development, until around 25 years of age. Discipline to us is not something that is done to the child but is developed within the child. It may not be as immediate as a rewards/punishment model, but the outcomes run deeper.

Classroom expectations:

1. Students should respect one another's personal space.
2. Students should speak quietly and peacefully in the classroom.
3. Students should use walking feet throughout the classroom.
4. Students are free to work with all materials displayed, given that they use it

respectfully.

5. Students may work at either a work rug or a table, whichever is appropriate to the chosen work.

Deviation from these expectations will be addressed with redirection by the teacher or her assistant.

Behavior Policy

The following action will be taken in the case of severely disruptive behavior, which includes but is not limited to: assault, biting, hitting, kicking, fighting, throwing objects, spitting, pushing, pinching, fleeing the environment, name calling, or sexual harassment.

1. First offense: The teacher will help to mediate the problem-solving process.
2. Second offense, same day: The child will be asked to sit in a watching chair or asked to sit next to the teacher or assistant until the child is ready to work again peacefully.
3. Third offense same day: Child will be removed from the classroom and parent will be called. The child may be sent home.
4. If a child reaches more than 3 offenses in a 2-week period it may be considered a severely disruptive behavior pattern. A conference will be scheduled to devise a behavior modification plan.

Consequences to severely disruptive behavior that continue consistently over days or weeks include, but are not limited to:

1. Removal of child from the classroom
2. Parents notified and asked to pick up child from school or event
3. Conference with parents
4. Behavior plan will be developed that may include but is not limited to:
recommendations for evaluations, plan of action for when the behavior occurs, journaling of behaviors by parent and teacher, food diary
5. Possible dismissal

The teacher in each classroom should have the appropriate training to interpret the situational context of a behavioral issue accurately and fairly. If a teacher does not have experience with behavior management of severely disruptive behaviors, the Head(s) of School will guide the teacher to devise an appropriate plan. Behavioral issues that continue over time will require that a Head of School is consulted and involved in the data collection and resolution process. School staff have the final say as to what is inappropriate behavior

and what, if any, recourse should be taken to address it.

Toddler Biting Policy

Biting is part of toddler development. It is usually a result of not enough or ineffective use of language. We will always work to give words to the child who is biting. Coaching the appropriate words is the best way to resolve the problem quickly. If a child bites three times in one day, or if the skin is broken, they will be sent home. The parent of the biter and the parent of the child who has been bitten will be notified by the teacher or assistant if the skin has been bruised or broken. If a child becomes a chronic biter, the parents may be asked to remove their child from the school until the behavior disappears.

Bullying, Intimidation, or Harassment Policy

Beginnings Montessori is committed to a safe and peaceful educational environment for all students, employees, volunteers, and patrons, free from harassment, intimidation, or bullying. “Harassment, intimidation or bullying” means any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, when the intentional written, verbal, or physical act:

- Physically harms a student or damages the student’s property; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student’s education; or
- Is severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying and extremely disruptive or dangerous behavior of any kind will not be tolerated at Beginnings Montessori. If a child is caught bullying or engaging in disruptive behavior, parents will be called, and the child sent home for that day.

DEFINITIONS:

Bullying- The CDC defines bullying as any unwanted aggressive behavior(s) by another youth or group of youths, who are not siblings, that involves an **observed or perceived power imbalance, AND is repeated multiple times or is highly likely to be repeated.** Common types of bullying include:

- Physical such as hitting, kicking, and tripping
- Verbal including name-calling and teasing
- Relational/social such as spreading rumors and leaving out of the group
- Damage to property of the victim

Other Types of Disruptive or Maladaptive Behavior (distinguished from bullying by occurring in isolation and not repeated, or occurring without an imbalance of power):

Classroom Disruption- Temper tantrums, running, interrupting the work of others, excessive loud noises, screaming, disorderly conduct.

Teasing – name-calling, insulting, or other behavior that would hurt others’ feelings or make them feel bad about themselves.

Exclusion – starting rumors, telling others not to be friends with someone, or other actions that would cause someone to be without friends.

Physical Aggression– pushing, slapping, grabbing, flicking, poking, pinching, tripping, or other violations of personal space

Severe Physical Aggression – punching, kicking, and similar behavior that could result in injury to others

Threat of serious violence – threats of using a weapon, or other conduct representing a direct physical threat to anyone; may require a report to authorities

Harassment – racial, ethnic, or sexual name-calling or other severe harassment

Thank you for helping to provide a safe environment for our children.

Prevention of Abuse Policy

Beginnings Montessori staff and volunteers will utilize several procedures to help prevent the possibility for abuse.

Visitors: Any visitor to the program or site when the children are present, but do not have direct interaction with the children, will be considered “strangers” and are never left alone with the children.

Toileting: Staff is required to use bathrooms that are separate from the preschool and Kindergarten children’s bathroom. The children’s bathroom is visible from the classroom. Staff does not go into the bathroom with a child unless absolutely necessary and requested by the child. When a staff member does accompany a child into the bathroom, another staff member witnesses the interaction.

Reporting

Beginnings Montessori staff has both a moral and a legal obligation to report any reasonable suspicion or known case of child abuse or neglect to the local law enforcement

agency and child protective services unit of the Allegany County Department of Social Services in accordance with state law and Office of Childcare Regulation 07.04.02.70.

Beginnings Montessori's staff must immediately report any and all suspected or alleged incidents to the authorities by telephone and follow up in writing within 24 hours. Staff shall cooperate in all investigations of abuse that include parents or children currently or previously enrolled at Beginnings Montessori.

Maryland law states that teachers do not have to prove the existence of such abuse and do not have to know who did it. If further investigation indicates that there was no offense, teachers who reported in good faith are protected from any possible prosecution. Teachers who had reasonable knowledge of an incident and did not report it can be prosecuted. Staff should show respect for the privacy of the child and family by only sharing the incident with others who must know. For example, other parents will be informed only if their children encounter the offender.

Accusation of Abuse or Neglect by Staff

When a parent, volunteer or visitor notifies the Beginnings Montessori Board President of suspected abuse or neglect that involves a staff person, the staff person will be contacted within 24 hours and given the opportunity to discuss the allegations with the appropriate people. The Board President will contact the local Childcare Administration within 24 hours of notification. The staff person will then be immediately relieved of his/her teaching duties and direct contact with the children at Beginnings Montessori until the Department of Social Services' investigation is completed and for such further time as the Childcare Administration requires.

Classroom Observations

All parents are welcome to observe the classroom at any time upon notification of the lead teacher of your classroom. Observations are not scheduled until after the first 6-8 weeks of school. There will not be any cell phones, cameras, or video equipment allowed during observation.

How to Observe a Montessori Classroom

- Note the variety of activities
- Observe the social interaction among the students
- Are students working alone or together?
- How does the mood of the classroom vary from time to time?
- Observe one or two students at a time

- Note the cycle of work from beginning to end
- Is the child concentrating?
- How is order maintained in the classroom?

Plan to spend 30-60 minutes if you come to observe the classrooms so you will get a better understanding of the workings of the classroom.

Confidentiality

During your observation you will see a variety of behaviors and maturity levels. Please be aware that we respect each child's place in their individual development and respect our staff's expertise in handling situations that may occur during your observation. Please be respectful of the children, their families, and the staff if you share observations with people who were not present. Confidentiality of personally identifying information must be maintained by all who interact with and observe students.

Parking

Beginnings Montessori parents may park in the parking lot of St. Paul's Lutheran Church. Please do not park in designated staff parking.

Facility

Beginnings Montessori utilizes the following facilities at St. Paul's Lutheran Church: Lower level classrooms (except those utilized by the Girl Scouts), front courtyard/playground, and gymnasium/stage/kitchen.

Student Enrichment Activities

Our students attend a variety of places of interest throughout the school year. At this time, parent volunteers are required to drive; however, we will notify parents if we are able to procure other transportation. We can usually arrange for extra tickets for parents if we have a week's notice. Each level (primary, lower elementary, and upper elementary) has its own requirements for chaperones during outings. Siblings are always welcome on our school trips. We encourage you to help us find resources in this area.

The Role of the Chaperone

The role of the chaperone is to provide a means of transportation for the students. The

chaperone ensures that the students carry out the going out activity safely. The decisions of where to go and how to carry out the going out activity are the responsibility of the teachers and students.

While in the vehicle:

- The chaperone will provide seats in the vehicle that have appropriate seat belts.
- The chaperone will expect the children to speak softly, face forward, and keep hands and body to themselves while riding in only the rear of the vehicle.
- The chaperone will make sure cell phones are used for emergency purposes only.
- The chaperone will stay with the caravan while traveling.

On arrival and during the event:

- The chaperone will take frequent head counts of his/her group of children.
- The chaperone will stay with the group at all times.
- The chaperone will ask children to follow the rules if necessary.

Field Trips

Parents will be required to provide the school with a signed authorization form to allow their children to attend walking school field trips. This authorization will be valid for the entire school year.

Parents will be notified of planned field trips off campus and will be required to make travel arrangements for their children. Parents are also asked to participate as drivers and chaperones. Staff members do not transport children. **If you sign up as a chaperone, you are responsible for the children that you transport.**

Emergency cards are taken on all trips. Parents that drive accept responsibility under their own insurance policy and must provide a copy of such coverage upon request. All children must be in a properly approved car seat for all field trips.

Guidelines for student behavior during a field trip

During Transportation

- All children should be in the rear seats of the automobile.
- All children should always wear a seat belt while in the vehicle and use appropriate car seats and boosters in accordance with Maryland law.
- The children must face forward.
- The children should speak in soft voices.

- The children must keep their hands to themselves.

During the Activity

- The children must keep their hands to themselves.
- The children must stay with their designated driver or group.
- During the performance, the children will sit quietly in their seats facing forward.
- The children will speak in soft voices.
- If in a restaurant the children will use proper table manners.

If the child is unable to meet the behavior expectations, they may be denied future going out privileges.

Health Records

Physical Exam

All children must have an up-to-date record of immunization from their physician in the school files. If your child is newly enrolled, please have his or her doctor fill out the form included in the admissions packet (or available at the school or doctor's office) and mail it to the school before the child begins school. Every child must have a yearly physical examination and the records of such on file at school. Also, please inform the school if your child has a communicable disease so that other parents may be notified. Vision and hearing tests are recommended with physical exams. The Health Department may conduct yearly vision and hearing tests at the school.

Emergencies

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, the staff will not hesitate to seek proper care for a child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file in the school are consulted immediately and the parents are called. All of our teachers and assistants are certified in CPR. If necessary, emergency personnel will be called, and the child transported to the hospital. The emergency card that the parent must sign prior to admission to school will accompany the child so that treatment can be given immediately in the absence of the parent. A child may also be isolated from the other children until picked up by the parent.

Medications

It is strongly recommended that no medicine be given to a child during the school day unless deemed necessary by a physician. In such a case, the staff must have written instructions from the prescribing physician, including the date of order, identification of the drug by name, dose, time and circumstances of administration and the length of time the medication is to be continued. This information will be kept on file at the school for future reference. Medication must be in the original container and must be given directly to a staff

member. Medicines such as cough drops, etc. should not be sent to school. Beginnings Montessori staff is trained in First Aid and CPR and therefore can respond to minor cuts and scrapes with the first aid kit found at the school. All injuries must be documented, and parents informed on the day the injury takes place.

Illnesses

To keep all our children, their families and staff members as healthy as possible, we ask that you observe the following:

- If your child has a fever of 100.4 or above, keep him or her at home for 24 hours after the fever has broken, without the use of fever-reducing medications. Viruses are still active within that 24-hour period.
- If your child has a bout of diarrhea or vomiting, please keep him or her home for 24 hours after the last incident. Again, this 24-hour period is a highly contagious one.
- If your child has a runny nose, please be aware of the following:
 - A clear discharge without any other symptoms indicates an allergic reaction. This is not a contagious condition.
 - A clear discharge with fever and or irritability indicates a contagious condition.
 - A discolored discharge indicates an infection and is a contagious condition. A sinus or ear infection may be present, and antibiotics and bed rest may be necessary to clear up the infection. Please keep your child home until the infection is cleared.

Staff members reserve the right to not allow a child they believe has a contagious condition into the classroom. We realize this might create an inconvenience for you. We prioritize the health of our children and their families and feel a strong responsibility to do what we can to protect all people in our school community.

Infectious Disease

Children with infectious disease may be identified through the required physical exam prior to admission into the program. This information is confidential by law and will not be a factor in determining admission. Staff and volunteers will utilize universal precautions when handling bodily fluids of all children and will seek the advice of medical personnel if needed.

Lice Policy

It is expected that school-aged children may get head lice. Lice is not something to be ashamed of as it affects all people regardless of cleanliness or socioeconomic background. Our policy is based on CDC guidance that references Both the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the National Association of School Nurses (NASN).

- If you find live lice or nits on your child, please inform the school. It is likely that if your child has lice that another child will also have lice.
- You should examine your child's head thoroughly, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck for nits and lice if your child exhibits symptoms (primarily itching). If nits or live lice are found, all household members should be examined for nits and lice every 2-3 days.
- We expect you to retreat your child in 7-10 days.
- The CDC recommends several product options to treat head lice. You may wish to contact your pediatrician, pharmacist, or health department for information about what product to use to treat lice.
- Students diagnosed with live head lice do not need to be sent home early from school; they can go home at the end of the day, be treated, and return to class after appropriate treatment has begun. Nits may persist after treatment, but successful treatment should kill crawling lice.
- Children will not be checked for head lice while at school. Misdiagnosis of nits is very common during nit checks conducted by nonmedical personnel.

We take head lice very seriously, but please understand that treatment and the eradication of head lice are fully the responsibility of the parent. We will do our best to keep you informed, maintain the classroom, and fully educate the children.

Emergency Procedures

Accident Response

In the event of an accident, staff will respond by handling all medical-related injuries first and then by handling any disciplinary issues. While one staff member is attending to the injured child or children, the other staff member will contact the parent or designated emergency contacts found in the child's file. If necessary, the child or children will be transported to the hospital by ambulance. Staff will provide care within the realm of their authority but will contact emergency personnel if the injury is more than a minor one. Children's Medical Group is the medical contact for Beginnings Montessori, unless otherwise specified on your Emergency Contact form.

All accidents will be documented in an accident report that describes the circumstances, including who was involved, how staff responded and, where applicable, a diagram of where the incident occurred. Copies of this report will be kept in each of the involved children's files, provided to the school's insurance carrier and given to the involved parents or guardians.

Fire Safety

Beginnings Montessori conducts periodic fire drills in which all children and staff will participate. The drills are held at different times throughout the year. There are smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the facility. Beginnings Montessori meets fire safety requirements of the Childcare Administration and is inspected by the Maryland State Fire Marshall regularly.

Enrollment Policy

Admission Procedure

We believe that choosing a school is a process that takes time. We recommend that families do the following:

- a) Request information by mail or pick up information at school
- b) Tour our building and classrooms while classes are in session
- c) Schedule an interview for the child (if in elementary)
- d) Complete enrollment process

Prior to being admitted to our program, all children must be registered by a parent or legal guardian. Registration for children currently enrolled in the program is held during March. Applications for new students are available on our website or can be given after touring the school. Students currently enrolled in Beginnings Montessori shall have preference in enrolling until registration becomes open to the public. Once registration is open to the public, enrollment is on a first come, first served basis.

The following documents are needed for enrollment:

- a) Application
- b) Non-refundable Registration fee
- c) Current immunization records (if new student)
- d) Financial Contract

The following admission policies and criteria are to maximize the compatibility among selected students, their families, and our school with Montessori philosophy and values. They take into account not only evidence of a student's academic achievement, but the student's and family's long-term commitment to developing the whole child and commitment to a school-family partnership.

1. Admissions decisions require and are made contingent upon receipt or completion of all requested tests, screening, student records, student and family visits and interviews,

and other forms included in our application/admission package.

2. We respect the rights of privacy of all prospective students and families, and honor the confidentiality of all reports, records, interview information, and any other information or materials obtained as part of the admission application process.

3. While embracing the philosophy that each child develops in a unique way and welcoming applications from a wide variety of students, we also recognize our limitations in meeting some highly complex or specialized learning needs. Our admissions procedure will therefore consider our ability to accommodate a student's special needs without disruption to our program as one factor when evaluating applicants. Students who have special needs that fall within our ability to provide services may be accepted on a provisional basis, with additional stipulations (such as a requirement for tutor or therapist assistance).

4. The Heads of School and classroom teachers will work together to make all admission decisions. Admission decisions are based on the following general criteria:

Primary Students

- Are able to cooperate in a social group
- Show respect for authority
- Show respect for other children
- Are independent in toileting skills
- Are able to understand and follow school and classroom rules and guidelines
- Demonstrate an eagerness to learn
- Are developmentally functional in all aspects of daily school routines
- Are at least 3 years old

Elementary Students

- Are able to cooperate in a social group
- Show respect for authority
- Show respect for other children
- Demonstrate an eagerness to learn
- Are capable of working independently
- Are able to understand and follow school and classroom rules and guidelines
- Are developmentally functional in all aspects of daily school routines
- Possess current academic and life skills at level commensurate with targeted class

Families

- Thorough understanding of and commitment to Beginnings Montessori School philosophy and principles
- Understanding of and commitment to long-term participation in the Montessori education process
- Understanding their role in partnering with the school (e.g. volunteerism,

attendance at school meetings and functions, support of school's vision and growth)

Contracts

Enrollment is secured by a binding contractual agreement with the school. We will begin to enroll students for the 2024-2025 school year in March of 2024. To secure your enrollment for the next school year we must have a contract signed by March 30, 2024. If your circumstances are such that you do not feel comfortable signing a contract, for example, a possible job transfer, please contact a Head of School for more information on how to handle your enrollment.

Eligibility

Primary classrooms are open to all children between the ages of 3-6 years and elementary classrooms between ages 6-12, regardless of race, color, religion, developmental ability, or creed. To be accepted into the preschool program, all children must be toilet trained. For enrollment details, please refer to our admissions procedures.

Class placement will be determined based on the child's chronological age, maturation level, recommendation from any previous teacher, and parental preference with the consultation of the Head of School and classroom teacher. The needs of the child will be of primary importance in every decision made.

Beginnings Montessori strives to include all students, including students with and without a diagnosed disability. Beginnings Montessori staff works with all interested parties to ensure that all students receive equitable services and access to quality Montessori education. The Head of School and parents will work closely with the teachers to ensure the school can provide appropriate services to meet each student's needs. The school will also work with related service providers to ensure fidelity of services offered and will consult with the Local Education Agency to ensure the provision of equitable services.

Inclusion of students from diverse backgrounds and with diverse needs is a cornerstone of Montessori education. All students are treated as individuals who progress at their own pace and have their own needs. To meet the needs of all students, Beginnings individualizes lessons to accommodate students and honor each child's strengths. The multi-age groupings in the classroom allow flexibility with lesson planning and implementation to meet each child's individual needs. Common accommodations include, but are not limited to: more time using manipulatives to gain conceptual understanding of learning tasks; didactic materials that build each child's skills from concrete to abstract; social emotional education and grace and courtesy lessons to build each child's social skills and understanding of their interactions with others; repeated practice of classroom and school routines so that all students have equitable access to the learning environment; and

physical arrangement of the learning environment to appeal to and provide access for all students. Additionally, Beginnings Montessori acknowledges that safety is paramount. As such, we operate as a peanut-free school and also accommodate students with other health-related needs so that every student feels safe and included in all school environments. Regular communication with parents, related service providers, school staff, and students is an integral part of our ability to provide an inclusive and equitable experience for all students.

Tuition

Tuition is based on our 170 day school year. Payment may be made in full, or monthly payments can be arranged via automatic bank draft on a schedule of your choosing. Please note that payment plans will vary based on the options that you choose. Most families will have payments due September through June, though some may be August through May. Please review your FACTS plan to determine when your final payment will be withdrawn. No reductions are made for illness or absences.

A charge of \$30.00 will be assessed on any returned check or insufficient auto debit.

An annual registration fee and online FACTS payment processing fee is due upon admission and is non-refundable.

When entering our program after September, tuition will be prorated at a monthly rate. Tuition rates given are subject to change without notice.

There is a 10% sibling discount.

Financial Aid

We currently accept the Maryland Boost Scholarship, West Virginia Hope Scholarship, and the Maryland Child Care Scholarship. Please visit the websites for these programs for information about qualifying and enrolling.

Termination of Enrollment

Every effort will be made to avoid terminating a child's enrollment in the school. However, termination of enrollment will be affected under the following circumstances: ● Failure of the parents to cooperate with the school's policies

- Delinquent tuition
- Failure by the parents to provide health forms and other paperwork required for enrollment

- Excessive biting
- Uncontrolled hitting
- Behavioral problems that are disruptive to the classroom atmosphere and other students
- Parent's refusal to seek professional help when suggested as being in the child's best interests
- Inability of the school to meet the apparent needs of the child, as determined by teaching staff consensus
- Parent's disrespectful behavior toward other parents, children, teachers, or any other staff
- Physical or emotional problems that require excessive one-on-one attention

Fundraising

Beginnings Montessori School is working hard to establish a culture of giving. Because tuition and enrollment fees only cover our operating costs, it is necessary for our community to raise additional money for student enrichment and materials, as well as school growth and enhancement projects.

Each year as a community, we support fundraising events. Information concerning these campaigns will be shared with you on an ongoing basis.

Primary Staggered Start

To ensure that each child has a successful beginning of the school year, we have a staggered start. All primary students are rolled in over the course of the first week of school. Primary parents will receive an electronic message from your teacher indicating which day your child will begin. This allows the teacher to give each child the special attention they need while transitioning from home to back to school.

Toys

The children are only in our school for a short time and a toy from home can keep them from fully engaging with the Montessori materials provided in the prepared classroom environment. Please encourage all "lovies" to stay at home or in the car. Should the child require a transition object from home, that object should remain in the child's cubby, unless otherwise arranged with the child's teacher.

Normalization

Normalization is the first 6 to 8 weeks of school when we are getting to know your children and they are learning the expectations of the classroom. Here is a list of things that you can do to help your child in this process:

1. Make sure your child gets to bed early.
2. Make sure your child has ample time in the morning to prepare for the day.
3. Make sure your child has a healthy diet.
4. Try to limit your child's exposure to your anxiety and stress about the new situation.
5. Make positive conversations about school with your child.
6. Try to choose clothing the night before and make sure the clothing choice makes toileting free of extra challenges.
7. Make sure your child has some time after school to just be.

Daily Schedule

A formal daily schedule for the primary classroom can be found in the primary rooms. An elementary daily schedule can be requested of the elementary teacher.

Visitors/Volunteers Policy

Any visitor to the program or site when the children are present, but do not have direct interaction with the children, will be considered "strangers" and are never left alone with the children.

Parents have access to their children anytime during school hours. However, the work of the children and the teachers'/assistants' attention should not be disturbed. Parents should always walk and speak quietly when in the building.

If you wish to speak with your child's teacher, please call or email the school to make an appointment. Do not use drop off or pick up time as a time to have a conference with the teacher.

Volunteerism

There are many opportunities to volunteer at the school throughout the year, including active involvement in our Parent Teacher Organization, driving on field trips, helping with fundraisers, helping with special events, enrichment days, being a classroom speaker, and bringing special treats for celebrations. Parents are not allowed in the classrooms during class time unless arrangements have been made with the teacher.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Beginnings Montessori School is an inclusive and accessible community of families, students, and educators. As such, we do not discriminate based on age, ancestry, color, creed, gender identity or expression, genetic information, marital status, mental or physical disability, national origin, race, religious affiliation, belief or opinion, sex, or sexual orientation in matters affecting employment or in providing access to its programs and activities. This policy is in accordance with Maryland Statute §26–704, partially listed below:

“It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:

(1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and

(2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:

- i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;
- ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual’s race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or
- iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.”

To view the full text of the statute, please view Annotated Code of Maryland, Education Article §26–704(c).

Statement of Rights

Beginnings Montessori School, Heads of School, and the Board of Directors retain the right to change, modify, cancel, suspend or interpret any part of the Community Handbook, policies and practices without advance notice within the sole discretion and without statement of cause for justification. All decisions made will be in the best interest of the children, school and parents. Parents will be notified through email or letter of any changes.