



# **AMARILLO MONTESSORI ACADEMY**

## **PARENT HANDBOOK**

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# Amarillo Montessori Academy

## Parent Handbook

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## Welcome Letter from Our Executive Director

Dear Families,

Welcome to Amarillo Montessori Academy! I am truly honored to be part of this vibrant and compassionate community as the Executive Director. Whether you are just joining us or have been part of the AMA family for years, we're so glad you're here.

At AMA, we believe in nurturing each child's natural curiosity and love for learning. Our Montessori approach gives children the freedom to learn in ways that traditional classrooms often don't allow—encouraging independence, creativity, and confidence from the very beginning. Every day, I witness our classrooms come alive with discovery, joy, and growth, and I couldn't be more proud of the students and the amazing educators who guide them.

Our mission is simple, yet powerful: **to foster independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers.** This mission is at the heart of everything we do.

I am deeply proud of our incredible staff, whose passion and commitment create a safe, supportive, and enriching environment for your child to flourish. From our youngest learners to our older students, every child is seen, valued, and celebrated for who they are.

Our community extends beyond the classroom. With your support—through school supply drives, seasonal events, and our ever-growing community garden—we are able to create an atmosphere where learning and connection go hand in hand. Our certified art teacher helps students explore their creativity, making learning even more meaningful through art, crafts, and joyful expression.

Thank you for choosing Amarillo Montessori Academy. We are excited to partner with you in your child's educational journey. My door is always open, and I look forward to getting to know each of you better throughout the year.

With warmth and gratitude,

**Alexa Ybarra**

Executive Director  
Amarillo Montessori Academy

## Amarillo Montessori Mission Statement

*“Amarillo Montessori Academy’s mission is to foster independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens, who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers.”*

## The Montessori Approach

*The Montessori approach is a child-centered educational philosophy developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, grounded in the belief that children are naturally curious and capable of initiating learning in a thoughtfully prepared environment.*

*At its core, Montessori education supports the development of the whole child—intellectually, socially, emotionally, and physically. It emphasizes **independence, freedom within limits, and respect for the child’s natural psychological development.***

*In our Montessori classrooms:*

- *Children learn through **hands-on experiences** with specially designed materials that promote exploration and discovery.*
- *Mixed-age groupings allow younger children to learn from older peers, while older students reinforce their knowledge by helping others.*
- *Teachers, known as **guides**, observe and support rather than direct, allowing children to progress at their own pace.*
- *The environment is carefully prepared to encourage **order, concentration, coordination, and independence.***
- *Learning is integrated and interconnected, emphasizing big-picture thinking and real-world application.*

Montessori education nurtures a lifelong love of learning and helps children become confident, self-motivated, and compassionate individuals who take responsibility for their actions and contribute positively to their communities.

## **Program overview**

*At Amarillo Montessori Academy, we offer a thoughtfully designed continuum of education from infancy through fifth grade. Each classroom reflects the Montessori philosophy, nurturing each child's natural desire to learn, explore, and grow in a respectful and enriched environment.*

### **Class Levels**

- *Young Infant (6 weeks - Crawling)*
- *Mobile infant (Crawling - Two Years)*
- *Bridge (2 - 3 Years)*
- *Pre K (3 - 6 Years)*
- *Elementary (Kindergarten - Fifth grade)*

### **Montessori Materials & Classroom Environment**

*Montessori classrooms are designed to encourage exploration, concentration, and independence:*

- *Each material is self-correcting and isolates a specific concept, guiding children toward mastery.*
- *The environment is orderly, beautiful, and child-centered, offering freedom within limits.*
- *Students choose their work and learn through uninterrupted work cycles, developing focus and intrinsic motivation.*
- *Mixed-age classrooms foster mentoring, collaboration, and peer learning.*

### **Daily Schedule & Routines**

*While each level has its own detailed schedule, core components include:*

- *Morning Work Cycle: A 2-3-hour uninterrupted block for focused, self-directed learning.*
- *Snack/Lunch Times: Opportunities for social interaction and self-care.*
- *Outdoor Play: Daily time in nature for physical activity and exploration.*
- *Enrichment Activities: Art, music, movement, and language extensions.*
- *Rest/Nap Time (Infant & bridge): Essential for growth and development.*

### **Outdoor Education & Enrichment Programs**

*We believe outdoors is an extension of the classroom. Our outdoor education program includes:*

- *Nature walks, gardening, and seasonal exploration.*
- *Practical life activities like sweeping, raking, and water play.*
- *Physical education focused on coordination, balance, and teamwork.*

***Regular enrichment offerings:***

- *Art: Exploration of materials and techniques for creative expression.*
- *Spanish: Early language exposure through conversation, song, and play.*
- *Yoga & Mindfulness: Enhancing body awareness, calm, and concentration.*

*The Amarillo Montessori Academy offers more than just academics; it cultivates a love of learning, confidence, and respect for others. Each child is met where they are and guided to reach their fullest potential in a warm, respectful, and inspiring environment.*

## **Admission and Enrollment**

***Enrollment process***

Before a child can be enrolled at Amarillo Montessori Academy, a completed application form and the non-refundable application fee must be submitted prior to the intended start date. This fee will be applied toward the child's first month of tuition. The official start date will be determined during the classroom tour. In the event of a waitlist, the application fee will secure your child's place.

***Waitlist policy***

Amarillo Montessori Academy requires a one time fee of \$50.00 to be placed on the waiting list. This is for all ages.

***Withdrawal and termination policies***

If you wish to withdraw your child, a two week notice prior to the students expected last day is required. A written notice must be provided to the office to ensure that Amarillo Montessori remains compliant with Texas State teacher/student ratios. Failure to provide notice of withdrawal will result in tuition being charged for two weeks past a student's unenrollment.

## Tuition and Fees

### *Nonrefundable Fee Schedule:*

- |   |              |
|---|--------------|
| 1. <i>Application Fee for New Student</i>             | <b>\$250</b> |
| 2. <i>Summer Only Application Fee for New Student</i> | <b>\$75</b>  |
| 3. <i>Waiting List Fee</i>                            | <b>\$50</b>  |

Program	School Day (7:00 am - 3:00 pm)	Full Day (7:00 am - 6:00 pm)	Yearly Tuition Total
Infant	\$985	\$985	School Day: \$11,820 Full Day: \$11,820
Toddler	\$820	\$965	School Day: \$9,840 Full Day: \$11,580
Bridge	\$800	\$945	School Day: \$9,600 Fully Day: \$ 11,340
Pre-K	\$780	\$925	School Day: \$9,360 Full Day:\$11,100
Elementary (K-5)	\$840	\$985	School Day: \$10,080 Full Day: \$11,820

**Please Note:** All fees are proposed and subject to change. The Board of AMA reserves the right to correct typographical errors or to adjust the Tuition and Fees schedule at any time it deems necessary.

### *Payment schedule and methods:*

Tuition will be billed the first of the month, and due by the 7th. If unable to pay by the 7th a late charge of \$20.00 per day will be charged to your account. To make a payment, you may pay through ProCare, or in the office via check or debit card. If paying with a credit card a 2.7% processing fee will be added.

## **Attendance & Punctuality**

### ***Arrival and dismissal procedures:***

*Amarillo Montessori Academy is open at 7:00 AM - 6:00 PM.*

### ***Absence and tardiness policies:***

*Students enrolled through the elementary program at Amarillo Montessori Academy are expected to be punctual and have adequate attendance with the exception of school approved absences, or emergencies to ensure the best education as possible.*

## **Communication**

### ***Parent portals***

Amarillo Montessori Academy utilizes the **ProCare** app to support seamless communication and real-time documentation of your child's daily care and development. Through ProCare, staff will share updates on your child's growth, including eating habits and sleep patterns, while also facilitating paperless billing and sending important reminders about school events. This platform helps foster consistent, easy communication between teachers and parents, ensuring you stay informed and connected every step of the way.



## **Health & Safety**

At Amarillo Montessori Academy, the health and safety of our students is our highest priority. We follow all regulations set forth by the Texas Health and Human Services Commission (HHSC) and the Texas Department of State Health Services (DSHS) to ensure a safe, nurturing, and legally compliant environment.

### ***Illness Policy and When to Stay Home***

To maintain a healthy school community, we ask that children be kept home if they exhibit any of the following symptoms:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher (must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning)
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Persistent coughing or difficulty breathing
- Unexplained rash
- Contagious illnesses such as pink eye, strep throat, flu, or COVID-19
- Lethargy or behavior changes that indicate illness

***If a child becomes ill during the day, parents or guardians will be contacted and expected to pick up their child promptly. A doctor's note may be required to return depending on the illness.***

### ***Immunization Requirements***

All students must have current immunization records on file in accordance with Texas state law. This includes all vaccinations recommended by the DSHS for the child's age group, including:

- DTaP
- Polio
- MMR
- Hepatitis A & B
- Varicella (chickenpox)
- Hib and PCV (for infants and toddlers)

We accept valid medical exemptions with appropriate documentation signed by a licensed physician. Non-medical exemptions must be filed through the Texas DSHS and are subject to state approval.

### ***Medication Administration***

Medication may only be administered with written authorization from a parent or guardian. Prescription medications must be in the original container labeled with the child's name, prescribing physician, dosage, and administration instructions. Over-the-counter medications will only be given with written consent and must also be in their original packaging.

All medications are stored securely and administered by trained staff members in accordance with licensing regulations.

## ***Emergency Procedures (Fire, Lockdown, Weather)***

We maintain a comprehensive emergency response plan that addresses various scenarios including fire, severe weather, lockdowns, and medical emergencies. All staff members are trained in emergency procedures and first aid.

- Fire drills are conducted monthly.
- Severe weather drills (such as tornado drills) are held at least twice per year.
- Lockdown drills are practiced twice a year in coordination with local emergency responders.

In the event of a real emergency, families will be notified as soon as it is safe to do so through our parent communication system.

## ***Nutrition & Meals***

At Amarillo Montessori Academy, we believe that proper nutrition is essential for a child's development and learning. Our food policies are designed to promote health, safety, and inclusivity for all students from infancy through fifth grade.

### ***Snack and Lunch Policies***

We encourage healthy eating habits and ask that families pack nutritious snacks and lunches for their children each day. Please follow these guidelines:

- Snacks and lunches should include whole foods such as fruits, vegetables, whole grains, and protein sources.
- Candy, soda, and other high-sugar or highly processed foods are discouraged.
- Lunches must be packed in containers that children can open independently, appropriate to their age and abilities.
- We are a nut-aware campus — IF the classroom is nut free, you will be informed and asked NOT to send peanuts or tree nuts to school, as some students have severe allergies.
- Although each room has a refrigerator we are unable to provide additional space for refrigerated meals. Please pack an ice pack for your child's lunch.
- Classrooms do have a microwave for teachers to heat up hot lunches.

Students are given ample time to eat in a calm, supervised environment that encourages independence and responsibility.

## **Infant Feeding Guidelines**

We work closely with families to ensure that each infant's feeding routine is followed as closely as possible to their home routine. Key guidelines include:

- Breast milk, formula, and baby food must be labeled with the child's name and the date it was prepared.
- All bottles and food items must be provided daily unless other arrangements are made with staff.
- Breastfeeding mothers are welcome to visit the school to nurse their infants in a private, comfortable space.
- Staff follow all sanitation and safety practices for bottle warming, feeding, and food handling per Texas licensing regulations.

## **Allergies and Dietary Accommodations**

We take food allergies and dietary restrictions ***seriously*** and are committed to creating a safe and inclusive environment for all students.

- Families must inform the school of any allergies or dietary restrictions and provide a physician's note if needed for medical accommodations.
- Allergy information is posted in classrooms and food preparation areas for staff awareness.
- We make reasonable accommodations for religious, cultural, or personal dietary preferences with proper documentation and planning.
- If your child requires a special diet or substitution, we ask that you communicate directly with the administrative staff and your child's teacher to ensure clarity and consistency.

Our goal is to support healthy development while respecting each child's individual needs and keeping all students safe.

## ***Dress Code***

### ***Dress Code Guidelines***

To ensure the comfort, safety, and independence of all children at Amarillo Montessori Academy, we ask families to follow the guidelines below when selecting clothing for school:

Children should wear comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing that allows them to move freely throughout the day. Clothing should be free of offensive language, violent imagery, or inappropriate messages in accordance with state guidelines for early childhood education. Easy-to-manage outfits (e.g., elastic waistbands) are encouraged to promote self-care skills such as using the restroom independently. Children should bring weather-appropriate outerwear daily, as we go outside regularly for recess and learning activities, except in extreme weather.

*Please label all personal items, including jackets, hats, and extra clothing, to help us keep belongings organized.*

## ***Discipline & Conflict Resolution***

### ***Montessori-based approach to discipline***

At Amarillo Montessori Academy, discipline is rooted in respect, guidance, and the belief that children develop self-control and responsibility through supportive experiences—not punishment. Our goal is to help each child build inner discipline and understand how their actions affect themselves and others.

### ***Core Principles of Our Discipline Philosophy:***

#### ***Respect for the Child:***

We treat all children with kindness and dignity. Discipline is never punitive; instead, we guide children gently and consistently, modeling respectful communication and problem-solving.

#### ***Inner Discipline and Independence:***

True discipline comes from within. We help children build self-regulation skills by allowing them to make choices and reflect on outcomes in a supportive environment.

#### ***Freedom Within Limits:***

Children are given freedom to move and explore within clearly defined boundaries. This structure helps them feel secure and understand expectations, while also learning to make responsible decisions.

#### ***Natural and Logical Consequences:***

Children learn best when they experience the natural outcomes of their actions. For example, if

a child spills something, they are encouraged to help clean it up. These real-life consequences are handled with calmness and empathy.

***Peaceful Conflict Resolution:***

Teachers guide children in expressing feelings, listening to others, and resolving conflicts peacefully. Many classrooms include a "peace area" where children can calm down or talk through a disagreement in a constructive way.

***Prepared Environment:***

A calm, orderly classroom designed for exploration reduces frustration and behavioral challenges. When children are engaged and their developmental needs are met, discipline becomes proactive rather than reactive.

***Role of the Teacher:***

Our educators act as guides, observing carefully and stepping in when needed to redirect behavior, offer choices, or help children reflect. We see mistakes as learning opportunities, and we support each child with patience and consistency.

*This approach helps children build confidence, empathy, and self-awareness—skills that support lifelong success and emotional well-being.*

## ***Technology & Media***

***Technology use in the classroom***

At Amarillo Montessori Academy, our approach to technology use is intentional, age-appropriate, and aligned with Montessori principles. We believe that technology can be a valuable educational tool when used purposefully and in balance with hands-on, experiential learning.

***Infants through Kindergarten***

For our youngest learners, screen time is extremely limited and primarily reserved for:

- Occasional music or movement activities
- Interactive story time or language exposure

We emphasize real-world, sensory-rich experiences and limit screen exposure in accordance with pediatric and early childhood best practices.

### ***Elementary (1st–5th Grade)***

In our elementary classrooms, technology is introduced as a support tool, not a central focus. It is used in the following ways:

- Research for student projects and reports
- Age-appropriate educational software to reinforce math, reading, or science skills
- Creative tools for writing, presentations, or coding basics (e.g., typing programs, Google Docs, basic design apps)

All technology use is supervised, purposeful, and balanced with Montessori hands-on materials and collaborative learning. Students are taught responsible digital citizenship, including how to use technology respectfully, safely, and ethically.

### ***General Guidelines***

- Personal devices from home (phones, tablets, smartwatches) are not permitted during school hours unless specifically authorized for a class project or special need.
- Internet access is filtered and monitored to ensure student safety.
- Staff members model responsible and limited use of technology in the classroom setting.

We strive to ensure that students develop digital literacy while still being fully engaged in the tangible, exploratory learning that is the heart of a Montessori education.

### ***Use of school photos/videos***

If you wish to **not** have your child's picture taken, we have a “No photo” list posted in each classroom. Children on this list will not be photographed. Pictures taken are often used for the schools social media during events, and announcements

## ***Transitioning Between Levels***

*At Amarillo Montessori Academy, transitions between classroom levels are handled with care and intention. **We recognize that each child develops at their own pace, and we work closely with families to ensure smooth, respectful, and developmentally appropriate transitions from infancy through elementary years.***

### ***Infant to Bridge, Bridge to Pre K, Pre K to Elementary***

*Transitions between program levels are guided by the child's readiness rather than solely by age. Considerations include:*

- *Emotional and social maturity*
- *Independence and self-help skills*
- *Language and communication abilities*
- *Physical development and motor coordination*
- *Ability to focus, follow routines, and participate in group activities*

*We typically begin the transition process several weeks in advance with gradual visits to the new classroom, opportunities to meet the new guide (teacher), and time to adjust to the new environment.*

*Families are kept informed throughout the process and are encouraged to communicate any questions or concerns during this time.*



## ***Readiness Assessments***

*Readiness assessments are used as observational tools to help guide the timing of transitions and to support each child's individual development. These may include:*

- *Developmental checklists tailored to Montessori benchmarks*
- *Informal observations and documentation of progress*
- *Conferences between teachers and parents to discuss strengths and areas for growth*

*These assessments are not high-stakes evaluations, but rather tools that help us ensure that each child is prepared to thrive in the next environment both academically and socially.*

## ***Orientation for Students and Parents***

*Before a child moves into a new program level, we provide an orientation process that may include:*

- *A classroom visit for the child to explore the new space and meet the teacher*
- *A parent meeting to review curriculum goals, daily routines, and expectations*
- *A written overview of what to expect at the new level (included in the welcome packet)*

*Our goal is to support the whole family in each transition, ensuring that both children and parents feel confident, informed, and excited about the next stage of growth.*

## ***School Policies & Legal Information***

### ***Grievance Procedures***

*At Amarillo Montessori Academy, we value clear and respectful communication between families and staff. If a parent or guardian has a concern, we encourage the following steps:*

#### **Initial Discussion**

Speak directly with your child's teacher or caregiver to express concerns or ask questions. Most issues can be resolved through open and respectful dialogue.

#### **Administrative Support**

If the concern remains unresolved, please request a meeting with the Director. A written summary of the concern may be requested to ensure clarity and documentation.

#### **Formal Grievance**

For ongoing concerns, a formal grievance can be submitted in writing to the Director. The school will review the issue and respond promptly with a resolution plan or next steps.

*We are committed to working in partnership with families and maintaining a positive, solution-focused environment.*

## ***Confidentiality and Privacy Policy***

*Your child's privacy and personal information are important to us. Amarillo Montessori Academy follows strict confidentiality procedures to protect every child and family:*

Child and family records are securely stored and accessible only to authorized staff.

Personal information is never shared with third parties without prior written consent, except as required by law.

Classroom photos and videos will only be taken or shared with parental permission and used only for educational or school communication purposes.

All conversations regarding children or families are conducted respectfully and in private. These practices help us maintain a safe, trusted, and respectful community for all.

## ***Mandated Reporting Policy***

*All staff members at Amarillo Montessori Academy are **mandated reporters**, as required by Texas state law. This means:*

Any staff member who suspects a child may be experiencing abuse, neglect, or exploitation is legally required to report it to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services (DFPS) within 48 hours. Staff are not required to have proof—only a reasonable suspicion based on observations or disclosures. Staff receive annual training to identify the signs of child abuse and understand proper reporting procedures. All reports are handled confidentially and with the sole purpose of protecting the child's safety and well-being.

*We are committed to maintaining a safe and nurturing environment for every child in our care.*

### **Call the Texas Abuse Hotline**

Phone Number: 1-800-252-5400

Availability: 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

Website: [TXAbuseHotline.org](http://TXAbuseHotline.org)

### ***Student Nondiscrimination Policy Notice***

*Amarillo Montessori Academy is committed to providing a safe, inclusive, and respectful learning environment for all students. In accordance with federal and state laws, it is the policy of Amarillo Montessori Academy not to discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, disability, age, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, or any other legally protected status in its educational programs, activities, or employment practices.*

*Harassment, intimidation, bullying, or other discriminatory behavior that interferes with a student's ability to learn or participate in school activities is strictly prohibited. Students who believe they have been subject to discrimination or harassment, or who have witnessed such behavior, are encouraged to report the incident to Alexa Ybarra.*

*Name: Alexa Ybarra*

*Title: Executive Director*

*Title: Email: [Office@AmarilloMontessori.com](mailto:Office@AmarilloMontessori.com)*

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*Office Address: 3806 Bowie St. Amarillo TX 79110*

***Students and parents/guardians are encouraged to contact Alexa Ybarra for more information or to file a complaint.***