



little paws  
MONTESSORI

Parent Handbook 2023-2024

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### **I. Introduction**

#### Mission Statement

Our Montessori program considers the emotional, intellectual, physical, and social development of the total child by addressing the uniqueness of each in a nurturing, emotionally secure and academically excellent environment.

We create a warm and enriching early childhood environment that promotes learning through hands-on experience, and opportunities for multi-sensory exploration and discovery.

### Philosophy & Program Goals

As a Montessori school, we use the philosophy developed by Dr. Maria Montessori to help children develop to their fullest potential. We want to educate the whole child, meaning we promote growth in all areas of a child's development: academic, social, emotional, and physical. A key to the Montessori Method is the belief that every child has an inner desire to learn, and we work to cultivate that desire so that each child has a true joy in learning and a lifelong interest to do so.

The teacher's job begins with setting up an environment that draws the child in; they do this by ensuring the environment is beautiful and well-prepared, and by having items available that fit what each child needs developmentally. The teacher does not instruct in the traditional sense of the word, but more accurately guides each individual in her care.

The Little Paws Montessori classroom comprises 5 main areas. Each teacher at Little Paws Montessori has been

trained according to AMS standards in these areas. Feel free to direct any Montessori-related questions toward any of us. We love to nerd out over Maria and her amazing method! We also have a veritable LIBRARY of Montessori books and binders and training literature in the office we would love to share with you at anytime. There are hundreds of lessons in the Montessori universe, separated by binder per category below. Each lesson includes its own specific age, category, prerequisites, materials, presentations, points of interest, control of error, direct aims, indirect aims, additional exercises, extensions, and associated language terms. All of these lessons are available to parents in the office via our AMS Montessori binders. Ask to check these out anytime!

The **Practical Life** area is equipped with familiar items that invite the child's interest. Speaking to children's sense of order and independence, these materials coordinate physical moments, refine hand-eye coordination, sharpen fine and gross motor control, develop concentration, and encourage social relationships through the Grace and Courtesy exercises. Early examples: buttoning a shirt, water pouring, flower arranging, assembling a flashlight, nuts and bolts, bead stringing, tonging, clothespin work, blowing one's nose, sweeping, setting the table, greeting a friend, care of

animals. Later examples: snack prep and serving, addressing a letter, sewing, working with money, washing and folding, tying shoes, woodworking.

The **Sensorial** materials enable the child to explore and identify, compare and contrast, recognize similarities and differences and classify sensory impressions in relation to size, color, temperature, texture, scent, taste, pitch, and more. Early examples: pink tower, brown stair, geometric solids, smelling bottles, color boxes, mystery bag. Later examples: binomial and trinomial cube, constructive triangles, color gradations and mixing, patterns and sequencing.

Montessori **Math** nurtures the mind through the manipulation of materials with the goal of understanding concepts concretely through self-discovery rather than memorization. Math materials allow the child to physically hold a quantity, feel the dimensions, and associate the corresponding symbol. Later, by combining the quantities, separating them into categories, counting them, and comparing them, they comprehend the basic operations of arithmetic. Early examples: sandpaper numerals, cards and counters, teen/tens/hundred boards, memory game. Later examples: decimal system work, addition/subtraction games (bank, stamp, and snake), addition/subtraction

charts, fraction work, bead work, even vs. odd, counting by 2s/3s/etc.

**Language** includes the development of expressive (writing and speech), interpretive (reading), and receptive (listening) language. This is achieved through a series of sequential materials, specifically designed to, through a natural process of maturation, transition the child from the mechanical execution to the abstract interpretation of language. Early examples: sandpaper letters, letter sound boxes, introduction to the moveable alphabet, letter tracing. Later examples: pink/blue/green reading series, writing, word games, story telling.

Cultural activities expose the child to the basics in **Geography, History, and Sciences**. Early examples: continent boxes, 3 part cultural cards, space/planet works, sink or float work, volcano work. Later examples: life cycle of different plants and animals, labeling the parts of different plants and animals, map making, continent-specific projects, and classifications of living things (vertebrate/invertebrate, carnivore/herbivore/omnivore, mammals vs reptiles, etc).

**Music, Art, Food, and Movement** are part of the integrated cultural curriculum. Examples: yoga, cooking, dance, and music.



Here are some Montessori articles that have inspired or interested us:

From Google to Amazon, How Montessori-Educated Founders Have Changed the World

<https://www.forbes.com/sites/stevedenning/2011/08/02/is-montessori-the-origin-of-google-amazon>

The Montessori Mafia

<https://www.wsj.com/articles/BL-IMB-2034>

What to Know About Montessori Preschools

<https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/19/parenting/montessori-preschools.html>

How to think like a genius: The Montessori method

<https://www.houstonchronicle.com/local/gray-matters/article/How-to-think-like-a-genius-The-Montessori-method-7966410.php>

Montessori preschool boosts academic results and reduces income-based inequality [https://](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/10/171030084800.htm)

[www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/10/171030084800.htm](https://www.sciencedaily.com/releases/2017/10/171030084800.htm)

Montessori: A Good School Choice for Smart Kids?  
<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/going-beyond-intelligence/201701/montessori-good-school-choice-smart-kids>

The Pros & Cons of Montessori Education [https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/pros\\_cons\\_montessori\\_education/](https://www.rasmussen.edu/degrees/education/blog/pros_cons_montessori_education/)

Studies Shed Light on Merits of Montessori Education  
<https://www.usnews.com/news/national-news/articles/2018-01-02/studies-shed-light-on-merits-of-montessori-education>

Books we LOVE and have tattered with our marginalia:

The Discovery of the Child by Maria Montessori

Theories of Childhood: An Introduction to Dewey, Montessori, Erikson, Piaget & Vygotsky by Carol Mooney

The Joyful Child by Susan Stephenson

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius by Angeline Lillard

Let Me Do it Myself!: Secrets for Raising a Capable,

Confident & Considerate Toddler by Ginny Trierweiler

The Secret of Childhood by Maria Montessori

## **II. To Prepare For The First Day**

### Paperwork

Please be sure you have submitted signed copies of the following by or on the first day of school: CA Licensing Enrollment Forms, Vaccination Records, LP Enrollment Contract, Sick Policy, and LP Family Questionnaire. If you have not received any of the above, please reach out to Miss Faith for a copy.

### Quickbooks

Quickbooks is the platform we use to pay tuition and any other invoices. Please look out for your Enrollment/Materials invoice in June and your September tuition invoice in August. Please let us know if you have any questions about the payment system. You will receive monthly Quickbooks tuition invoices via email.

### Seesaw

Seesaw is a wonderful platform that connects teachers, students, and parents. This is where you can go in the

first week for a little peace of mind – to get updates on your little one, what they're up to, and how their day is going! We will use this platform nearly every day of the school year, posting your child's work and quick snapshots or videos we can grab throughout the day. It is private, and only the child's family will be able to see his or her "journal." Group or class photos may be accessible to the whole parent community.

Seesaw also offers features like parent/teacher private messaging, school-wide notifications, and the ability for parents to share an idea for a lesson or craft with the teachers. Miss Faith will be inviting you all individually by email to join our private school group.

\*\*Please note for important school-wide notifications, Miss Faith will always also email the mailing list or call/text you directly – should you not have immediate access to Seesaw.

### Contacts

Miss Faith's phone number, 415.254.5422, is the number to use for communication during the school day.

Secondary phone numbers in case of emergency are

Miss Vanessa at 818.284.7728 and Miss Annica at 805.657.0584. Please do not use these numbers regularly or as a default; these numbers are to use only if you are not able to immediately reach Faith.

## Cubbies

Here is what you will need to bring for your child's cubby. **Please try to find as exact a match as possible to the below products. We have tried many, many variations of these products over the years, and have concluded these are the most ergonomic for little hands. Even if there is a cuter pattern in another style, often these variations are too hard for children to operate themselves, and they can quickly feel frustrated when their friends can put away their own things and they cannot. The Wildkin napmat is a required item. Please do not bring a different brand/style of napmat.** *Please make sure everything your child brings to school is labeled with his or her name.* We do have extras of some of these items, so please let Miss Faith know if you need any assistance buying these items. If you have any questions about any of below items and whether your chosen style of item will work, feel free to ask Miss Faith.

-Cubby Bin, measuring 11 x 11 x 11 in, example: <https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09BCZJ2WV/>

[ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_2](#)

-Indoor Slippers with rubber bottoms, that are easy to put on and take off, example: <https://www.amazon.com/Beeliss-Toddler-Slippers-Cartoon-Crochet/dp/B0753WD2RP/m>

-Nap Mat, that can be easily rolled and velcroed, example: <https://www.amazon.com/Wildkin-Nap-Mat-this-World/dp/B004FM7VOW>

-Lunchbox that is waterproof and closable with zipper or easy clasp and Water Bottle -- both of which your child can theoretically (with our help and practice, first, of course, if needed) operate themselves. I.e. not a lunchbox you, as an adult, struggle to open and close. examples:

[https://www.amazon.com/Bentgo-Kids-Prints-Unicorn-5-Compartment/dp/B07QZ4CRP3/ref=sr\\_1\\_6](https://www.amazon.com/Bentgo-Kids-Prints-Unicorn-5-Compartment/dp/B07QZ4CRP3/ref=sr_1_6)

[https://www.amazon.com/CamelBak-Kids-Water-Bottle-Unicorns/dp/B015DK94R6/ref=sr\\_1\\_3](https://www.amazon.com/CamelBak-Kids-Water-Bottle-Unicorns/dp/B015DK94R6/ref=sr_1_3)

-Backpack that **easily** fits lunchbox, water bottle, a change of clothes, and any artwork/Show & Share

extras, example:

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08CS46L52/  
ref=redir\\_mobile\\_desktop](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08CS46L52/ref=redir_mobile_desktop)

-Outdoor shoes your child can easily learn to put on and take off themselves. We change our shoes twice a day. Teachers will always help a child take off and put on their shoes, but please do not bring a child in lace up shoes if he or she has not yet learned how to tie them. Please do not bring your child in shoes you yourself struggle to remove or put on them. This can set children up for frustration and a lack of independence in the classroom. Examples of good options:

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09T8VZJGQ/  
ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_6](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B09T8VZJGQ/ref=sspa_dk_detail_6)

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08913GC78/  
ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_4](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08913GC78/ref=sspa_dk_detail_4)

Any sandals should be closed-toe, examples:

[https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08CS6ZLND/  
ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_0](https://www.amazon.com/dp/B08CS6ZLND/ref=sspa_dk_detail_0)

<https://www.amazon.com/dp/B07LCQLFSJ/>

[ref=sspa\\_dk\\_detail\\_6](#)

-3-4 changes of clothes for potty trained friends, 8-10 for potty training friends

-Sweater or jacket in case it gets chilly

-Wide brimmed hat or baseball hat

-4-5 child-sized face masks in case of a COVID exposure at school

-Sunscreen, should you want us to re-apply it before going outside in the afternoon

-1 month supply of diapers and wet wipes for diaper friends

One last reminder to **\*PLEASE LABEL ALL CLOTHES AND BELONGINGS.\*** Thank you so much!!

Earthquake Kits

The school maintains a three-day emergency supply of



food, water, and first aid equipment in sealed containers, to provide for all children and staff. We also have packed backpacks ready to go for any evacuation emergencies. While we supply the necessary items, we encourage parents to feel free to bring a small supply of items for your child such as non-perishable snacks that they will enjoy, a small flashlight, and a bottle of water. A special comfort item from home that will not be missed while it is stored is appreciated.

### Naptime

At Little Paws, the children lie down to nap from 12:30-2 pm. We darken the room, play peaceful music, and the children lie in sleeping bags on mats. We help to remind them to stay on their mats as peacefully as they can and try to rest.\*

*Note: Please read below studies on the importance of naptime/afternoon rest in early childhood and its vital role in memory consolidation, emotional processing, and overall health. We take this science seriously. Please do not ask us to try to keep your child from falling asleep so that they go to bed earlier at night. The Montessori morning curriculum is rigorous and it is our policy to let a child sleep during naptime if they are tired. If they are not tired, they are more than welcome to read a book quietly on their beds.*

*The Role of Naps in Memory and Executive Functioning in Early Childhood*

<https://par.nsf.gov/servlets/purl/10251344>

*Day-time Naps Promote Vocabulary Growth in Early Childhood*

<https://www.acamh.org/research-digest/day-time-naps-promote-vocabulary-growth-in-early-childhood/>

Especially if they've never napped away from home before, this can be a time when a new student experiences a bout of separation anxiety. Below are some ways you can prepare your child over the summer for naptime at school. The more you can work on these things at home and create consistency, the better set up for success they will be at school. The first month of school will be full of all kinds of new experiences and people, so laying the groundwork for certain routines will take one less unexpected thing off your child's plate.

1. If they are still sleeping in a crib, practice naptime on a floor bed or mat each afternoon, so they can start to have more freedom to exercise self-control. If they try to

get off their bed and run around or make loud noise, you can gently remind them that at naptime they do not have to sleep, but they must rest quietly on their bed.

2. Start talking to your child about how they will be taking a nap at school soon, and how their teachers will be there to keep them safe and comfortable. (If your child does not yet have the words to tell us, feel free to give us any guidance regarding whether they like to be soothed or left alone, and how best we can communicate with them about resting on their beds).

3. Help them to practice rolling and unrolling their nap mat so that they are familiar with their bed, feel ownership of it, and feel comfortable lying on it.

4. If they are still using a pacifier or bottle at this time, start to phase those out. Your child is more than welcome to bring one stuffed animal to comfort them and cuddle with during naptime.

5. If they are napping during a different time window, you could start moving their nap closer to 12:30, so that their bodies become acclimated to their school schedule.

\*Your child must return to school each week with their napmat. If you forget their napmat at home, we will ask you to come back with it before lunchtime.

### Little Steps Toward Independence

A tenet of the Montessori method is building up a child's sense of dignity and confidence by encouraging his or her independence in daily routines. As teachers, we are utterly delighted to help a child with anything they need help with, but we also like to empower them when we hear that beautiful plea: "Let me do it myself!" We might even ask a child to try to do something his or herself before doing it for them. Maria Montessori said that, as adults, we often unwittingly rob children of the opportunity to learn by doing things for them. While we may think we are being helpful, we can actually sometimes be thwarting their development and sense of dignity by implying to them that they are incapable of performing basic tasks for themselves.

One way you can help your child prepare for their first foray into Montessori school is to give them little jobs around the house and empower them to do simple self-care. You may already do these things, but if you haven't yet, consider encouraging your child to try to:

1. Throw away their own trash
2. Wash their own plate or cup
3. Pour their own water
4. Put on and take off their own shoes and socks
5. Clean up their own toys, books, or play space
6. Zip/unzip their own bag and lunchbox or open and close their own water bottle
7. Stay seated in a normal chair while eating meals or snacks
8. Help you buckle or unbuckle their carseat
9. Walk whenever possible, rather than be carried. (We do not carry the children at all at school. Rather we get down on their level to communicate with/teach/comfort them so that they feel more confident and in control).
10. Wear their own backpack or carry their own small bag, rather than you carrying everything for them
11. Brush their own teeth (or give them a turn to brush their own teeth before you finish the job)
12. Blow their own nose (or give them a turn to try)
13. Wash their own hands
14. Wipe after the toilet themselves (or give them a turn to try) for potty trained friends. Hold the baby wipes or help you take off their diaper for diaper friends.
15. Verbalize the exact things they need, and practice

asking for it politely, rather than just waiting for you to do it for them.\*

16. Exercise self-control by using walking feet indoors, indoor voices, etc.

To be clear, we by no means expect new friends to be doing all these things when they arrive at school. These are simply suggestions of things we do at school that you could implement at home to help make your child feel more comfortable, confident, and prepared in their new surroundings. Your child may also feel considerably less separation anxiety if they have already practiced having agency over their own body and choices.

\*Encourage verbal rather than physical communication. If your child is prone to push, encourage him or her to ask for "space, please!". If your child begins to cry or whine when they want something, encourage them to ask for it by name.

## Transitions

An essential part of our job as teachers is easing your child's transition from home into the school environment. No matter what their personality, this is a huge change, and we want them to feel **safe, loved, and supported every step of the way!**

Here are a few things we do to ensure your child feels as comfortable as possible in this (understandably!) confusing time.

- lots of TLC; eg. hugs if they want them, playing their favorite song and dancing to it, reading them a comforting book on our lap, or offering them activities in their favorite theme - pretty much whatever helps them feel more cozy and happy at school

- re-iterating that "It is ok to be sad. It is ok to cry. Mommy/Daddy/x always comes back. You are safe with Miss Faith/Caroline/Vanessa/Annica. We love you and will take care of you."

- Inviting older friends to take their hand if they are comfortable with that, and show them how we play in the garden

- Staying busy with games, puzzles, art, and projects

- Avoiding any pressure around potty, big new lessons, or anything that makes them feel uncomfortable in these first few days

If your child is starting school for the first time, here is what you will do the first 3 days:

Day 1 - Walk through the back garden with your child and a teacher and walk into the cubby room. Put away

your cubby, change your shoes, and encourage your child to enter the classroom for work time with a teacher. You can tell them you will stay in the cubby room in case they need to come see you. After one hour you will take them and head home. If your child is able to say goodbye to you without any trouble, you can try leaving them for longer - but we usually just do one hour this first day, so that they feel good about their first experience and confident to come back the next day.

Day 2 - Walk into the back garden with your child and a teacher, and let them know you will be working in the garage and they will go inside the classroom to play. (You can prepare them for this idea before school, as well). We will let them know that if they need to see you, they can ask and we will bring them to the garage to visit with you. We will try to do the whole morning this way. When they are ready to go home (if before noon), we will let you know and you will take them home.

Day 3 - Say goodbye at the front gate. We will try the full day unless you have already indicated you want to try nap at a later date.

If at any point your child indicates they are comfortable



with you leaving, that is your cue to go. We will take good care of them, and the less prolonged the transition period with you around, the less confusing it will be for them. However, we provide above options so that you can feel confident your child feels heard and respected by us these first few days while they are still getting to know us.

Here are a few things you can do during the first first weeks to help your child have a more comfortable transition:

- Go through the steps of drop off, their day, and pick up with your child before they come in to school. For example, "Henry, do you remember that today you're going to school? Do you know what will happen at school? Here is what will happen. Let's say it together. We will walk up to the Little Paws Gate and have our special hug. Then you will say hello to Miss Faith, take her hand and go into the class and play games with your friends inside. Then I will come pick you up and we will go home together, and do x." (Or if on Day 1 or 2, refer to above schedules).

- Do not hover if you can help it. We know how difficult this is! Even if it feels like you are helping your child by

staying when they cry for you, it is actually usually prolonging the inevitable and creating a confusing situation for them. In our experience, 9 times out of 10, a child stops crying within minutes of their caregiver leaving. Empower your child by trusting them, and make them more comfortable by trusting their teachers to take good care of them. If a child is upset for a prolonged period of time, Miss Faith will **always** let you know so that you can advise or come pick up or comfort your child.

Over the summer, feel free to check out our website or Yelp for pictures you can show your child of the space, toys, lessons, and teachers. They may feel more comfortable if they recognize the teachers and rooms.

This transition is a two-way street, and we really look forward to hearing more in your questionnaire about what works at home for you when comforting your child so that we can better serve your child at school! Our number one priority always is for your child to feel safe and happy.

### **III. School Year Policies**

Fire Drills & Earthquake Procedures

We practice monthly fire evacuation drills and quarterly disaster drills including earthquake and lockdown procedures. Staff are trained on an ongoing basis. A full Emergency Protocols Plan is attached separately and posted in the cubby room and we encourage you to read it.

If for any reason we need to leave the facility to ensure the safety of the children and staff (fire, building danger, security threat, etc), we have two emergency meeting locations:

1. The lock and key garden of 1347 N Mansfield Ave, the neighboring building directly North of us on our side of the street. This is our default meeting place. The owners of the building are Syrus and Aria Danial and their phone number is 310.359.3719. A second and third contact in the building are Isra at 203.550.9042 and Ari at 818.913.3419. Please do not use these phone numbers unless you are unable to reach Faith or another teacher.

2. Black Canvas Coffee, the coffee shop 2 blocks away at DeLongpre and Highland. Their address is 1411 N Highland Ave and their phone number is 323.380.7951. This location will only be used if the emergency's threat extends to our neighbor's garden.

We will exit Little Paws with our emergency backpacks - a teacher taking attendance as we leave, and we will walk to our evacuation site all together using our handled rope.

Parents will be notified by Seesaw, cell phone, and email as soon as possible.

As usual, please use Miss Faith's cell first by default, which is 415.254.5422. If you are unable to reach her, you may also call Miss Vanessa at 818.284.7728, Miss Annica at 805.657.0584, or Miss Caroline at 773.592.6123. Please take a moment to save these numbers in your phone in case you need them, but please do not use them unless you are unable to reach Miss Faith.

### "Ouchie" Report Policy

If a child becomes injured or hurts another child (even minorly) while at school, a teacher will write a quick text or make a call summarizing what occurred to inform you. In the event of any serious incident, you will be notified immediately by phone call.

### Field Trips

We have two field trips per year. They take place on Fridays. Every child is required to have a parent or

caregiver accompany them on our field trips and be responsible for their safety. Please take note of the date of these field trips on the calendar. Costs associated with the field trips will be collected via Quickbooks leading up to the event.

### Pet Policy

Animals at or visiting Little Paws Montessori are carefully chosen in regards to care, temperament, health risks, and appropriateness for young children. Before bringing your pet to visit, please provide the teachers a specific date and time, as well as a copy of the pet's vaccination records. Children with allergies to animals will always be accommodated.

### Birthdays

The Montessori birthday circle is a super special occasion that children excitedly await! OK, and teachers, too!! We will celebrate your child's birthday unless directed otherwise by your beliefs. The traditional Montessori celebration involves singing "The Earth moves around the Sun" song during circle time, as your child holds our model of the Earth and revolves around the model of the Sun for as many years as they are turning! You are most welcome to bring pictures of your child at each age for us to incorporate into the circle.

Parents are welcome to drop off a birthday treat to be enjoyed during afternoon snack from 2:45-3 pm, but no refined sugar, please. Take-home goodie bags or other treats are most welcome, but please discuss with Miss Faith before bringing balloons, entertainers, or any other elements that may potentially be disruptive to the environment.

### Parent Involvement

Parent involvement is highly encouraged. We plan parent nights as well as suggest weekend family activities in the monthly newsletters. Please feel free to suggest an additional one at any time! We'd love to help organize! We also love how parents join us on field trips. We invite you to schedule a visit should you ever be moved to demonstrate any interesting hobby or talent to the children, as well. Some other fun family activities we organize are our Halloween Carnival, Thanksgiving Feast, "Holidays Around The World" presentations, and Mother's Day tea. If you would like to come read to the children, you may do that any Monday or Friday at 2:40 pm. Please schedule in advance with Miss Faith.

### Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are offered twice a year in the Fall and Spring, although they may be scheduled at any time if a parent has a concern or particular dialogue to

pursue. Teachers will observe and record information on children's development. We will share the information with you, learn from your knowledge of your child, and together plan for more opportunities to grow. We will keep your child's information strictly confidential.

If this is your child's first year at Little Paws, you are required to attend your Fall and Spring parent conferences as well as Parents' Night in September. You may also be invited to a summer Zoom call to review the answers you provided in your Family Questionnaire.

A conference can be called by the teachers at any time throughout the year to discuss a specific behavioral issue with your child. These conferences are mandatory and will be held in person. If a serious behavioral issue arises and you are not available to come in for a conference within the week, we reserve the right to ask you to keep your child home until you are able to meet and help us put a joint plan of action in place. Please see the Intervention section for more details on behavioral conferences.

### Naps

We believe in the importance of afternoon rest time for

a child's wellbeing during these busy days at school. California licensing requires that children under 5 be given the opportunity to nap for 90 minutes each day. Though they do not have to fall asleep, LP friends are encouraged to rest quietly on their napmats. We provide soft washable pads for all the children to place their napmats on. We send your child's napmats home with you every Friday to be washed and returned Monday. If you forget your child's napmat on Monday morning, we will ask you to return with it before noon.

Children ages 5 and up who do not fall asleep may join Miss Faith for an hour long "Kindergarten" class in the garden during naptime.

### Potty Training

Ideally, friends at Little Paws should be potty trained when they begin school. That said, we understand some take longer than others to complete the process; not to mention, the new environment can cause some regression! We are here to help you!

We do ask that friends who are actively potty training wear regular underwear to school every day, as pull-ups tend to slow the process down considerably and can confuse them a lot. You can expect many loads of laundry for a few weeks, but it's so worth it! Please also



give the teachers any information you can about what words you use for the potty at home, so we can be consistent between home and school. We tend to take potty training friends to the bathroom close to every 20 minutes when they are still having accidents, so that could be another good thing to do at home for consistency.

If you plan to start potty training while school is in session, please discuss a plan with Miss Faith **in advance** of starting at home, so we can all be on the same page. Please request the LP Potty Training Guide when you are ready to initiate this conversation.

### Diapers

In Montessori schools, we change diaper-wearing friends standing up rather than lying down. This helps our young friends feel more control in this vulnerable moment and helps them transition more easily into potty training when the time comes. In the spirit of creating consistency between home and school, consider practicing standing diaper changes with your child. This is, of course, a personal choice - but could be another opportunity to prepare your child for what is to come at school so there are no uncomfortable surprises.

*More on standing changing in the Montessori setting:*

*Standing Nappy Changes: Why & How*

<https://www.montessorichild.com.au/blogs/news/17497868-standing-nappy-changes-why-how>

Whether in diapers or in the process of potty training, **please do not bring your child in pull-ups.**

### Drop-off

We require that each child be escorted to the front gate by an authorized family member, friend, or caregiver, between 8:30 and 9 am. If you cannot drop off by 9 am, you will need to wait until 10:30 am to drop off - when our Montessori work period has ended. There is a charge of \$25 each day for drop-off after 9:00 am without prior notification provided to Miss Faith. When dropping off, the parent (or other caregiver) helps the child until they are visibly in the care of a teacher, and signs them in on the iPad with a timestamp.

Unless it is your child's first week at school, please do not walk in past the front gate at drop off. The children inside are busy working and any unexpected interruptions can be disruptive.

Please do not carry your child into school when you

drop them off. They should walk in on their own two feet. The first steps they take in to school set the tone for their day. We advise that you help your child walk in carrying their own bag, even if this is unfamiliar to them at first.

Especially when separation anxiety is present in a child, drop-off can be anxiety-provoking for their parent at first, too. However, we have found that it becomes much trickier and more distressing to the child when a parent lingers for too

long a time. Remember that your child takes their cue from you, their most trusted figure! The more confident you are in your child's ability to have a wonderful day and adjust to their surroundings/trust their teachers, the more confident they themselves will feel.

*This may go without saying, but please do not start the day at the gate with a comment like "Henry had a really hard morning. He woke up too early and might be extra sensitive today" in front of your child. This is not a good way to start the day. While we greatly appreciate this information, details like this should be sent to Miss Faith over text or explained after the child is already inside and out of earshot.*

Again, **we are here to help**, and make this process as cozy and positive as possible for your child.

### Pick-Up

Pick-up is at 3 pm sharp. There is a charge of \$25 per 1/4 hour or any part of a 1/4 hour for pick-up after 3 pm.

Feel free to enter through the inner gate and wait in the front garden at pick-up time. While you await your child, you will clock them out on the iPad. You can also check their Going Home Folder for artwork or other items, or encourage them to do that themselves when they walk out to you.

On Fridays - or Thursdays for Tuesday/Thursday friends - you can also take this opportunity to collect their Show & Share item from the basket and their napmat from the bin (to be washed at home over the weekend).

As Little Paws lies within a residential neighborhood, we do appreciate your cooperation leaving the premises in a timely manner and not allowing the children to play loudly in the front garden or on the sidewalk. With the teachers exiting through the driveway around this time, it is also not safe for the

children to be running around unattended.

If your child would like to play after school with friends, DeLongpre Park is 4 blocks away at DeLongpre and Cherokee. This is a favorite after-school spot! There is a playground and the park is safely enclosed by a fence.

### Belongings

One last reminder to please take a few minutes to mark your child's clothing and belongings with their name. This will aid our teachers in daily operation as well as ensure your belongings get home with your child!

### Absences

Please let Miss Faith know by text/email before 8:30 am if your child will be absent. It is important for us to know if your child will not be coming to school.

### Sick Policy

Children who are not physically well won't fare well in a learning environment. They may also be contagious and pass their illness on to other children, teachers, and members of the community. Please find our detailed Sick Policy, including Covid-19 policies, attached separately.

## Medications

We understand that children will occasionally need to take medicine (such as antibiotics) at school. Any medications given to the child will be at Miss Faith's discretion, and must be in the original (prescription) container, with the physician's instructions on it.

A parent's signature is required to authorize us to administer prescription medication. Please ask Miss Faith to provide the medication form for you to fill out.

A physician's signature is not required for these non-prescription medicines: antihistamines, cough medicine, decongestants, anti-itching cream, diaper ointments, powders, and sun screens. However, parents must fill out the authorization form, and non-prescription medicine must also be in its original container.

A written physician's permission is required for other non-prescription medicines not on the authorized list. We are not authorized to administer herbs or vitamins without a prescription.

All children must have up-to-date vaccination records on file by their first day of attendance.

## Medical Emergencies

Our procedure for life threatening emergencies is as follows:

- Immediately call 911 and 323.361.2120 for an ambulance to Children's Hospital Emergency Room
- Administer First Aid and/or CPR as appropriate
- Notify parents or guardians
- Transport child to Children's Hospital as appropriate (see hospital details below)
- Document emergency and file in child's file

In case of illness or accident, it is necessary for us to know where you may be reached at all times. Please keep a current list of emergency contact information on record with us at all times. We will begin by contacting primary caregivers and move down the list until we speak to one of you directly.

In the event of an accident, allergic reaction, illness or other situation where a child is **stable** but potentially in danger, we will use our discretion in whether or not to call an ambulance. We will make every attempt to reach you while making this decision.

Our local hospital is Children's Hospital of Los Angeles (located 1 mile from our facility).

The address is:

Children's Hospital Los Angeles  
4650 Sunset Blvd, Los Angeles, CA 90027  
Emergency Call Phone: 323-361-2120  
Regular Phone: 323-660-2450

From their website:

"Our division treats more than 88,000 infants, children and adolescents who need emergency care each year. The emergency department is a designated level I pediatric trauma critical care center and pediatric critical care center. Children with severe illness or critical injury are treated by our emergency department. Children with non-life threatening illnesses or injuries are cared for in lower acuity areas.

As a Level I Pediatric Trauma Center, we are one of 12 hospitals in the nation providing the highest level of emergency care for children. Our specialized trauma team consists of emergency and critical care physicians, surgeons and ancillary personnel. The nursing team is comprised of caring and experienced nurses with a passion for treating children.

We are also designated as a pediatric critical care center, a designation signifying the ability to provide emergency and critical care for ill and injured patients from infancy



through adolescence."

### Cleaning and Disinfecting

At Little Paws, we clean and sanitize the classroom work and surfaces throughout the day. Hand washing is mandatory when entering the classroom in the morning, coming in from outside, before meals, and after restroom trips. Cleaning products are stored in a locked closet or high cabinet.

### Toys/Show & Share

We try to have children only bring items from home for Show & Share on Fridays (or Thursdays for Tuesday/Thursday friends), or to keep in their cubby for naptime. We have found that in certain instances the use of personal items has also helped with transitioning, arrivals, etc. Based on this, we are open to discussion about bringing a special item at drop off. \*Please\* discuss with Miss Faith beforehand. Please do not wait until drop off at the front gate to ask a teacher if a child may bring in a toy.

We do Show & Share on Fridays. If your child would like to participate, they may bring an item that relates to our weekly theme. The weekly themes will be listed in the monthly newsletter.

## Lunch & Snacks

We ask parents to provide lunch for the school day. We provide morning and afternoon snack.

Per the Department of Early Learning, each of our snacks must contain at least 2 out of the following:

- a milk product (such as cheese or yogurt)
- a meat or meat alternative (such as meat, legumes, beans, egg)
- a grain product (such as pretzel, bagel, rice cake or bread)
- fruit or vegetable

We serve cold, filtered water at every snack-time.

Good nutrition is an important element in our overall program. In your child's lunchbox, please pack adequate amounts of protein, which plays an important role in your child's growth and stamina throughout the day, and please keep sugar items to a minimum. We do not allow soda or gum at our center, and a recent California state law requires we do not serve a child more than one juice per day. Please make sure your child's water bottle is filled with water every morning.

Need ideas of what food to bring in your child's bento box lunch? Here are some

suggestions:

- fresh or dried fruits (apples, bananas, grapes, kiwi, oranges, plums, berries)
- fresh vegetables (carrots, celery, cucumber, broccoli, green beans, tomatoes)
- sandwiches or wraps (avocado, turkey, tuna, etc)
- cheese (string, cubes, slices, cottage)
- beans, rice, quinoa
- sushi
- mixed nuts (we will keep you updated on any allergies)
- shredded chicken, turkey sausage, deli meats
- yogurt
- hard boiled eggs
- crackers with hummus
- soup, mac and cheese, or pasta leftovers

We are happy to warm up portions of your child's lunch in the microwave. If your child is unable to ask us this (or might forget), feel free to write us a note in the lunchbox or send your instructions by text before school.

### Allergies

If there are allergies in the class, you will be notified prior to the first day of school so that you can be mindful when bringing class-wide treats for birthdays, potlucks, or other

group events. We cannot guarantee a nut-free or allergy-free environment, but we do accommodate children with allergies by clearing all school snacks in advance with their parents (or by stocking up on their special approved snacks) and by providing them the opportunity to sit at a lunch table that is free of their specific food allergens. If your child has any allergies or dietary restrictions (vegetarian, vegan, etc.), please be sure you communicate this to Miss Faith by August 1 to allow plenty of time for parent chain notification and snack planning.

### Licensing

Little Paws Montessori is licensed by the State of California, facility #198020948. We meet all health and safety standards required by the California State Department of Social and Health Services. There are regular health and fire inspections, and our license is renewed as required.

We recognize, value, and promote diversity. It is the policy of Little Paws Montessori that no person shall be subjected to discrimination because of race, gender, color, national origin, sex, sexual orientation, age, religion, creed, marital status, or disabled status. Little Paws Montessori acknowledges and protects the rights of children, families, and staff to their own culture and to the customs, beliefs, and practices that comprise that culture.

## Insurance

Little Paws Montessori carries full insurance coverage including liability and accident policies.

## Behavior Policy

Goals: We will work in partnership with parents to develop independently thinking children who:

- respect themselves and others
- feel a sense of belonging
- contribute to their community in their own way and with joy and pride
- accept and include diverse people
- solve problems peacefully
- take responsibility for their own behavior
- practice mindfulness

Philosophy: We strive to produce a safe and secure environment for the entire school community. We promote the child's rights to develop as an individual through making mistakes and learning from them. The boundaries we set are designed to never punish the child, but rather to help the child grow into a respectful, responsible, and peaceful individual who is capable of making the best decisions for themselves and their environment.

Methods: We prepare a child-centered, calm, and interesting environment with child-centered activities. We will always respect the child and focus on the goodness of their hearts. We will model and actively teach social skills: how to share, take turns, ask for things, communicate, etc. We teachers are also human and make mistakes, too. We will be sure to point out our own mistakes, too, and discuss how we can make better choices the next time around ourselves. We encourage parents to do this, too! It can be nice for the children to realize they are not alone in sometimes having a tough time making the best choices.

Every Monday afternoon, we begin the week with a Mindfulness class, and we repeat these activities often throughout the week. Please see below for some tools and activities we use to help the children develop a mindfulness practice. We have found it is helpful to introduce a child to these tools **before** a tantrum or conflict arises, and on an ongoing basis, so that they feel more in control to self-soothe when that does happen.

12 Simple Ways To Teach Mindfulness to Kids

<https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/breathe-mama-breathe/201605/12-simple-ways-teach-mindfulness-kids>

If a child has a "tantrum" for any reason, our practice is to guide them to a private area with one teacher and let them know we are here to comfort and support them, and to listen as soon as they are able to communicate their needs. We offer to hug them, and if they do not want to be touched, we respect their space in a positive, loving way, and sit with them until they are a feeling better.

Children will learn to solve conflict with each other through respectful discussion. We will give the children appropriate positive attention for positive behavior. We will never inflict pain, humiliate, frighten, or shame any child for any reason whatsoever.

We will deal with inappropriate behavior through respectful but firm reminders, allowing time and space to cool-off without judgment, encouragement of peace games/mindfulness activities in the peace corner, and consistency in implementing solution-oriented natural or logical consequences. Kind but firm consistency is the name of the game for us when it comes to setting boundaries.

The first month of school we will all make rules for our community together. From there, we will consistently

explain that it is your child's choice to follow any rule, but if they do not follow a rule, they may have the consequence of not being able to participate in certain community activities as a result. We want the children to know that they should not feel ashamed for not being able to follow every group rule all the time; while also understanding the reality that every choice in a group may have a consequence. (For example, if there is a rule that we don't knock over each other's blocks when building blocks together, and a child repeatedly knocks over their partner's blocks, they will be asked to stop working with that partner until they can follow the rule. However, they might be invited to work by themselves on the blocks).

The following are a list of unacceptable "choices" at Little Paws:

- physical abuse or injury of another student or staff member at Little Paws
- invalidation or emotional bullying of any kind
- purposeful damage to the environment or the belongings of other friends
- screaming to the point of prolonged disruption to the learning environment

Intervention: Whenever a child continues to hurt others physically or emotionally or destroy their property, we will conference with the parents to cooperatively work



out suitable behavior goals for the child and techniques to help him or her improve in these areas. We will also implement a timetable to evaluate progress. Parents will take a child home in case of repeated hurting of other children and staff or disruption to the learning environment. If prolonged screaming is due to separation anxiety, we will similarly make a plan with tailored techniques and a timeline specific to your child's needs.

**Disenrollment:** Disenrollment is extremely rare, but would be used when, despite the best efforts of the parents and staff, a child's behavior continues to:

- threaten the safety of children or staff
- result in the destruction of property
- seriously and regularly interfere with the ability of classmates to learn and play

### Religion

We do not disseminate any religious teachings in the classroom. Like most secular schools, we employ philosophies from many cultures and beliefs. A statement such as "some people believe" would accompany any remarks concerning religious beliefs.

We do encourage parents and staff to share their celebration of meaningful religious or cultural

holidays with us in an age-appropriate manner. We believe an open sharing of such customs and beliefs expands the children's understanding of the world. It is also a way to learn acceptance and appreciation for other people's beliefs and differences.

Nothing that we would do at the school is meant to supersede or interfere with your own personal teachings. The foundation laid in your home is by far the strongest basis for your child's spiritual growth. If you feel your child is confused by a school discussion, we encourage you to reinforce our statement of "some people believe...".

### Child Abuse/Neglect

We are obligated by law to report any suspicion of child abuse or neglect to Child Protective Services.

Please visit <https://www.cde.ca.gov/ls/ss/ap/childabusereportingguide.asp> to read the Mandated Reporter identification and reporting guidelines. Every teacher at Little Paws has undergone the Mandated Reporter training.

### Wildfire, COVID, or other emergency closures

We will make every attempt to stay open and service you. However, in the case of an unforeseen threat or

emergency in the area, please check Seesaw (be sure push notifications are turned on), email, and phone. These are the primary ways we will notify you of school closures, late starts, etc. In these instances, please respond with confirmation of receipt of the news.

### Covid-19 Protocols

As of the writing of this version, we plan to continue our weekly PCR testing at Little Paws on Wednesdays. You will receive an email with instructions on how to sign up for the testing through DoctorNow. The tests are conducted by teachers at Little Paws and sent to the lab for processing. You will receive your child's results on Thursday. If your child is a Tuesday/Thursday friend, please give your child a rapid test every Wednesday and report the results to Miss Faith. You may ask Little Paws to provide the rapid tests to you.

Other Covid-19 protocols such as close contact exposure and quarantine period are listed in the Covid-19 sub-section of our Sick Policy.

Please do not come to school if you or your children have experienced the following:

cough

shortness of breath or difficulty breathing

chills

muscle pain/ body aches  
fatigue  
headache  
sore throat  
runny or stuffy nose  
loss of taste or smell  
diarrhea  
vomiting  
feeling feverish or a measured temperature of 100  
degrees Fahrenheit  
known close contact with a person who is confirmed or  
suspected to have COVID-19

We reserve the right to ask you to come back another time, and we will if we see any of the above signs.

Every child and teacher **MUST** have a mask available at school. If there is a suspected or confirmed exposure at school, we may decide to wear masks. We do not currently require masks in any other event, but please let us know if you would like your child to wear one. If you expect your child to wear his or her mask at all times during the day (except while eating, drinking, and napping) -- you must provide a mask that does not fall off easily. We cannot guarantee your child will be wearing a mask all day, but we will do our best. Please label every mask your child brings to school.

Temperature checks will be administered if a child is showing any signs of sickness.

Children will wash or sanitize their hands with a teacher before snack and meal times, and before and after play.

Children who become sick at school will be isolated in the office, and will need to be picked up within 30 minutes of Miss Faith's call.

Your safety and the safety of our teachers is our number one priority. We know it can be an inconvenience to keep a child home, but we must do everything to ensure everyone's safety.

#### **IV. Signatures**

I hereby declare that I have read and understood the above Little Paws Montessori policies and guidelines, and that I agree to all the terms.

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Parent: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_