

PARENT HANDBOOK

2025-2026



The Giving Tree Montessori School

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VISION AND MISSION

MARIA MONTESSORI: THE WOMAN, THE EDUCATOR

The Montessori experience is the result of the observations and genius of Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952). Upon graduation as the first woman medical doctor in Italy, Dr. Montessori became interested in the education and training of young children.

Dr. Montessori's observations of children convinced her that each child carries within himself or herself the person he or she will become. Each child's potential is reached through a process of striving, aided by a growing sense of order and self-discipline. Every child must be free to develop at his or her own rate. Montessori designed materials and techniques that allowed her students to work in a way previously considered beyond their capacity. She quickly saw a new and valuable relationship develop within the classroom. No longer was the student dependent on the teacher.

The child was now free to use the environment and other children as tools in his or her learning.

In a Montessori classroom, the teacher, through the study and observation of children, prepares the environment to attract the child. As the child is drawn toward learning, the teacher is free to provide small lessons and observe each child. In turn, each child is free to choose enticing work and repeat it continuously, if desired, until he or she is satisfied. Thus, fostered at an early age, concentration and self-discipline become the cornerstones upon which the child's confidence and competence as a learner are built. Montessori children grow up learning, to observe, to think and to judge. Natural curiosity and tendencies toward learning become the roots from which the older child evolves and emerges as a socially confident and intellectually disciplined adolescent.

Dr. Montessori died in 1952. Today, after over 100 years of international application, the Montessori Method thrives in many countries. In the United States, more than 3,000 schools have been established since 1957. In addition to the national Montessori certification now available to ensure quality Montessori care and education, the National Independent Schools are preparing to include Montessori schools in their certification process.

MISSION

The mission of The Giving Tree Montessori School is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating Montessori environment which will help children develop within themselves the foundation for a lifetime of learning, thinking and living. We are a child centered community that honors individuality and encourages respect for one another and oneself. We believe that the deep commitment and dedication of our small community, which is made up of our school's children, parents and staff members, is vital in the fulfillment of this mission.

VALUES AND OBJECTIVES

Our program rests on these core values and objectives:

1. **Respect** – Self-respect, respect for others, tolerance, honesty, integrity and responsibility.
2. **Compassion** – Concern for one another, for humanity, kindness, peacefulness, understanding, acceptance, and warmth.
3. **Love of Learning** – Discovery, exploration, working together, curiosity, and ownership.
4. **Service** – A lifelong commitment to give something back through service to others who are in need.
5. **Independence** – Doing for oneself, understanding one's own capabilities.
6. **Interdependence** – Responsibility to and healthy dependence upon one another, a love of community.
7. **Excellence** – Quality in all that we do to serve the children, and the cultivation of the pursuit of excellence within our students.
8. **Universal Understanding** – A global perspective, and an understanding of being part of something bigger than oneself.

PROGRAMS

PRIMARY CURRICULUM (AGES 3-6)

The Montessori preschool classroom is a “house” for children. Children choose their work from among the self- correcting materials displayed on open shelves, and they work in specific work areas. Over a period of time, the children develop into a “normalized community,” working with high concentration and few interruptions.

Normalization is the process whereby a child moves from being undisciplined to self-disciplined, from disordered to ordered, from distracted to focused, through work in the environment. The process occurs through repeated work with materials that captivate the child’s attention. For some children this inner change may take place quite suddenly, leading to deep concentration. In the Montessori preschool, academic competency is a means to an end, and the manipulative materials are viewed as “materials for development.”

In the Montessori preschool, five distinct areas constitute the prepared environment:

- **Practical life** enhances the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of the environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and coordination of physical movement.
- The **Sensorial** area enables the child to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, temperature, mass, color, pitch, etc.
- **Mathematics** makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number, symbol, sequence, operations, and memorization of basic facts.
- **Language arts** include oral language development, written expression, reading, the study of grammar, creative dramatics, and children’s literature. Basic skills in writing and reading are developed through the use of sandpaper letters, alphabet cut-outs, and various presentations allowing children to link sounds with letter symbols effortlessly and to express their thoughts through writing.
- **Cultural/Geography** activities expose the child to basics in geography, history, and life sciences. Music, art, and movement education are part of the integrated cultural curriculum.

The preschool environment unifies the psychosocial, physical, and academic functioning of the child. The primary objective of the classroom is to provide students with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security, a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. Enrichment activities such as art, music, movement etc. are also a part of the school day. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career.

SUMMER PROGRAM

The summer months bring a change of weather, schedule, pace and activities for children, ages 2-6. The Summer Program is a nature-based camp with different areas of focus each week for eight weeks. The hours offered during the summer program match those of the regular school year. The children spend more time enjoying outdoor activities as well as arts and crafts projects.

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

The extended day program is a service to parents who need care for their children before and after regular school hours. The hours of this program are as follows:

- Morning – 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m.
- Afternoon – 3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Parents may contract for this service at the beginning of the year or use it on a per day basis (see Fee Schedule for rates). All requests for per-diem morning care, after-care, or full day stay (for half day students) must be approved through the office. Please call ahead or stop by the office to sign up for care. Requests for extended day programs cannot be approved by your child's teacher.

Late Pickup

For parents whose children attend the extended afternoon day program (3:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.), children must be picked up no later than 6:00 p.m. A charge of \$1 per minute will be required from parents for pick-up after 6:00 p.m. (i.e. for pickup at 6:06 - \$6 charge).

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

ADMISSIONS

Children two to six years of age may be considered for admission. Admission shall be determined after consultation between the administrator and the teacher of the appropriate class. An Open House takes place each year in the spring to allow prospective families to meet with the staff and parents of TGTMS.

Families wishing to be considered for admission are requested to come in for an informational interview and tour our campus. This first visit is *adults only*. Following the initial visit, a second appointment allows teacher to meet with the student candidate and talk with the parents. To be considered for acceptance, each family must apply and pay a one-time application fee.

Admission priorities are in accord with the following school policy:

Primary:

1. Siblings of older students at TGTMS.
2. Montessori transfer students.
3. Children between three and four

years old. Toddler:

1. Children with satisfactory TGTMS experience.
2. Montessori transfer students.
3. Siblings of TGTMS students.

Because a complete Montessori education is built on a series of three-year cycles from Toddler through the elementary program, admission to the elementary program when and if one becomes available (six to nine-year-old level and nine to twelve-year-old level) without prior Montessori experience is considered only after careful discussion with parents.

NON-DISCRIMINATION POLICY

The Giving Tree Montessori School admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national and ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, and other school-administered programs.

In Accordance with Federal Law and USDA policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability (not all prohibited bases apply to all programs). To file a complaint of discrimination, write to the: USDA, Office of Civil Rights, Room 326-W, Whitten Building, 1400 Independence Ave SW, Washington, DC 20250-9410, or call 1-800-795-3272 (voice) or 202-720-6382 (TDD). USDA is an equal opportunity provider and employer.

TRUTH IN ADVERTISING

As a member of the American Montessori Society, we pledge to represent our school truthfully and accurately to the general public and internally to our parent community.

APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Appointment for a Tour/Visit

This is the first step in our enrollment process. We request that this first visit be an “adults only” visit. This allows you, as a parent, to assess the school, our classrooms, and the Montessori Method for the right fit for the family and the child. This meeting is typically about 45-60 minutes long.

Application

After visiting the school an application form is required to be submitted to the school in order, along with the one-time application fee to be considered for enrollment. Applications for all programs are accepted year- round and are available on the website www.thegivingtreemontessorischool.org. Applications should be emailed directly to the school or hand delivered.

Interview and Child Visit

After receiving an application, the school will contact the prospective parent for a parent interview and child visit. During this time, prospective parents or guardians will meet with the Head of School, while the child visits one of our classrooms. This is an opportunity to ask more specific questions about the school, its programs, the staff and the Montessori philosophy. It also allows the school’s staff to meet with the student candidate and talk with the parents.

Enrollment Decision/Acceptance

In the spring, after assessing the number of openings available in our programs, the school makes its decision on enrollment for the following school year. It is at this time that you will be notified about acceptance or waiting list status in one of our programs. Please see our Admissions policy for priority enrollments in each of our programs.

ENROLLMENT AND RE-ENROLLMENT

Enrollment

The following forms and fees are needed by the school to complete enrollment:

1. Signed enrollment agreement.
2. Non-refundable deposit (applicable towards tuition).
3. Enrollment fee (for newly enrolled families).
4. Payment plan form (if paying installments).

Re-Enrollment

Re-enrollment for currently enrolled students begins on February 1st of each school year and ends on February 28th or 29th. During this period re-enrolling families have first priority in securing enrollment for their children. Parents or guardians must return an enrollment agreement and applicable deposit to the school to secure enrollment for the fall. Open enrollment begins on March 1st of each school year.

During open enrollment the school will consider all spaces for which it does not have an enrollment agreement ‘open’ and will begin filling these openings with new applicants. If extenuating circumstances do not allow a returning family to secure enrollment for the fall during re-enrollment period, please speak to the Head of School.

ADMINISTRATIVE AND FINANCIAL POLICIES

TUITION POLICY

Enrollment Agreement

The school year is considered to be continuous from August through June. Parents enroll their children for that period of time. The August to June tuition is divided into equal payments according to a plan (annual, semi-annual, monthly) agreed upon and committed to through the school's enrollment agreement. Allowances or refunds will not be made for phasing-in, illness, vacations, withdrawal, and dismissal or otherwise. Early withdrawal from the year's program, prior to or during the school year, does not terminate parent's tuition responsibility. Enrollment in the program entails responsibility for the entire year's tuition.

Parents/guardians assume responsibility for the school year's tuition when a signed enrollment agreement is turned in to and accepted by the school with the applicable deposit and registration fee. At this time the school considers the space in the classroom, for which the child is being enrolled, 'filled'. TGMS makes its admissions decisions and financial commitments based upon these tuition obligations assumed by the families of its students.

Accounts must be up-to-date to be considered for enrollment or re-enrollment. Payment Plans and Tuition Express Tuition

Annual payments are due on August 10th and are made directly to the school.

For semi-annual and monthly payment plans the school uses Tuition Express Tuition/Procare, a tuition management service, to provide safe, efficient and convenient payment of tuition. Tuition Express Tuition/Procare invoices parents directly for tuition payments. Monthly and bi-annual payments can be made by check, internet "bill pay", and automatic withdrawal from checking accounts. Monthly payments are due on the 10th of each calendar month from August until May. Semi-annual payments are due on the 10th of August and January. There is a small processing fee charged by Tuition Express Tuition if paying in installments.

If your family has special needs regarding tuition schedules, please speak to the Head of School.

Late Payments

In order for us to meet our financial obligations we depend upon prompt payment of tuition. A late fee of \$150 will be assessed for payments made after the 20th of the month in which the payment is due.

If tuition becomes 90 days or more delinquent the school and will consider any payment arrangement breached and will declare the entire balance of charges immediately due and payable. In the event of default of payment of any installment provided for in the enrollment contract, the student may not be allowed to continue classes. If the school is required to initiate legal proceedings to enforce this agreement, the parents or guardians will be held liable for the school's legal cost, including reasonable attorney fees as stated in the enrollment agreement.

Late payments will affect a family's eligibility to participate in installment plans and scholarship aid in the future.

Tuition Rates

Tuition and fees are adjusted annually by a percentage to meet increasing “cost of living” expenses. The school strives to maintain reasonable and affordable tuition rates in order that our school community can be reflective of our broader surrounding community.

WITHDRAWAL

Any withdrawals from the school must be requested in writing 30 days in advance of the final date the child/children will attend.

Enrollment Agreement (see above)

Children are admitted for the duration of the academic school year and parents/guardians are obligated to make the tuition payment for the entire year. The students' withdrawal or absence for any cause, prior to or during the school year, will not reduce obligation for the full annual tuition. Obligation to pay the full annual tuition begins when a signed enrollment and applicable deposit and registration fee is turned into and accepted by the school. The school's budget and operations depend on fulfillment by all parents and guardians of their agreement to pay the tuition, and that if you have elected to pay monthly or quarterly; this is for your convenience and does not limit the obligation to pay all installments in a timely manner.

FINANCIAL AID/SCHOLARSHIPS

Philosophy

The Giving Tree Montessori School is committed to the policy of providing quality Montessori education at as reasonable a cost as possible. Nevertheless, our tuition is beyond the means of some interested families. In keeping with Dr. Montessori's philosophy that all children could profit from exposure to this environment, TGMS seeks to provide financial aid to families who otherwise could not afford to offer this educational advantage to their children.

Process

Any family in need is encouraged to submit an application for scholarship help. The deadline for submitting a scholarship application is in February of previous year. Scholarship applications may be completed via hard copies which can be obtained at the front office. Hard copies should be returned to the office for processing. A processing fee is required when applying for scholarship aid. If a family has extenuating circumstances that may need to be considered, please fill out the TGMS Application for Financial Aid form and sent it directly to the Head of School.

Awards

The Giving Tree Montessori School's Board of Directors will make award decisions based upon the financial information received (need), individual circumstances, and the availability of funds. Family tuition accounts must be up-to-date to be awarded a scholarship. Priority for awarding scholarships is as follows:

1. Families who currently have scholarships
2. Re-enrolling students in grades K through 8
3. New students

An application for scholarship will not affect the admission decision in any manner. Acknowledging that family circumstances change and that the financial resources of our school vary, no family is guaranteed aid indefinitely. Annual application is required. A family that is awarded a scholarship must sign an enrollment contract with the school.

BUSINESS TRANSACTIONS

All business transactions should be conducted with the administrator or Head of School. Please call the school to schedule a time to stop by.

STUDENT RECORDS

All student records are confidential. Parents have the right to review and add comments. Records are released only upon written parental consent and when all financial obligations have been met. Please give the office sufficient notice if records are to be transferred. We uphold FERPA, or the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (see below).

Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA):

The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA) (20 U.S.C. § 1232g; 34 CFR Part 99) is a Federal law that protects the privacy of student education records. The law applies to all schools that receive funds under an applicable program of the U.S. Department of Education.

FERPA gives parents certain rights with respect to their children's education records. These rights transfer to the student when he or she reaches the age of 18 or attends a school beyond the high school level. Students to whom the rights have transferred are "eligible students." If you'd like more information about FERPA, visit the following link: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html>

DAILY SCHOOL ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

Arrivals

Class begins promptly at 8:30 a.m. for Toddler and Primary students. Children enrolled in the extended day program may begin arriving at 7:30 a.m. Please call if your child is not enrolled in the extended day program and needs to be dropped off early. The morning greeting and plans for the day are a valuable part of your child's day. **Tardiness is very disruptive to the children and the teachers. If your child will be tardy, please call the school so that we can be prepared for his/her arrival and bring your child directly to the office, not to the classroom.**

During the morning arrival, students will be dropped off at their perspective classroom. A staff member will be at the common area to help students with their belongings. Cars entering and leaving should park and bring their child inside keeping in mind that parking is limited so we ask that you do so quickly and efficiently, allowing other parents to do the same.

Departures

Dismissal for the full day program begins at 3:00 pm To alleviate the congestion in the parking lot, Toddler and pick up will begin at 2:45 – 3:00 pm and Primary pick up will start at 3:00 – 3:15pm. Please call the school if you will be late for pick-up so we have adequate staff available for supervision. If you arrive after 3:15 pm, when our staff begins to transition into after-care, you will be charged at a rate of \$1 per minute.

No child will be allowed to leave the school with someone other than the driver authorized by parents without written permission/email or through Procare by a parent to the school office on the day of the authorization. Please let the authorized person know to bring a photo ID that will be checked before the child is released.

We appreciate your understanding of this policy. However inconvenient it may seem, it safeguards your child against an unexpected or confusing incident.

Early Dismissal

Parents are requested to inform the office in advance if they plan to pick up their child prior to his or her scheduled dismissal time. This will help the teacher to prepare the child in a timely way without disturbing the classroom.

ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS

Regular and punctual attendance is critical to ensuring a positive experience for your child. Consistency and routine are essential elements in a child's Montessori experience. Erratic attendance can lead to missed lessons and interruptions in the child's natural learning process, a sense of alienation from the classroom activities and routine as well as a feeling of social isolation. Please notify both your child's teacher and the administrator of extended absence of your child (anything more than 2 days).

Punctual attendance is also expected of all children, for reasons other than illness (please see "Illness and Medication Section). Consistent tardiness disrupts the classroom and shows disrespect for the teacher and other students. It is not uncommon for children who regularly arrive late to school or miss school frequently to exhibit negative behavior. If a parent and child are consistently arriving late, the parent will be asked to come in for a conference with the office to discuss rectifying the situation. If the behavior continues, we may ask that the child be taken home upon late arrival to school. Should it become apparent that a family cannot be supportive of the school's missions or goals, it may be necessary for the administrator to consider whether it is in the best interest of the school to keep the child enrolled at TGMS.

Doors to the classrooms will be locked once the morning (and afternoon) sessions have begun. If you are late, do not bring your child directly to his/her classroom (or knock on classroom doors). Please bring your child to the office for drop off. He/she will be escorted to the classroom at an appropriate time to minimize disruption to the teacher and other students.

SAFETY PROCEDURES

In order to control adult traffic within the school, all doors will always remain locked. All doors that have access to the outside have fire safe handles, which allows them to be opened from the inside when locked from the outside. Parents will have access through a key fob, QR Code or Phone App.

- If you are late arriving at the school in the morning, please take your child to the front office, and someone will come and escort your child to his/her classroom at an appropriate time so as not to disrupt the start of the morning program for the other students.
- Visitors to the school are required to check in at the front desk when coming onto school grounds.
- Security cameras and remote entry locks are installed at the main entryways to school buildings. To enter the doorways, please ring the "doorbell" to obtain entry into the building. Visitors that have not checked into the office before seeking entry into one of the school buildings will not be allowed to enter.
- All visitors will be required to wear a pass while on the premises.
- Reminder: No child will be allowed to be picked up from school without prior written permission (those on the child's "Pick-Up Authorization" form and those indicated by a parent/guardian letter). If the staff does not know the authorized person picking the child up, they will ask for photo identification.
- Please advise whomever you have authorized to pick up your child that they should have photo identification with them in case a staff member does not know or recognize them. If a staff member does not know or recognize the person picking up your child, they will not release them without photo identification, even if we have written authorization.

- If there is a court order regarding custody or visitation rights regarding a student and a parent, we need to be notified immediately and have a copy on hand for staff members. Upon receiving the order, the school may require the primary caregiver to fill out new emergency contact forms and pick up authorization forms, if there is any change.

PARKING

TGMS has limited parking. Parents picking up and dropping off children must be considerate of others and attempt to do so quickly and efficiently. Be prepared for cars to stop, park or pull out to exit.

It is important to move traffic through the parking area smoothly to avoid lines or traffic in the parking lot. Please follow the general rules of the road when entering and exiting the parking lot (i.e. traffic should stay to the right when entering and exiting the lot).

Do not leave unattended cars parked in the driveway while running, even if locked. Never leave children unattended in cars.

Children must be supervised in the parking lot at all times.

SNOW DAYS

TGMS's policy concerning snow days considers the safety of families who must travel a distance through many snow zones to reach us. Please do not make assumptions about the weather! Announcements for school closings and late openings can be found on all local television stations and through text messages/Alerts through the Procare App.

- School will be canceled or delayed when Guilford County Schools announce a delay or cancellation.
- School will start at **10:00 a.m.** for **all children** in the event of a delayed opening (one- or two-hour delay).
- In the event of an early closing there will be no afternoon extended care program.

It may be necessary to close school early. In this circumstance the school will notify you or the person designated by you on your child's emergency card. Please avoid making calls to the school during an early closing unless it is absolutely necessary (the phones get awfully busy at these times!).

Travel to school in any bad weather with poor road conditions is always up to parental discretion. Should you choose to stay at home due to bad conditions, please notify the school.

There may be days when TGMS needs to close (i.e. power failure) when the school district does not. We will notify parents via e-mail and via phone as quickly and efficiently as possible.

CLASSROOM ROUTINES AND PROCEDURES

DISCIPLINE

The Giving Tree Montessori School uses positive discipline, which is implemented in a developmentally or age- appropriate fashion to meet the needs of the individual child. Our focus is on how to help children resolve problems and empower them to have a successful experience in the classroom and school community. The goal of our discipline policy is to provide an environment that promotes respect and safety for each person as well as the space we share.

The need for discipline within a Montessori classroom is greatly reduced by the prepared environment. The teachers make a point of keeping engaging activities available for the children so there is never a lack of something interesting for each student to do. The teacher may also redesign the work areas, jobs available, number of children allowed in a work area, etc., in response to classroom behavior.

For younger children, the primary method in a Montessori classroom is redirection – moving the child from a disruptive activity and engaging him or her in something more productive. Emphasis is put on directing a child to what they may do (making appropriate choices) rather than telling them what they may not do. For elementary aged children, the primary method used in a Montessori classroom is involving the child in making respectful and constructive choices. This may be done using mini-conferences, reflective listening and questioning, giving limited choices, making agreements, helping to resolve conflict, etc.

The classrooms also utilize a Peace Area. This is a comfortable area in which the child may relax and calm down or try to resolve conflict with another child. The child may choose to go to the peace area her- or himself or may be requested to visit the area by a teacher. On occasion, in the event of unsafe physical or verbal behavior, or a persistent problem, a child may be removed from the classroom with a supervising adult for a period of time to collect him or herself and to give the staff an opportunity to help resolve the situation.

Parents will be notified of significant or persistent disciplinary problems at school in a timely manner. If it is necessary to involve parents in the resolution of a problem at school, it will be done with a spirit of cooperation and with the aim of helping the child. Parental support during that time is very much appreciated. Through conferences, goals will be mutually agreed upon. If the goals cannot be met within an allotted time, further professional help or other school placement will be considered for the child. Parents or faculty may call upon the administrator to act as facilitator at any time. Should it become apparent that a family cannot be supportive of the school's missions or goals, it may be necessary for the administrator to consider whether it is in the best interest of the school to keep the child enrolled at TGMS.

In order to provide an environment that is physically and emotionally safe for all children, suspension or expulsion procedures may be executed in the event of serious and/or persistent behavior problems. Such behavior includes but is not limited to defacing or damaging property (school or other), profanity (verbal or written), triggering a fire alarm, violence, threats of violence, blatant disrespect, disorderly conduct, and endangering safety of self or others. This kind of disciplinary action will be determined by the administrator upon consultation with the faculty.

OBSERVATION OF THE CLASSROOM

After the first few weeks of school, parents are invited to make appointments in advance to observe the classroom. One observer is welcome in the classroom at a time, so be aware that impromptu class visits may not be possible. Please check in with a staff member before visiting the classroom. An observation sheet will be given to you with guidelines for your stay. The teacher will call you to answer questions concerning your visit.

SNACK PROGRAM

Families are encouraged to donate community snacks for the classroom. Food that is wholesome, sugar and trans-fat free, and non-processed is appropriate. Snacks, which expose our children to interesting and appealing foods originating from other countries, are welcomed! Please remember: No nuts or food processed in nut oils are allowed. Please read packages for foods that are processed in plants that ALSO process peanuts or tree nuts (it will be disclosed on the back of any packaged foods). These items are also NOT allowed, as they can trigger a severe, life-threatening allergic reaction. **Please bring food items in original packaging, if possible, so we can check ingredients if a child has a reaction.**

Snack Suggestions. Snacks must be store bought.

- Vegetables and fruits (cut to child's finger size)
- Dips (not too runny)
- Crackers and cheese
- Raisins or dried fruit
- Different baked breads (banana, zucchini, carrot, etc.)
- Nutritious cookies (oatmeal, carob, etc.)
- Yogurt
- Sunflower or pumpkin seeds
- Cheese cubes
- Applesauce

Snacks Not to Bring

Please do not send foods containing high quantities of salt, food coloring (especially red), sugars, peanuts or tree nuts, trans-fats, or preservatives. Also, please do not bring foods that can be easily choked on such as popcorn, stringy celery (remove strings), or thick carrots (should be cut into thin strips).

REFERRAL PROCESS FOR SPECIAL NEEDS

TGMS recognizes and values the academic potential of students of diverse learning abilities. Although our program is not designed specifically to students with learning disabilities or attention difficulties, some such students can experience success at TGMS when supported by an open and cooperative teacher-student-parent-professional relationship, and a carefully structured learning plan.

TGMS encourages all teachers to solicit advice from colleagues concerning classroom situations or learning needs that present special challenges. In the event that a child is exhibiting learning challenges or behavior patterns that interfere with a normal learning pattern, the teacher will document the patterns observed and meet with parents about the Child Find Process.

1. Teacher informs Head of School of observations regarding learning discrepancies or behavior patterns that interfere with a normal learning pattern.
2. Teacher documents observations/patterns.
3. The Head of School and/or teaching staff make observations.
4. After outside testing and/or evaluation is completed through Child Find or parent initiative, a copy of the results must be reviewed by the teaching team and Head of School with the parents and the professional who conducted the testing and/or evaluation.
5. The teaching team, Head of School will review the test results and/or evaluation and according to recommendations by the diagnostic professional TGTMS to determine if our classroom setting is the best place to meet the students' needs.
6. If the teaching team and Head of School determine that the student's needs can be served within TGMS, a formal Personal Learning Plan (PLP) will be developed and implemented with input from parents, and guidance from the diagnostic professional. The PLP will consist of:
 - a. Student strengths and areas of challenge
 - b. Specific objectives and goals
 - c. Teaching strategies to be implemented to meet the goals
 - d. Accommodation made for the student
 - e. Measurement methods and frequency to determine progress
 - f. Roles and responsibilities of the PLP team
 - g. Communication plan for monitoring student progress and PLP effectiveness

TGMS is not staffed with a special education department, nor does the School diagnose or evaluate students for learning differences or special needs. The School may be able to make some accommodations within the regular classroom to support these students.

LUNCHES

Children may bring their own lunch to school. All lunches **MUST** follow USDA Guidelines and consist of specific meal components like fruits, veggies, grains, meats/alternatives limiting added sugars in cereals and yogurt, increasing whole grains. A reasonably sized lunch box should be used. Lunch boxes should be clearly marked with your child's name.

For children who have difficulty giving up peanut butter sandwiches, given the school's no nut policy, we recommend you try Natural or Sungold Sunbutter (it's a peanut butter alternative made with sunflower seeds in a peanut free facility and even our pickiest taste testers loved it).

Please send a nutritious, balanced lunch for your child each day. Teachers will call parents if they notice a pattern of eating which they feel does not support the student's learning and physical activity throughout the course of the day.

- Please exclude the following from your children's lunch:
 1. Peanut butter and/or peanuts or tree nuts (including granola bars containing these items)
 2. *Gogurt®* (yogurt in a soft plastic squeeze tube)
 3. *Lunchables® or similarly over-packaged foods*
 4. Yogurts or pudding with foil tops (please use re-sealable containers for these type of foods)
 5. Highly sugared foods
 6. Foods with excessive additives and preservatives
 7. Juice boxes or pouches, as they are difficult for children of all ages to manage and they pose a trash disposal problem to us and to the environment.
 8. Any candy or gum
- Lunches containing the above foods will be sent home for your child to enjoy once school is over. The school has food on hand for such instances. A note may be included in your child's lunch reminding you of the importance of a nutritious well-balance meal.
- Foods that need to be served warm should be sent in thermoses or insulated containers, as the staff cannot facilitate the heating of individual lunches.
- To respect individual family food choices, children may not share or trade food.
- Most children prefer small quantities of a variety of food rather than a large quantity of only one or two items.
- If your child cannot finish his or her lunch, the remaining food will be sent home in the lunch box. This will help you to better gauge the amount needed for your child's lunch.
- *Candy and gum are not allowed at school.* These snacks will be sent home for your child to enjoy once school is over. No gum is allowed at school at any time.
- Please send your child's liquid refreshment in a thermos, or unbreakable container (plastic water bottle or *Tupperware* type bottle).
- Please pack yogurt in re-sealable containers (i.e. *Tupperware* type). Pre-packaged yogurt spills easily and is often wasted as most pre-packaged containers cannot be re-sealed adequately.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays and celebrations can be a challenge for young children. All the distractions, noise, and pressures can leave a child feeling out of sorts. Montessori's approach to holidays is to honor and respect the celebrations of all cultures but to keep holiday activities to a minimum within the classroom. While it is appropriate to study religious and cultural events from a historical and cultural perspective, the school discourages celebrations that cannot be enjoyed by the whole school community.

TOYS & EQUIPMENT

Please check with your child's teacher before sending in sporting equipment. All equipment brought to school will be available for community use. Children should not bring toys to school. Such items can easily be lost or broken.

Parents are asked to carefully monitor what their children bring to school. Objects from nature or educational items can be brought in to share with the class on any day.

TRANSFER OF BELONGINGS

Please be sensitive to your child and to the faculty. If your child is involved in a regular transitional schedule between homes, please remember that how and when items are transferred can make a big difference in a child's day. Items should be carefully packed and contained to minimize bulk and confusion. If possible, changes of clothing and toys should take place outside of school and the classrooms. This avoids loss and confusion of precious items. If necessary, items may be stored in the Director's office. Children can retrieve them prior to dismissal. Parents should not expect teachers to handle the exchanges of toys and clothing that have been misplaced during social engagements.

MARKING OF ALL BELONGINGS

Parents are advised to mark clearly all their child's belongings including sweaters, jackets, extra clothing, educational items brought to share, books and personal supplies. Each child must keep track of his or her own possessions as the school is not responsible for lost items. A lost and found is located in the coatroom area. An effort is made to empty the lost and found prior to major school holidays. At the end of the year, remaining items are donated to charity.

LOST AND FOUND

Misplaced items that are found will be placed in one of the three Lost and Found bins in the school (both primary classrooms and front hallway hamper). Please check the bins often for items that have been left out on the playground or around the school. Items are brought to the "closest" bin, so one glove may be in one bin and the other in another bin. At the end of the year, all items left at the school are donated to charity.

CHANGE OF CLOTHING

Each child six years and younger must bring a complete change of clothing. The change of clothing will be kept in a "Tupperware" shoe box in the classroom. If the child uses the clothing, it will be sent home and the change of clothing must be replaced the following school day. It is the parent's responsibility to replace the change of clothing as a child grows into a new size.

Extra clothing is stored in the school. Please do not send in extra clothing in backpacks or duffel bags.

SCHOOL DRESS

Clothing worn should allow for independence (i.e., overalls with easy fasteners, elastic waistbands for younger children and child user-friendly shoes and boots), art projects and outdoor play. Stains cannot be avoided without limiting your child's participation.

To enable all children to participate in outdoor activities, appropriate outdoor shoes for running, climbing and playing should be worn. Shoes must include a heel strap for safety purposes. For example, no crocks, thongs, jellies, elevated heels and clogs are appropriate.

Please make sure that during the winter months and on rainy days your child has appropriate outerwear for outdoor activities. It is not unheard of to take a nature walk in the rain! For your child's protection, winter clothing must include coat, hat or hood, mittens or gloves, and boots. If your child, due to illness, is unable to participate in outdoor activities, please keep him/her home or come to pick

up your child early from school. Additional staff are not available to supervise a sick child indoors while the rest of the class is outdoors. Child supervision is of the utmost importance, and we cannot be short a staff member outside to watch one or two children inside.

- Clothing should keep midriffs, back, and underwear always covered.
- Shorts, dresses, and skirts should be at a length that allows for discretion when students are active or sitting on the floor.
- All clothing should be free of messages or graphics that are inappropriate for the school environment, including promoting illegal activity or discrimination of any kind.
- Hats, hoods, and sunglasses may only be worn outside the building.

SCHOOL SUPPLIES

The school will provide all school supplies for the children. Please do not send in special notebooks, workbooks, pencils and pens.

Children may bring a small book bag for carrying items and communications to and from school. In order to reduce clutter in the coatroom; please do not send in other bags (backpacks, duffel bags, etc.) with your child. Change of clothes should be given to a teacher to store in the classroom on the child's first day.

BRINGING ANIMALS TO SCHOOL

Different types of animals are very interesting and often provide an extension to lessons taught in the classroom. Parents are welcome to bring in animals to share, provided they follow a few guidelines. Always check with the administrator/directress of the class. Do not bring animals to school without making prior arrangements. Only small animals in cages can be left at school for the day.

BIRTHDAYS

Children can enjoy having a birthday snack at school. We suggest that parents provide a special snack for their child's celebration. Please remember our no nut policy. Carrot cupcakes with cream cheese frosting that are decorated with raisins are an example of a popular birthday snack acceptable for school (low, low sugar, please!). Outside food must be in its original packaging and purchased from a regulated supplier such as Publix or Walmart. Homemade treats are not permitted.

Our birthday celebrations will be scheduled through communication with your classroom teacher. Parents/guardians are encouraged to participate.

Families are encouraged to donate a book to the school library on their child's birthday with a personal inscription (i.e. "Presented to the TGMS library for all to enjoy, in commemoration of Kevin Brown's 4th birthday, May 22, 2021"). This has proved to be a wonderful way for children to leave their own legacy at the school and to build the school library in a personal fashion.

SOCIAL ARRANGEMENTS AND PARTY PROTOCOL

As a community we must be sensitive to each of the children's feelings, putting our own convenience aside. Please do not send party invitations or gifts to school. We do not have the facilities to hold and transfer *sleep over* party gear and paraphernalia. These items should not come into school with the students. Party pick-ups may not take place at school. Arrangements for the rendezvous must be made so that pick-up does not happen at school or during dismissal time. The driveway traffic and the faculty cannot absorb the additional confusion and still feel the physical and emotional safety of all students is respected.

COMMUNICATION

TO FAMILIES FROM SCHOOL

Procare App

The school's App is the hub of information for all school activities. The school calendar, classroom web pages and parent forms may also be found by checking the *Parent Information* page on the school's website: www.thegivingtreemontessorischool.org or on the Procare App. All written notices (permission slips, notes, etc.) will be sent through the App or via email (please notify the administrator if you do not have email so a hard copy can be sent home with your child).

Classroom information is updated frequently on the Procare App and includes descriptions of recent classroom activities, photos and upcoming areas of study or field trips. Parents will be notified of updates through the weekly email, "This Week at TGMS". Parents who have requested a hard copy of information will be provided with a hard copy of recent additions to the classroom web pages as they are made available.

Book Bags

Each child should carry a small book bag. Communications that cannot be sent via app/email (book orders, Montessori Services orders, etc.) will be sent home with the children in their book bag. Please check your child's book bag each night for communications from the school. Also, please be sure to check the bulletin board for announcements and communications.

For greater access to school information, please register on the Procare App and check your email regularly for messages from the school.

TO SCHOOL FROM FAMILIES

Please keep all communications to the school in the child's portal on the Procare App or via email to avoid lost or forgotten communications, please do not hand communications directly to the administrator or teacher outside of the office as they may get lost in the morning or afternoon shuffle. Rest assured, we check email and app notifications very frequently.

Office

Of course, feel free to bring written communication, payments, forms, book orders, etc. directly to the front office.

PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES

Parent/teacher conferences are held two to three times annually and are scheduled as part of the school calendar in the fall, winter and spring. If an emergency on conference day makes an appointment inconvenient, please call to schedule a different time. The administrator or teacher may invite a child to a conference when appropriate. Special meetings may be scheduled at any time during the year, as desired by the school or the family.

Please be respectful of the fact that the teachers' responsibility during school hours is to the children. During school hours their attention is to be focused on the children. Please understand the teachers will excuse themselves from conversations to rejoin classroom activities. Teachers will be glad to conference by phone or in person at school if you leave a request for them to set an appointment.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

EMERGENCY CARE

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, the school will not hesitate to seek proper care for a child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file in the school office will be consulted immediately, and the parents will be called. If necessary, the child will be transported to the hospital by ambulance or emergency vehicle. The consent statement, signed by parents, will accompany the child so that treatment can be given immediately in the absence of the parent. It is **imperative** that you keep the emergency contact information in the office up to date!

ILLNESS AND MEDICATION

For the sake of others as well as the child, parents must keep any child at home who has a fever (or requires medication to control a fever) or other symptoms of illness. Child must be fever free for 24 hours before returning to school. Parents (not the child) should make the decision on when a child should go to school and when the child should stay at home. Once at school, the teacher or the director will make the decision to send a child home due to illness.

We also ask that parents please take a moment to call the school and let us know your child is ill. If your child has been diagnosed with a contagious illness such as strep throat, conjunctivitis, or chicken pox, hand foot and mouth disease please tell the school so that we may inform parents of illnesses their child may be exposed to. This helps parents and their medical professionals target treatment and save office visits and money. The TGMS staff cannot adequately inform parents of what is going around unless the parents take time to let the staff know.

Should a child become ill at school, he or she will be isolated. Parents will be notified and will make arrangements to take the child home. If the parent can't be reached, the emergency contact will be called.

Those parents whose children are exempted from immunization due to medical or religious belief will be notified when communicable illness is present in the school. The children must be kept home until officially notified to return. To maintain a state of wellness in the school community, the school may exercise the option to exempt any child from attendance due to illness.

Medication

- a. The staff will administer prescription medication only upon written orders from a physician or according to the labeled instructions on the original medicine container and with a written, signed and dated request from the parent.
- b. The staff will not administer any nonprescription medication to a child.
- c. Children who require medication to control a fever should be kept home.

INJURIES

In the event of a minor injury, first aid will be administered by a qualified staff member (teachers and assistants are certified in first aid) and the child will be made as comfortable as possible. A written accident report will be filled out for any injury requiring first aid and the report will be given to the parent at the end of the school day. On occasion, parents will be called regarding accidents or injuries that do not require emergency care, but may require a parent's further attention, or for which a parent may want to seek non-emergency medical care.

Please note that while every effort is made to give parents an accident report in a timely manner, there may be situations when an accident is communicated verbally before the report is completed (e.g. a minor injury occurring on the playground just before pickup time).

NO NUT POLICY

Due to a number of **life-threatening** food allergies within our student population, the TGMS campus has instituted a No Nut Policy (peanuts, peanut butter, almonds, cashews, walnuts, etc). We rely on the understanding and cooperation of parents, students, and staff members to make sure that no nuts or nut products are brought to the school at any time—including snack, lunch, birthday treats, bake sale items, and potluck dishes. If an individual is exposed to nuts at home before coming to school, we ask that person to be sure to wash hands and remove any traces of peanut from skin, face, and clothing.

Cross contamination is the greatest risk to children with these allergies. An allergic reaction can happen just by touching a material or a doorknob that a child who just ate one of these items previously touched or even breathing peanut dust in the air.

Given the severity of the consequences to children with nut allergies, any child who brings snack or lunch items containing peanuts or tree nuts, will not be allowed to eat them (an alternative will be provided by the school) and parents will be notified reminding them of the policy. We realize that for some children, not having peanut butter and jelly sandwiches is a tough adjustment, but when the life of another child is at stake, it's a small sacrifice to make.

Parents of children with food allergies need to notify staff immediately of your child's condition and provide the school with either antihistamine or an EpiPen prescription specifically for your child. If your child has other food allergies, you may be asked to provide your child's own snack and make us aware if your child has any other food exposure reactions. Please note this food policy is not fail-safe.

The school and the staff will take all the precautions possible to keep your child safe while on campus.

EMERGENCY PLAN

The Giving Tree Montessori School maintains an emergency preparedness plan for emergencies that may affect the school. The plan is reviewed annually. The emergency plan is kept in the office and can be viewed by any member of the school community.

REQUIREMENT TO REPORT ABUSE/NEGLECT

The staff at The Giving Tree Montessori School is required, by North Carolina State Law and licensing regulations, to report immediately to the police or Department of Human Services any instance when there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, or emotional abuse, or child neglect or exploitation.

The staff may not be able to notify parents when the police or Department of Human Services are called about possible child abuse, neglect, or exploitation. This depends on the recommendation of Department of Human Services.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

VOLUNTEERISM

To support the education of the children of our school community, we encourage parents to become active participants in the school through volunteering and by becoming familiar with the curriculum of the school and its underlying Montessori philosophy. Such participation is not only rewarding for parents but supports our mission of setting an example for the children of building and serving our community. Please let your teacher know if you have a special skill or hobby you would like to share.

MONTESSORI PARENT GROUP

The Giving Tree Montessori MPG is a social, fundraising, and service organization. The mission of the TGMS MPG is to create a collaborative community by which Montessori parents, teachers, and friends can become purposefully and meaningfully involved in supporting Montessori education and the values of our school.

As a social organization, the goal of the MPG is to be involved in fostering both a sense of community and friendship throughout the school. As a fund raising and service organization, the goal of MPEG is to raise funds to offset the costs of its programs and activities, Grants and Financial Aid to Families of Need and to provide time and expertise to support the maintenance and growth of the school.

All parents of children in The Giving Tree Montessori School are welcome and encouraged to participate in MPG. The association works directly with the school administrator and provides essential support to the school and its community. MPG consists of four sub-committees; Fundraising, Building and Grounds, Parent Education and Outreach, and Events. Some of the responsibilities that MPEG assumes are:

- School maintenance and beautification
- Community outreach
- Community building events (picnics, potluck's, open houses, new parent orientation, etc.)
- Organization of parent volunteers
- Fundraising

SERVICE HOURS

It is expected that each family contribute 12 hours of service to the school each year. Many, of course, give much more. Typical activities include school cleanup, fundraising, special projects, classroom participation, assisting with the hot lunch program, stuffing envelopes, serving on an MPG committee, etc. The scope of service that parents provide to the school is broad, and the ways in which parents meet this expectation is flexible. The MPG Chairperson provides a running list of jobs that need to be done around the school and can help parents find a venue for their time and talents. As a Montessori school, we believe that everyone's gifts are valuable and can be used to help the greater good. A volunteer interest survey is included in every family's enrollment package at the beginning of the year.

Each family should complete it so volunteer coordinators can contact those whose interests and expertise best match available volunteer opportunities. Beyond that, requests for volunteers will happen throughout the year. If your schedule permits, we'll take all the help we can get!

Families who are not able to meet the service hours through their contribution of time are asked to make a financial contribution to the school in the amount of \$50 for each hour of service not completed. Please keep in mind that although financial contributions are helpful to the school, work hours are much more valuable.

In the spirit of service and community, this program relies on the honor system. Parents keep track of their own time.

CLASSROOM PARTICIPATION

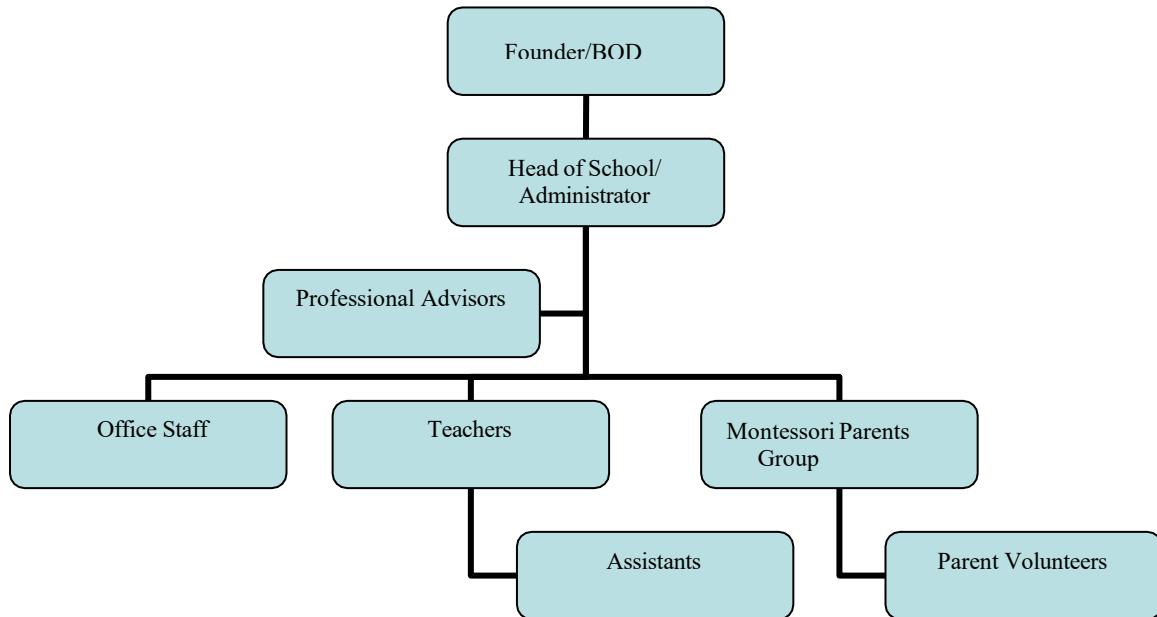
Parents who have a talent, career or hobby that they think would be interesting to the children are encouraged to make arrangements with the class teacher to set up a time to share this information with the children. Parents are also encouraged to share anything they may have to aid in our different curriculum studies. Please work with the class teacher to develop your talent, information or hobby into a presentation that will be developmentally appropriate for the children. The teacher will discuss with you the guidelines for working in a Montessori environment. It's quite different from a traditional educational environment and you will be given tips on how to gear your presentation that is complementary to the Montessori Method.

PARENT EDUCATION

The school has parent education workshops during the school year. These get-togethers are a way to continue to help parents better understand what their children are doing in the classroom each day and to help parents carry out the Montessori philosophy in their own home. There are also meetings to familiarize parents with the different curriculum areas of the classroom, and workshops at the beginning of the school year to help new Montessori parents to get acquainted with the Montessori philosophy. Many of the questions that come up during a given school year are answered at these events, so we

encourage your attendance. These events are structured as “Bring your Parents to School Nights” so your child also can act as an “educator”, teaching you the materials that he/she is learning to master. All staff will also be on hand to add depth and answer your questions about the materials and/or curriculum.

ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



BOARD OF DIRECTORS (TBD)

President:

Vice-President:

Secretary:

Treasurer:

Member:

RESOURCES

FOR YOUR INFORMATION

Montessori

The following resources may be helpful to you or your extended family as you learn more about Maria Montessori's work with children. Many of these books are available at the school or through individual staff members.

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius,
Angela Lillard *Montessori, A Modern
Approach*, Paula Polk Lillard *From Childhood
to Adolescence*, Maria Montessori
Dr. Montessori's Own Handbook, Maria Montessori
Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom, AMS Publication
Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work, E.M. Standing
The Secret of Childhood, Maria
Montessori *Discovery of the Child*,
Maria Montessori *The Hidden
Hinge*, Rosa Packard
The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori
The Montessori Controversy, John Chattin McNichols
Children the Challenge, Rudolf Dreikers
To Educate the Human Potential, Maria Montessori
The Hurried Child, David Elkind
Education for Human Development, Mario Montessori, Jr.
Maria Montessori, a Biography, Rita

Kramer Positive Discipline

Positive Discipline, Jane Nelson, Ed.D.
Positive Discipline: A-Z, Jane Nelson, Ed.D
Parents Who Love Too Much, Jane Nelson, Ed.D
Raising Self-Reliant Children in a Self Indulgent World, Jane Nelson Ed.D. and H. Stephen Glenn, Ph. D.