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I. Purpose and Identity

Logo

A treasured song in our community is "This Little Light of Mine." In this song we are encouraged to let our individual "spiritual" lights shine in order to show the love of God to others through His Son, Jesus Christ. The Light House is a symbol of the guidance, hope, assistance and vision in a world of danger, risk, adversity and challenge. A light shining from the top of a Lighthouse that guides ships so they do not crash on the rocky shores of life. Jesus is the "Lighthouse" and the ships are people like you and me. Our prayer is that the children will not only grow and mature in physical wisdom and stature but also in the admonition of God; capable of making an eternal impact on others and our world.

Mission Statement

It is our mission to provide a Montessori education that celebrates the individual gifts of each child, nurture a passion for learning biblical principles, and equip for academic excellence and Christian discipleship.

Vision Statement

We are family; We are rooted in tradition; We are a strong community; We are dedicated professionals; We are true Montessorians; We are unique among educators; We are leaders; We are spiritually grounded; We are ambassadors of peace; We are caretakers of the earth; We are culturally diverse; We are a source of community outreach; We inspire academic excellence; We prepare children for life; We are a teaching school; We are committed to naturally and ultimately meeting the needs of the child and family...

We are the Christian Montessori School at Lake Norman!

Accreditations and Associations

- North Carolina Department of Non-Public Instruction
- North Carolina Division of Child Development and Early Childhood Education
- American Montessori Society

II. General Operations:

School hours:

Office Hours: 7:30a.m. -4:30 p.m.

Before School: 7:30 a.m. - 8:00 a.m. After School - 3:00 p.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Elementary: 8:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

Primary: Half Day Program - 8:15a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Full Day Program - 8:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m. (required for all children 5 and over)

All Day Program - 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Toddler: Half Day Program - 8:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Full Day Program - 8:15 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.

All Day Program - 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

Infant: All Day Program - 7:30 a.m. - 6:00 p.m.

***All programs are Monday through Friday.**

Access to Building

Parents/Guardians must obtain a security key to enter the preschool building. Access is allowed between the hours of 7:30 a.m. and 6:00 p.m. Do not let anyone in the building who does not have a security key unless you also commit to bringing that person to the attention of a staff member in administration. While this may seem awkward at first, most parents appreciate your care for the safety of their children. The Building is closed to all from Saturday evening to Monday morning.

Parking

- The parking lot accommodates only one-way traffic, and you should always keep your children by your side. Never allow your child to run ahead, especially into the parking lot.
- To avoid tie-ups, please don't line up in the traffic circle before 3:00 p.m. If you are coming on campus to take your child out of school before the day officially ends, please try to leave before 2:40 p.m. to avoid becoming blocked in by the after-school traffic.
- To keep traffic moving, if you need to speak with a teacher or get out of your car for any reason, please park in a designated parking space.
- Do not park your car and leave it unattended in the carpool circle.

III. Arrival Procedures

Your child's arrival at school is an important time, when the tone for the day can be established either positively or negatively.

Over the years we have learned that:

- Separation is easiest for young children when they can say good-bye and leave their parent as opposed to the parent saying good-bye and leaving the child. Please try to say your final good-byes before entering the cubby area.
- Allowing the child to walk (as opposed to being carried) into the building communicates your feeling of the child's strength, independence and confidence in their ability. This gives the child the sense that "I can do this!" as well as a sense of safety.
- Prolonged separation is hard for the child and their parents, so the quicker the good-bye, the easier for everyone.
- Routine provides children with a feeling of safety and faith that the world is a safe place to be. The more punctual and consistent you can be in your child's morning arrival, the easier this time is likely to be for both of you.
- For safety and supervision reasons, the school cannot be responsible for students who arrive at school earlier than 8:15 a.m. (for the preschooler) unless they are enrolled in the All Day Program.
- Morning arrival in particular is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins. Otherwise you can correspond via a note in the parent journal and the teachers will get back to you by email or voicemail within 24 hours.

All-day Program Morning Arrival: The Extended Day Program opens at 7:30 a.m. The Staff is not available for care at any time prior to 7:30 a.m. Please walk your child to the designated supervision area. Do not drop them off at the main door.

Infant, Toddler and Primary Student Morning Arrival: All preschool parents should park in the designated parking areas and bring the student to class. Do not park your car in the carpool area. Class begins at 8:15 a.m. for preschoolers.

Elementary Program: Parents will need to drive through the carpool circle to drop their child off. Please do not allow your child to walk through the parking lot unattended.

Tardy Policy

All students are due in class by 8:15 a.m. Students who arrive later than 8:30 a.m. are considered absent and must check in at the front desk to have absence removed from their record. After checking in at the front desk and receiving and "Late" pass, the student and parent should go to the classroom door, ring the bell at the door and wait until the teacher can answer the door and invite the student in with their "Late" pass. This process will eliminate interruptions to lessons and chapel. This is not meant as a mode of punishment but to emphasize that late arrivals are disruptive to the rest of the class and result in missed instruction. **N.C. State regulations require attendance to be kept regularly. Having parents sign the students in at the front desk help ensure accurate record keeping between the classroom and Administration.** We depend on your family's full support in this area. If we find that your child is arriving late more than three times in a semester, a conference will be scheduled to work out a solution. This policy assists our children by minimizing disruptions during the very important morning work time.

Saying Good-bye!**Tips for Toddler and Primary Parents on Separation**

It can be difficult for parents and young children to separate at the beginning of the school year. We have found that a short and positive good-bye and on-time arrival is easiest for the child. Prolonged good-byes and late arrivals often make the separation more difficult. Your children will pick up on your nonverbal messages. Feel free to utilize the classroom teachers after class hours for suggestions if transition becomes a concern. A call to the school for reassurance that your child has settled in and is adjusting well is encouraged.

IV. Dismissal Procedures**Early Pickup**

Naturally, there will be occasions where you will need to take your child out of school early for a doctor's appointment or similar obligation. To ensure that your child will be ready, please send in a note to the teachers indicating the reason for early pick-up and letting them know the time you will arrive at the school. When you arrive at school, you will need to stop by the front desk to sign yourself in and retrieve a "Parent" badge.

Half-Day Students Dismissal

Infants, Toddlers, and Primary Students should be picked up from their classroom by 12:00 p.m. This allows toddlers to eat lunch with their classroom friends. Lunch is typically served around 11:15 a.m.

Full Day Students Dismissal

The normal school day for full day preschool students will end at 3:00 p.m. Parents who have not picked up their children by 3:15 p.m. should pick them up from the Administration Office. In such cases, the parents will be charged a nominal fee for the late arrival. Dismissal will occur at the carpool driveway located at the end of the covered walkway for preschool and Elementary students. Elementary students should be picked up by 3:00 p.m.

All Day Students Dismissal

The All-day Program ends at 6:00 p.m., at which time Christian Montessori School closes for the day. It is essential that all children be picked up by this time. A substantial late fee of \$2.00 per minute will be assessed should any child not be picked up by 6:00 p.m. To pick your child up in the afternoon, park in the lot, walk up to the building and locate the appropriate supervision group. Please make contact with the staff member supervising your child before taking him/her out of the group. **All children must be signed out.** It is required that alternate plans be made with your

emergency contact to pick up the student in the event of a late arrival. You will also need to notify the school if the emergency contact will pick the child up.

After-school Studios Dismissal

After-school Studios work independently from CMSLN. It is the responsibility of the individual vendor to communicate to you the exact time your child should be picked up from the studio. It is also the vendor's responsibility to maintain supervision of your child. If your child is participating in the CMSLN All-day program, the studio vendor will coordinate with your child's teacher the transition between the studio location and the All-day program.

Dismissal Due to Inclement Weather

If severe weather conditions make travel hazardous, school may be postponed, closed early or canceled. Closings will be announced on WSOC as well as on the school voicemail message and website. Along with our Mecklenburg County friends, we have teachers and families who travel from Iredell, Cabarrus and Lincoln Counties and believe we need to make these decisions independently of any particular school system. "Snow Days have been built in to the academic calendar. Any days, other than those built into the calendar, that may need to be made up due to inclement weather will be announced as necessary.

Late Pick-up Policy

We anticipate that there will be times when uncontrollable factors will result in your picking up your child late. As parents we know you will try to keep these events to a minimum due to the concern and confusion this causes the child.

However, in the event you are late picking up your child, a procedure has been put in place to ensure the safety of your child as well as others:

- Children not picked up by the designated time will be brought to the office to await your arrival.
- Due to ratio concerns, children will not be able to wait in their room or in the All Day Program or Afterschool program (unless they have been registered for the All Day Program).
- For those normally dismissed at 12:00 p.m. or 3:00 p.m., a late pickup fee will be charged as follows: twenty minutes after normal pickup time results in a flat charge of \$5.00. After thirty minutes or more, the student will be supervised at a charge of \$20.00 per hour. **Students scheduled to be picked up by 6:00 p.m. will be charged a late fee of \$2.00 per minute. Upon arrival the parent will be required to sign the "Late pickup" form and submit payment. "Late pickup" fees will not be billed.**
- Unless we receive specific permission from you to do otherwise, we will only release your child to the people that you have specifically indicated on the Emergency Information form that every family completes annually. **Students must be signed out of school daily through use of the classroom checkout sheet.**
- We must receive a note, or in an emergency, a phone call from you in order to release your child to someone not on your list. This rule also applies to students going home with school friends. We will require a photocopy of a photo ID from anyone to whom you've given permission to pick up your child if he or she is not familiar to our staff. Please make sure all of your car-pool drivers are on your release form. Do not park your car and leave it unattended in the carpool circle.

Attendance and Absences (see also Academic Policies for state laws and expectations).

Consistency and routine are important to every child's development, and nothing can be more disruptive to a child's education than irregular attendance. All students, even our youngest, are expected to attend school on a daily basis, arriving before the start of the school day. Students are expected to be in class before 8:15 a.m. and to be present in class for the full school day (or for the full morning session in the case of younger students enrolled in the half day program) and at other required school activities.

However, Christian Montessori School also understands that every once in a while it is necessary to be away from school. While we are fairly understanding and supportive, it is still important that you keep your child's absences from school to a minimum.

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

V. Financial Policies

Tuition Policies

Christian Montessori School is a not-for-profit organization, completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income with building projects and other items financed by donations and grants. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. The school will be forced to withhold any and all services to students whose accounts have fallen behind unless written arrangements have been made for deferred payment. Your cooperation is essential and very much appreciated.

Parents are responsible for prompt payment of all outstanding tuition and fees. Accounts are due (after the 5th of each month) will be assessed a \$50.00 late fee. Each additional day of delinquent pay will result in an additional fee of \$5.00 per day. After the 15th day of the month, the credit card on file will be charged for the tuition due plus a \$30.00 processing fee. Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account that is more than sixty days past due. Records will be forwarded once the account has been brought up-to-date.

Re-Enrollment

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

Re-enrollment materials will be mailed home in mid-January and are due back at the school by mid-February along with the annual registration deposit. If the school has not received a student's re-enrollment materials by February 14th, his space will be made available to new students who have applied for admission to the school.

No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on her account.

Financial Assistance Program

Christian Montessori School offers limited financial assistance to families enrolled in the school. Parents may contact the Admissions Office for an application, which they then submit to the School and Student Service (SSS) for Financial Aid, National Association of Independent Schools in Princeton, NJ. The Financial Aid Committee meets in March of the current academic year to consider applicants for the following year. Financial aid decisions are based on the need of the family for the coming year as well as assistance availability. If financial aid is needed for more than one year, the family must submit a new application each year. Applications are available after January 1st.

Financial aid is defined as a reduction in tuition granted to families who have demonstrated eligibility through an objective assessment of their financial position.

Conditions of Financial Aid

1. All financial aid will be awarded on a one-year basis. Students receiving financial aid cannot be guaranteed that it will be awarded in the following school year, although the Financial Aid Committee will give their applications careful consideration.
2. The maximum level of financial aid that the Committee may award to anyone student may not exceed 30% of his or her tuition.
3. Awards of financial aid cover tuition only and do not include any fees for materials, special activities, supervision or transportation.
4. Any awards of financial aid shall be credited to that individual student's account. Financial aid awards may not be given or transferred to any other student.
5. The family may elect any of the school's three optional payment plans to pay the balance. They will be expected to pay the balance of their accounts on time, according to the payment plan selected.
6. Financial aid will not be renewed in any case where a family receiving aid fails to keep the balance of their account up-to-date.

Assignment of Financial Aid

Priority in considering applications for financial aid will normally be given to:

1. Families who have two or more children enrolled in the school; and/ or
2. Families who have been with the school for several years; and/ or
3. Any special contributions the student or family have made to the life of the school.

Applying for Financial Aid

1. Obtain from the school office the necessary forms to submit to the School and Student Service for Financial Aid, requesting an impartial evaluation of your family's eligibility for financial aid in the upcoming school year.
2. These forms should be submitted to the School and Student Services as soon as possible by January 15th to be considered for the following academic year. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure that all appropriate forms and supporting documents are submitted by the deadline established by SSS.
3. Late applications will be considered if funds are still available.
4. Applications for financial aid should be mailed directly to SSS by their deadline. Please be sure to include all necessary paperwork as required by SSS.

(Information submitted to the Financial Aid Committee will remain strictly confidential.)

VI. Everyday Life at Christian Montessori School**Starting School**

Many young children and their parents feel a bit nervous when they leave one another in an unfamiliar situation. A few tears may even be expected. If this is your young child's first year at Christian Montessori School, we encourage you to visit the campus frequently before the school year begins to allow him or her to become familiar with the new setting.

Depending upon the class and program, parents and students will have a conference the week before school starts. At this time children can visit the classroom and meet their new teachers. This is considered our school transition. As a part of the transition for Toddlers and Primary, parents will have an opportunity for a home visit from assigned classroom teachers.

Transitioning into the Classroom

All preschool children will join the class in a three-day transition. If you are joining us during the Fall back-to-school season, you will be provided a Transition Schedule for your child by your classroom teachers.

During transition, the children will be introduced in small groups to the school and their classroom. During this time of transition, the children learn how to navigate through their new environment. Each child is unique; some children adjust quickly, while others take longer to feel comfortable. The most comforting and reassuring thing you can do for your child is to model complete confidence in their new environment and their ability to do this themselves. Remember, the longer the goodbye the more distressing it is to the child. Classroom teachers will communicate to parent via a summer mailer the times and days of transition for your child.

Transition Schedules

Toddler and Primary Programs (Fall):

- 1st day of attendance either 8:15-10:30 a.m. or 10:00 a.m.-12:00 p.m.
- 2nd day of attendance 8:15 a.m. - 12:00 p.m. (lunchtime included)
- 3rd day of attendance 8:15 a.m.- 12:00 p.m. (lunchtime included)
- 4th day of attendance regular schedule (lunchtime included)

Toddler/Primary Programs (Mid-year):

- 1st day of attendance 8:15-10:30 a.m.
- 2nd day of attendance 8:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (lunchtime included)
- 3rd day of attendance 8:15 a.m.-12:00 p.m. (lunchtime included)
- 4th day of attendance regular schedule (lunchtime included)

*** Elementary (Including Kindergarten/3rd year Primary Students) and Middle School students do not transition and experience a full day of school beginning on the first day of school.**

*** In keeping with the individualized approach of Montessori, transition schedules may be modified to meet the needs of an individual child. Your child's teacher will let you know if she feels your child would benefit from a tailor-made transition into the classroom.**

Daily Schedules

Schedules may vary with each classroom and will be posted outside each classroom. Changes to the class schedule will be communicated to you through the classroom teachers via written communications such as the classroom newsletter and "Weekly" Folder fliers.

Work Periods

Elementary: the Elementary work period begins at 8:00 a.m. and lasts until approximately 11:30 a.m., at which time the students enjoy lunch and recess. The afternoon contains time for Specialty classes (Music, Art, Spanish and Mandarin, P.E. Technology) and practice work as well as Environmental Care. Students who are 5 years of age and in the preschool program will have an extended learning period in the afternoon when they will join Elementary students in Specialty Classes.

Toddler/Primary: the Preschool program work period begins at 8:15 a.m. and last until 10:30 a.m. followed by Outdoor time and Lunch. For students in the Full day Program (3 and 4 year olds) an afternoon work period is available from 1:30 p.m. to 2:45 p.m.

Outdoor Time

Children spend time outside each day unless there are dangerous weather conditions. We ask that you dress your child appropriately for the weather as well as bring necessary outerwear such as rain boots and raincoat. Also, apply sunscreen prior to arriving to school.

Lunches/Snack

Christian Montessori School students have the option to bring their lunch to school or participate in the Hot Lunch Program.

Christian Montessori School offers a Hot Lunch Program with a monthly sign-up. This program contains monthly menus highlighting each day's meal.

Christian Montessori School community places great emphasis on the importance of good nutrition as the first step to a lifelong wellness education program. Lunch is a very important part of not only your child's school day, but of her wellness education as well. We need to count on you to work with us to teach her about health and nutrition. The challenge is to help them discover that wholesome, sugar-free foods can taste even better than junk food and don't have the negative effects on their bodies.

Our lunchtimes are similar to a family meal and an offer excellent opportunity for grace and courtesy lessons as well as allow the children to enjoy each other's company.

Packed Cold Lunch: Preschool parents choosing to prepare a packed lunch for your child, the following are some guidelines:

- According to Health and Sanitation regulations, children's packed lunches cannot require heating (i.e., leftovers, soup, etc.). We realize this puts an extra burden on coming up with interesting packed lunches; however, we must follow the state guidelines.
- With younger children, it is a good idea to prepare food in small, easy-to-handle servings, such as cutting sandwiches into quarters and purchasing bite-size fruit. Elementary students may heat (not cook) their food in the microwave however; parents must sign a waiver of school responsibility in the event of overheating or a burn. Please remember that heating food takes time away from the students' lunchtime and should be avoided.
- Please do not send your child with sugary desserts or drinks. Please, NO SODAS or CHOCOLATE!
- At Christian Montessori School, the children tend to quickly develop the habit of drinking water, but if you do want to send in a prepared drink, read the labels and look for 100% pure fruit juices.
- Your child's bagged lunch must have their name on the bag and the date the meal was prepared. Do not send lunches in bulky lunch containers, as there is not enough storage space for large containers in the cold lunch refrigerator.
- The State of North Carolina requires that lunches brought from home have a representation from each of the four food groups. Milk is provided for all students, 2% and whole milk is supplied by CMSLN. (The parent must supply any milk substitutes.)
- When you send food in re-sealable bags or boxes, we can send leftovers home. You will know how much food your child has eaten and when possible, can recycle your good, carefully prepared food.

Snack

Students have nutritional snacks in the mornings and afternoons. We also have many food preparation lessons that include fruit, veggies, cheese, etc. We only serve water to drink. Parents often help out with snacks and food preparation as a way to support the curriculum. Snack suggestions include fresh fruit, individually packaged cereal, snack bars, crackers, graham cookies, fresh vegetables (cucumbers, carrots, celery), cheese snacks, Danimals, jelly and crackers, peanut butter, bagels and cream cheese, etc.

Special Dietary Restrictions

Some students may follow a special diet for religious or medical reasons. Please be sure to notify the teachers if your child should avoid certain foods. A list of allergies will be posted in each classroom as well as the kitchen. Dietary needs will be taken into account in planning snacks or on days when the class prepares its own lunch.

Siesta/Naptime

The state of North Carolina requires that all children under the age of 5 have an opportunity to rest. Naptime typically occurs between 12:00 p.m. and 2:00 p.m. During this time, the children are required to be still and quiet however, sleeping is optional.

Weekly Community Chapel

The entire school community participates in a school-wide chapel one day of each school week. Parents and friends are invited to join in on this up-beat praise and worship experience. Community Chapel usually begins at 10:35 a.m. and occurs in the school atrium.

Field Trips

Classes will periodically take field trips, possibly involving a small fee, to local points of interest during the year. They are planned to coordinate with the curriculum and subjects being studied by a class, to take advantage of special community events, and/or as a part of our mission programs. Notice of upcoming events will be sent home in advance. Parents often help out with transportation and are welcome to join the class in these activities. If you are interested, please speak with your child's teachers.

Parents will always be notified of any trips scheduled for your child's class. Parent volunteers often help with driving and the students are always well supervised.

Elementary field trips within a 20-mile radius of the school will be covered by a single permission slip signed at the beginning of the school year. Longer distance trips will require an individual permission slip. Elementary classes will typically have one or more over-night trips during the year. These trips will be carefully planned and chaperoned.

The teachers will have a handout with further suggestions for making the field trip a success.

Show and Tell

Each class schedules a time for Show and Tell. Your child's teachers will inform you of their policy. Children enjoy bringing in an item from nature, a special souvenir from a trip, something they have made or their favorite books. Again, do not send in toys.

Birthdays

Children love to celebrate their birthdays with their friends. To enhance the meaning and excitement of the child's special day, we have a special birthday ceremony in which the class is told the story of the birthday child's life. On the morning of your child's birthday, please send to school a poster board with one photograph of your child for each year of the child's life. Under each photograph, give a brief biography of some special event that occurred during that year (e.g. at age 1, _____ took his first step, at age _____, flew on an airplane, age 3, etc.) After the biographical presentation, the child will ceremoniously carry the globe of the earth around the sun (represented by a candle) once for each year of his life. Parents are, of course, invited to attend this special ceremony. The classroom teachers arrange times for birthday celebrations independently.

It is especially nice to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. Small store-bought muffins, oatmeal cookies, etc. work well, but try to keep sugar to a minimum. Health and Safety standards do not permit homemade items. This is also the only opportunity for open flames to be

allowed at our school with the exception of brief chapel lessons. Students are never allowed to handle any flame.

Lastly, please do not send birthday invitations or birthday gifts to school to be distributed to other children. We feel birthday parties are private home affairs and distributing invitations and gifts at school interferes with the rhythm of the child at work at school.

School Studios Program

Christian Montessori School Studio Program offers all primary and elementary students a range of extracurricular courses and activities including arts and craft, music, drama, dance, physical education, sports, computers and special clubs and activities. The individual vendor determines schedules and fees for studios. Parents may sign their child up for studios in the main office at the studio display area.

Parents are also invited to share their talents and interests with the children by leading or assisting with Studios during the school year.

Dress Code

Our students wear uniforms for several reasons including:

- We have children at our school from varying economic backgrounds. In the classroom, each child is on the same “playing field” and economic boundaries do not exist.
- We encourage children to develop their individuality via their personalities and academic achievement as opposed to their outward appearance.
- Each student’s day is full of opportunities to learn and concentrate. Our goal is to remove any distractions that would impede the student’s ability to grasp the world of information that is offered to them each day. When each child is unified in apparel, there are fewer distractions in the classroom.
- Uniforms reduce opportunities for peer pressure to fit in. “Uniformity” means everyone. Even if only one person is not in appropriate dress then the entire environment is no longer “uniform”.

Students are expected to dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable and appropriate for school and should adhere to the uniform policy once they reach the Primary environment. For Toddler and Primary we suggest a change of clothes for each student to be stored in their cubby (underwear, uniform shirt, pants, socks, and indoor slippers).

Primary and Elementary students should adhere to the following dress code:

- **Colors:** Navy and khaki
- **Tops:** All uniform shirts, blouses, sweatshirts and sweaters must be purchased from the school’s designated uniform supplier.
- **Bottoms:** Uniform wear from the waist down may be purchased from any store that carries an official “Uniform” brand.
- **Shoes:** Soft-soled navy blue, black or brown are recommended. All white athletic tennis shoes are permissible. You will need to avoid shoes with characters and flashing lights, as they cause distractions in the classroom.
- **P.E. Attire:** Monogrammed navy sweatpants, gray tee shirts/sweatshirts and navy gym shorts are required for children who are enrolled in PE. These items are worn only on PE days for Elementary and Middle School only.

Toddler

The primary focus of the Toddler program is developing and encouraging independence in the young child, and these guidelines work toward that goal. Toddlers should dress in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves: pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc. Young children usually cannot manage the shoulder fasteners found on overalls. Also, keep in mind that toddlers work and play hard. Because we cannot be responsible for soiled and stained clothing, we ask that you do

not send your child to school in their best clothes.

Recommended Clothing:

- Pullover shirts
- Elastic waist pants, shorts and skirts*.
- Dresses
- Velcro-strap or slide-on shoes

*Especially important for children learning to use the toilet.

Discouraged Clothing:

- Overalls
- Onesies
- One pieces rompers
- High top shoes or boots
- Watches, necklaces, etc. (these items are easily lost or broken)

It is important to mention that students go outside every day, warm or cold, and therefore seasonally appropriate clothing is a must. It can be quite warm in the classroom, so dressing in layers can be beneficial. Please check your child's cubby as the seasons change to ensure that he or she has the proper change of clothes.

Violation of Uniform Policy

- **1st violation of the uniform policy** - The classroom teacher will notify the parent by email or note reminding them of the uniform policy.
- **2nd violation of the uniform policy** - Administration will call the parent and ask them to bring the appropriate clothing to the school for the student or give the school permission to change the student's clothes to a new uniform piece of clothing, and the parent will be billed the cost of the uniform piece.
- **3rd violation of the uniform policy** - Administration will call the parent for the child to be picked up from school and not return until they are wearing a uniform.
*New students are offered a "grace period" of one week to obtain uniforms.

Miscellaneous

Classroom "wish" list and donations

Christian Montessori School provides a safe and comfortable environment for all students. Each classroom is carefully prepared with each child's needs in mind. There are, however, some supplies that will need to be brought from home or purchased for your child's use. Teachers will contact parents during the summer with notification of any classroom needs according to the years area of focus within the curriculum.

Toys

Toys should not be brought to school. They are most often lost, fought over or broken. If toys are brought to school, they will be stored in the teachers' closet or administration offices.

Lost and Found

The lost and found area is maintained in the front foyer area. At the end of each academic quarter any items in the lost and found will be displayed in the front lobby. Extra uniform items will be kept and added to the school's inventory all other will be donated to Goodwill.

Locker/Cubby Care

Our goal is to assist your child in gaining confidence and self-esteem through independence and self-help skills, and morning arrival can set the tone for the entire day. Please set your child up

for success by keeping his/her cubby free of clutter and extraneous items. Large pillows, blankets and backpacks create obstacles for getting to coats and lunch boxes, and usually end up on the floor. When selecting these items, keep in mind the size of the cubby. And, be prepared to discover most socks come with feet. ...They walk away!

The following items are necessary for the cubbies:

- Crib sheet: to go home on Fridays for laundering
- Small crib blanket. Take home on Fridays for laundering
- Change of clothes. We suggest 2 pairs of underwear, 2 uniform shirts, 2 pair pants, socks and indoor slippers or slipper socks. See page 11 for more information on the Dress Code. Check your child's cubby regularly for cleanliness and any clothing that needs to go home or be replaced.

***Label everything! Every child in the Primary program is wearing the same uniform, and every child occasionally leaves sweaters, jackets or sweatshirts on the playground. When this happens, it is difficult to know which child or class the item belongs to.**

VII. Health Procedures

Student Medical Reports

The State of North Carolina requires all students to have an updated Medical form on file within 30 days of the first day of school. Failure to have the form on file will result in a temporary dismissal of the student until all information is on file and available for audit by the state representative.

School-wide Hand Washing Policy

In an effort to maintain a healthy learning and growth environment for everyone in our community, the Christian Montessori School has implemented the following Hand Washing Policy:

Students and Employees will thoroughly wash their hands with soap and water (at minimal) upon the following occasions:

- Upon entering the classroom
- After using the restroom
- After diaper changes
- After changing out of soiled garments
- Before preparing snack
- Before eating any meal or snack
- After wiping runny noses
- After coughing and/or sneezing

In addition to hand washing, staff will regularly spray areas and surfaces that are frequently touched with bleach and water solution approved by Mecklenburg County Health and Sanitation Department to include areas of entry and exit throughout the building.

When Your Child is Ill

Whenever your child is ill and won't be coming to school, please call the office between 8:00 and 9:00 am to let us know that he/she will be absent. For the sake of other children, please inform us immediately if your child has been diagnosed with an infectious disease. Examples of infectious diseases include: chicken pox, conjunctivitis (pink eye), salmonella, fever with rash, hand, foot and mouth disease, scabies, strep throat, tuberculosis, whooping cough, croup and head lice. Please note this is only a partial list.

Students with any illness, including infectious diseases, **must stay out of school until 24 hours AFTER the last symptom.** This includes being fever free without fever reducing medications. Return to school must be accompanied with a doctor's note.

As contagious illnesses are confirmed in your child's classroom, a notification letter will be sent home to inform you of the symptoms as well as the illness guidelines.

Some guidelines the school uses for determining student illness and the need to temporarily exclude students from the school include the following:

- Child's fever is 100 degrees or higher (axillary)
- Child exhibits outward signs of illness (rash, vomiting, diarrhea, etc.)
- Child is flushed, has chills, or feels warmer than usual
- Child is irritable or lethargic for a long length of time
- Frequent coughing is experienced which keeps the child from participating in daily classroom activities
- Any undiagnosed rash (child must have doctor's note to return to school)
- Mouth sores associated with the child's inability to control his/her saliva (child must have doctor's note before returning to school)
- Symptoms of a general cold: nasal congestion/runny nose, chills, sore throat, red and watery eyes, aches, dry cough/hoarseness, breathing difficulty, nasal discharge that is copious/profuse/yellow/green, ear drainage.

If Your Child Gets Sick at School

If your child ever feels ill, he/she will be taken to the office, and we will contact you to arrange for him/her to be picked up right away. We understand how difficult it can be for working parents to break free during the day, and yet all of our children get ill from time to time. You will want to make arrangements with a friend or relative in advance for an out of the ordinary pick-up. **We do not have a designated room so your child will be in the front office until picked up.**

Remember: Because colds, flu and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if he has a fever, nausea, diarrhea or any other symptoms of illness. If your child has fallen behind in their schoolwork due to an extended absence, please contact their teachers to develop a strategy to help them catch up.

At Christian Montessori School and weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, they are probably too ill to be at school. *The only occasions children will NOT play outside are when there are severe weather conditions. Rain, snow and cold weather are not considered to be severe.

Emergency Care

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

If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. In an extreme emergency situation, we will first call 911 for assistance then attempt to reach the parent (guardian). If the situation is less severe, we will take your child to the local urgent care facility, emergency room at either University Medical Center, Presbyterian Hospital, Carolinas Medical Center or Lake Norman Regional. Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you.

Please be sure to keep your emergency information form up-to-date and inform the office immediately if there is any change in your address or phone number during the academic year.

Medication

Please do not send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs, except under a doctor's instruction as explained below. This includes any over-the-counter treatments with labels reading, **"KEEP OUT OF THE REACH OF CHILDREN"**.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that doses are due during hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably shouldn't be in school for a full day.

Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff in the school office, where it will be locked up.

Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student except as authorized by you as parent or guardian and the child's physician, in accordance with the following procedures:

Prescription Medications:

- All medications sent from home must be accompanied by the "Authorization to Administer Medication" and the "Physician's Statement" forms before the first day medication is administered at the school. Any medication sent without the appropriate completed authorization form will not be administered and will be sent home.
- If a medication is to be administered on an on-going basis, the "Authorization to Administer Medication" form should indicate the duration of treatment.
- In cases involving long-term medication for chronic conditions, a new authorization form must be completed with the school each year in August. A new medication form must accompany any medication changes during the school year.
- We can only administer oral medications, with the exception of prescribed Epi-pens, in the event of an allergic reaction.
- The original bottle containing the medication must be clearly labeled with the student's name, medication contained, and the time(s) and amount(s) of dosage.
- This policy applies to prescription and over-the-counter medications. A new authorization form must be completed for each episode of illness and each new medication.
- When having the prescription filled, you may want to request two bottles ñ one for home and one for school. If the medication is liquid, please do not dilute it with water.
- As parent (guardian), you are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
- If administration of medication could cause harmful effects to staff, the school reserves the right to deny administration of medicine.
- As parent (guardian), you are responsible for notifying the school in person or by telephone on the first morning a new medication is being brought in with the completed authorization form and physician's statement.
- Whenever possible, medication schedules should be arranged to cause minimal interruption in the student's school day.
- A copy of the form authorizing us to dispense medication may be obtained from the school office.

We will strictly adhere to this policy!

Over-the-Counter Medication:

Absolutely no medications, including aspirin, Tylenol, cough remedies or other over-the-counter medications will be given or allowed to be taken at school unless authorization is submitted by parent AND physician. This includes ANY medication (including chap stick) if the label reads "Keep out of reach of children".

VIII. Safety Procedures**Fire Drills**

Random fire drills will be conducted on a monthly basis. The alarm will be a loud horn, which will sound off continuously in the event of a fire or drill. When the horn sounds continuously, all classes will dismiss into designated areas and remain in their groups. The teachers will make certain the room is empty and close the doors. The teachers will join the class outside the building, take roll and notify the office of attendance. Students and teachers are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until informed that they may return to class.

Emergency Evacuations:

In the unlikely event of an emergency at the McGuire Nuclear Power Station requiring an area evacuation, the following procedures will occur:

1. The Emergency Management System will notify Christian Montessori School that there is a need for an evacuation.
2. Each classroom will have in their possession an Emergency Evacuation Packet containing emergency information from Charlotte-Mecklenburg Emergency Management, their individual "Student Emergency Information forms, Christian Montessori School identification stickers (1 per student, employee and vehicle), directions to the designated evacuation site and attendance book.
3. All employees will use their personal vehicles to transport the students to the Northwest Cabarrus High School (Trinity Church Road, Concord). If time permits C.A.T.S. will send a bus.
4. After all children are loaded in the vehicles, there will be a final check of the building to ensure everyone has evacuated. After the final building check, all vehicles will move towards the evacuation site at the same time assisted by a police escort. We will make one trip to the evacuation site. Traffic returning back to the School will not be allowed by public officials.
5. The general public will be notified of the evacuation at which time you should travel to the Northwest Cabarrus High School.
6. The school's employees will care for the students until parent arrival.
7. Parents are required to pick up their child from that shelter area. DO NOT attempt to pick your child up from the school. This will help avoid delays. Law enforcement officials will direct traffic away from the 3-mile radius of the McGuire station.
8. You will need to ensure that your child's emergency form is completed and updated. Please be aware that parents will not be called prior to an evacuation, however, the local news and radio stations will inform the public of any evacuation.

We do not anticipate any form of emergency evacuation will occur. We do, however, feel that it is important to share the information given to us by the McGuire Nuclear Power Station as well as have an evacuation plan for the school. If you have any questions regarding area evacuations, please call the information center at the Energy Explorium (704) 875-5600.

Bringing a Guest to School:

Students are welcome to bring a friend or family member to school for a visit, although certain arrangements must be made at least one day in advance with the teachers and office

Before the visiting day, if necessary, the visiting student's parents will need to complete an emergency information form and submit to the office a note giving their permission for their child to visit Christian Montessori School.

If you would like your child to invite a friend or family member to spend a day with her at Christian Montessori School, they will need to remember that the visitor is their personal guest, and they will be responsible for their guest's comfort. They should see that their guest is not left alone.

Students may invite only one guest to school on any given day. All guests must be signed in at the school office on arrival.

Guests will be expected to follow the school's ground rules and dress code (uniform not required for guest).

Automobile Safety on Field Trips:

Please be sure that you understand and can support the following basic safety rules. Safety is our prime concern, and we must insist that every student follow certain rules of safe and courteous conduct while using transportation during an outing.

- Passengers must wear their seat belts at all times.
- Children who fall under the North Carolina child safety seat regulations must sit in car seats.
- Stay in your seat at all times while the automobile is moving.
- Don't leave your seat until the automobile has come to a complete stop.
- For everyone's safety, do not shout, engage in horseplay or switch seats during the trip.
- Never stick your hand (or anything else) out of the window.
- Never throw anything out of the car.
- Do not play with sharp objects, such as pens or pencils, in the car.
- Do not eat or drink in the car unless the driver gives permission.
- Every student is expected to set a good example for the younger children.
- Watch your language and behavior. Do not curse, act foolish or break any school rules.
- Please use earphones if you wish to listen to a radio or tape player in the automobile.
- Remember that all of the normal school rules apply when in an automobile for field trips.

Elementary Overnight Field Trip

Christian Montessori School provides all elementary children an opportunity to venture off campus for extended studies and educational experiences. As always, there's an effort to maintain consistency for the children at school and abroad, and to ensure a positive learning experience. Planned in the fall of the school year, often these trips involve overnight stays away from home. During these trips, additional expectations for adult and children apply (see Ground Rules). Essentially, chaperones and teachers are responsible to oversee the behavior and safety of each child they are assigned. We expect parents to respect our school's policies and ground rules even off campus, especially our "Two Person" Rule (an adult may not be alone with a student without another adult present).

Weapons

It is absolutely illegal and forbidden to bring or carry a weapon to school or to use any common object as a weapon.

Internet and Computer Use Code of Ethics

Elementary students and their parents should have a full understanding and agreement to the Code of Ethics regarding Internet use:

1. The user should accept the responsibility for all materials received and sent through the Internet.
2. Users will limit their pursuit of information through the Internet to curriculum-related activities.
3. Extensive personal use of the Internet is prohibited.
4. Any use of the Internet for personal gain or profit is prohibited.
5. Inappropriate use of the Internet may result in the loss of use and/or disciplinary action.
6. Users will have appropriate Internet etiquette. The use of inappropriate language or graphics, insult or harassment is not acceptable.
7. User ID and Passwords shall be kept confidential.
8. Internet access and activity are not guaranteed to be private.
9. Users are advised not to give out personal information such as home address, phone numbers or last names to anyone via the Internet.
10. Appropriate bibliographical citations must be given for all information obtained via the Internet.
11. The vandalism of computer hardware, software, electronically maintained data or network systems will result in immediate cancellation of user privileges and will require restitution.

IX. Parents and the School

Christian Montessori School - A community built on trust, friendship and mutual respect.

Once upon a time we all lived in a "Community". Children were born, grew up, got jobs, married and raised their own children in the same town. They attended the same schools that their mothers and fathers attended as children. Perhaps they even had some of the same teachers that their parents had as children. For the most part, children grew up to be decent, honest members of society. Truthfully, they had little or no choice. If they strayed just slightly off the straight and narrow path, there was always someone who knew them and their family who would set them straight. Some people might consider this meddling, but in many ways that meddling was a demonstration of caring.

In our fast-paced and very mobile society, it's difficult to establish the community bonds that unite people. Today, many of us wish that we could re-create that same type of environment.

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

You will often hear the word "community" used to describe Christian Montessori School. It offers for those who wish, an authentic community. Relationships tend to grow strong and friendships run deep here. Teachers, students and parents enjoy an old-fashioned sense of friendship and collaboration.

This opportunity for continuity, stability and a true sense of community within the school means a great deal to many of us at Christian Montessori School. Students know that they belong, that they are respected and that they are cared for not only by their parents, but by the larger community of fellow students, teachers and other parents in the school, many of whom have known them almost all their lives.

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

In a time when it is often difficult to establish the same positive feelings of continuity, unification and stability in our own neighborhoods, Christian Montessori School has succeeded in re-creating that positive sense of identity, mutual caring and concern among its students, teachers and parents that truly define Christian Montessori School as a community.

PARENT TIP

Research shows the most successful students (and people!) are those whose loved ones are involved in their daily lives. Become familiar with your Child's school.

Communicate

Observe

Volunteer

Participate

The Parent Co-op Program - The Gift of Time and Talent

At Christian Montessori School parent involvement is essential and has a significant impact on our children's classrooms as well as the greater school community. We depend heavily on our talented parent population. Whatever your interests- cooking, gardening, writing, technology- we need your special abilities. Your participation in 20 hours of required services will be referred to as "Parent Co-op" as it is a cooperative effort to provide helping hands of service to our school, which will benefit all our children.

Many valuable contributions of time and talent are made because parents wish to be supportive of their child's classroom activities. We appreciate your services to the classroom but ask that you consider spreading out your hours to serve the broader school community as well. Co-op hours may be reported for any of the services listed on the Co-op Job Descriptions. Hours may also be reported for requests made through your child's teacher for additional services to the class (i.e. cleaning, supervision of garden care, etc.) Please note that Parent of the Week responsibilities count (2 hours per occurrence) towards hours. Other examples of participation that may not be reported for Co-op hours are: attending classroom parties or other celebrations, attending school meetings, curriculum nights or parent education workshops. Parent Co-Op and event planning do count. Up to 2 hours per field trip of chaperoning may be claimed. Please note that there are opportunities to provide "in kind" services to the school in lieu of served hours. If you are a business owner or independent contractor or dealer of any services that the school may benefit from, you can trade hours for those services. Examples of this might include restaurant owners who will cater a donation, landscapers, painters etc. Please let us know if you are interested in doing this on your Co-op Agreement.

A few ways in which you can be a part of the Christian Montessori School community include:

- Family of the Week
- Assisting teachers with: arts and craft displays/posters
- Cooking and/or providing refreshments for special events
- Culture and ethnic studies throughout the year
- Dance and movement sessions and exhibitions
- Drama and theater events and activities
- Gardening
- History, folklore and storytelling
- Music
- Photography
- Classroom or office assistant
- Fund-raising / development efforts
- Committee involvement
- Assist with school newsletter
- Assist with special event
- Teach a studio course
- Help our students work in the Children's Garden
- Share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy or a field that you've studied
- Coach a team or after-school club
- Serve as a class parent
- Substitute teacher

Note: Christian Montessori School depends on our combined talents.

Communication between home and school: THE CRITICAL LINK!

In an environment as diverse and productive as ours is, it becomes imperative that everyone do their part in fostering effective and continual communication. We expect we will hold each other responsible to this mutual commitment.

It is very important to have open lines of communication between teachers and families. To that end, we have a number of ways to keep in touch.

- There is a "Parent Communication Journal" outside the classroom for parents to jot down notes to the teachers.
- Each child will have a folder for notes, newsletters, etc. We ask that parents check their child's folder daily.
- There are bulletin boards outside each classroom that provide news and information, and a dry erase board, which is updated frequently with the most important news. Please make it a habit to check these areas often so as to stay up-to-date on class and school news and events.
- We also send home a monthly newsletter that has information that pertains to things that are happening in the classroom in that particular month.
- We will have Parent Education events during the course of the year to discuss specific topics so you can learn more about your child and their Montessori experience.
- On the school calendar, you will find that parent/teachers conferences are scheduled twice a year. This is an excellent opportunity to share information about your child and set goals for the future. Both parents are required to attend! Additional conferences may be requested at any time during the year.
- Each class has designated room parents who help facilitate projects and special events.

- We can be reached by voice mail and/or email, which are checked daily. All calls will be returned within a 24-hour time period however, messages left after noon may not be retrieved until the following workday.
- Website

PARENT TIP

During school hours teachers need to focus on the children in their classroom. If you need to reach your child's teacher to discuss any issues related to your child, there are a number of channels to use:

1. Put it in writing! Leave a note on email or at the door.
2. Leave a message on the teacher's school voice mail.
3. Schedule a conference to take place over the phone or in person.

Sonya Curry 8/8/12 12:00 PM

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During the school year, we will send home a variety of letters, notes, newsletters and announcements. Students will bring them home "Work" folders every Friday afternoon. The folders will contain:

- Communication from various committee members (PTA, teachers, SACS, etc.)
- Flyers and announcements of upcoming special events
- The school newsletter, Connections (once a month)
- A monthly letter from the teachers.

Whenever parents are separated, divorced or for some other reason not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters. Should there be any changes of this nature, we ask parents to notify the Front Office immediately.

Both parents at their respective addresses at no extra cost will receive copies of progress reports and announcements mailed out or sent home with students. Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents as well.

When family conferences are scheduled, we need to avoid separate conferences for each parent. It is terribly important to communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the School Administrator to discuss the situation. Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events. Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

PARENT TIP

Our simple rule for direct, honest and productive communication is always to go to the source. If needed, you'll be directed to the appropriate person to answer your questions, get your information or support you in problem solving.

Sonya Curry 8/8/12 12:02 PM

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Observing the Class at Work

Observing through the window unannounced and unnoticed is a great way to learn about your child and about his or her relationship with peers and adults.

Parents are required to observe in their child's classroom at least once per academic year.

Contact your child's teachers to let them know when you would like to visit. Unless arrangements have been made in advance, they may not have time to speak with you before, during or after your observation. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence, therefore, when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of your child and his or her classmates at work.

In-class Observation Process

1. Schedule your observation through the Director of Admissions.
2. Turn off cell phone and any other electronic device you may have with you.
3. Please enter the classroom quietly.
4. Sit in the designated chair or area provided for you by the teacher.
5. Do not interrupt the teacher or the teacher assistant as they are concentrating on the children's work.
6. Do not engage in conversation with the students. If a child approaches you, please tell them to continue their work because you are in the classroom to watch them work.
7. Observe the children and teacher quietly. Please write down your questions or comments on the Observation Survey Form and the Director of Admissions will address them with you after your observation.

PARENT TIP

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially the younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and new environment. For this reason, we ask parents to avoid class observations during this period.

All of our Primary and Toddler classes have observation windows where a parent can watch any time they wish. Even if your child is not in one of these classes, you will enjoy a view of the students at work and will gain a better understanding of the Montessori program. All Primary and Toddler classes are set up with the same types of materials and the approach is very similar from room to room.

Regardless of your type of observation, all visitors and volunteers (including parents) need to sign in and get an appropriate visitor badge from the front office upon arrival.

Points to Note When You are Observing the Classroom

- As you sit down to carefully observe in a Montessori classroom for the first time, what catches your eye? What do you notice on your second or third visit?
- How is the classroom organized? What do you notice about the layout of activities, furnishings and shelves?
- Pay attention to the way the adults interact with the children. What do you notice?
- Perhaps during your observation you will see the teacher correct or discipline a child. What do you notice?
- As you observe, try to look for any unwritten rules and procedures that the children are following. What do you notice?

- Focus on a particular child other than your own. Follow her work during the course of at least a half hour. How does she spend her time? How does she select work?
- Hopefully you will see the teachers present several different lessons to either small groups or individual children during your visits. What do you notice about the way they teach?
- What do you notice about the educational materials on the shelves and how the children work with them?
- What about the Montessori materials seems to be most attractive to the children?
- Focus on a few different Montessori materials. What concepts or skills does each isolate?
- How do the teachers introduce the children to the materials? Try to catch one child learning from another.
- Focus on the control of error built into several of the materials. How do they self-correct? Try to observe a child correcting her own work through the built-in control of error.
- As you observe the children at work, do you sense that there are certain tasks that the children prefer? Are there any that they seem to avoid?
- How do you as an adult respond to the Montessori materials? Are you drawn to them? Do you wish that you could have gone to a Montessori school?
- What sort of interactions do you notice between the younger and older students?
- During your observation, did the teachers spend most of their time with the youngest or older students? If so, try to determine what factors led them to concentrate most of their attention on one age group or another?
- How does your child feel about being in a multi-age classroom?
- What advantages and disadvantages do you see to multi-age grouping?

Learning More About Your Child's Day

"So, what did you do at school today?"

Have you experienced frustration when asking this question? Did you get the common answer, "nothing." Or possibly they tell you everyday that they did the same thing such as play-dough or spooning beans. Don't be alarmed. We can assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his development.

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

In addition to the difficulty children may have talking about their school experience, you may have noted that not many papers come home. They can be doing complex math, word building, writing, and geography and science lessons, all with manipulative materials that will have no paper work to show you their progress.

So How Can You Find Out What Your Child is Doing in School?

- Ask your child questions that are more specific. "Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colors?"
- Occasionally, park at dismissal and bring your child into classroom to show you her favorite lessons.
- Set up a time to observe your child in class.
- Read a Montessori book.
- Stop in after school and talk to your child's teacher, or set up an appointment for a formal conference, if you prefer.
- Come to school meetings and workshops.

- Play school with your child at home. Sometimes children will show you through their play what they are learning.
- Be patient. In time it will be obvious that your child is growing and learning everyday

Parent Education Opportunities

- **Montessori Fairs**
Families from our school and the outside community are invited to enjoy our Curriculum Fair. Classrooms are open to all; special presentations and displayed student work are available. Vendors, raffles and activities for the whole family are part of the fun.
- **Parent Lending Library** - Housed in the Administrative Office, this growing collection offers resources, books, listening and viewing tapes on subjects related to parenting, education, Montessori and more. Donations are always appreciated.
- **Class Meetings** - Scheduled individually by classroom, this will be a time for your child's teachers to invite you for informative discussions and presentations.
- **Guest Speakers and Presenters** - From our own faculty to invited guests; Montessori education and parenting topics will be featured.
- **Classes, Workshops and Forums** - Based on popular demand, these offerings will provide an in-depth perspective on an array of subjects.
- **Observations in Classrooms** - see Observing the Class at Work
- **Website Linked Information**-by going to the school's website (christianmontessorischool.org) you can find many links to related websites on the Montessori Society as well as accrediting bodies for the school.

PARENT TIP

If we desire to foster a love of learning for life, then we must continue to learn ourselves. Educating ourselves as parents only benefits our children's education.

X. Academic Policies**Classroom Placement for Students**

The placement of children in the classroom is based on several factors:

- Boy: girl ratio
- Age of child
- Careful balance of special needs population
- Other considerations are made with regard to sibling placement. Each classroom is fully equipped with the materials and faculty needed for individual student success; therefore, the school avoids "parental choice" for classroom placement. If parents have questions regarding their child's classroom placement, they should speak to the Admissions Director.

**Final classroom placements for the beginning of each academic year will be communicated to parents via the June "summer mailer".

Ratios

Ratios for classrooms are in compliance with the governing standards from the state of North Carolina and are as follows:

- Infant- 1: 4
- Toddler Classroom - 1:6
- Primary Classroom - 1:10
- Elementary Classroom (non-regulated)
- Middle School (non-regulated)

Evaluation of Student Progress

Christian Montessori School's Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced, and the teachers maintain careful records of each student's academic progress. Parents will have opportunities to review their child's progress through work plans, portfolios, parent/teacher conferences, student-led conferences, progress reports, report cards and standardized assessments.

Work Plans

Work Plans set forth specific individualized educational goals for each child that parents, teachers and elementary school students mutually agree to consciously work toward during the next few days, weeks or months ahead. The student's progress toward fulfilling his or her Work Plan will be a primary focus of subsequent conferences, progress reports and student self-evaluations.

Homework**Parent Tip**

Homework should never become a battleground between adult and child. One of our goals as parents and teachers should be to help the children learn how to get organized, budget time and follow through until the work is completed.

Christian Montessori School Elementary teachers may choose to assign homework beginning in the first grade. Not page after page of busy work, but meaningful, interesting assignments that expand on the topics that the children are pursuing in class and which invite parents and children to work together. At other times the work that is sent home is intended for practice. Continual communication between home and school is imperative in order to best ensure the student's learning.

Homework doesn't need to be boring! We try to challenge children to think, explore and pursue tangible projects that give them a sense of satisfaction. Homework is intended to afford students the opportunity to practice and reinforce skills introduced in the classroom. Moreover, there is a certain degree of self-discipline that can be developed within the growing child through the process of completing assignments independently.

Once a week, normally on Mondays, the elementary classes send home a packet of "At Home Challenges" for each age group. The children have an entire week to complete them. On Friday, teachers sit down with the children to review what worked, what they enjoyed and what they found difficult. When possible, the teachers build in opportunities for children to choose among several alternative assignments. Sometimes teachers will prepare individually negotiated weekly assignments with each student.

Ideally home challenges will give parents and children a pleasant opportunity to work together on projects that give both parent and child a sense of accomplishment. They are intended to enrich and extend the curriculum.

Depending on the child's level, assignments normally involve some reading, research, writing and something tangible to accomplish. They may be organized into three groups:

1. Things to be experienced, such as reading a book, visiting the museum or seeing a play.
2. Things to learn stated in terms of skills and knowledge, such as "See if you can learn how to solve these problems well enough that you can teach the skill to a younger student."
3. Products to be submitted, such as a play, essay, story, experiment or model.

Portfolios

As a part of our assessment of student learning, our school will maintain portfolios of student work, from Toddler through Upper Elementary. Montessori teaches us that children will not develop an interest in "product" until they near age five or six. Therefore, their teachers will maintain our youngest students' portfolios, while older children will play an active role in documenting their growth.

Even though young children tend to be much more interested in the process of work than in tangible products, even four and five years-old tend to produce enough to create an impressive collection as the months go by.

Elementary-aged students will develop and present a portfolio collection of their best work from the months gone by. Each elementary student will also present a portfolio collection of her best work. At year's end, it will become a record of her year: her best drawings, math work, stories, spelling words, essays and special reports, possibly with photos taken at school, the teacher's narrative reports, the child's self-evaluations, etc.

Over the course of the year, your child will assemble his best work from the year into a permanent portfolio binder. You may want to add photographs that you've taken of your child and his friends and teachers over the year, some poetry, or a little note to your child reminding him of the high points of the year.

Teacher Observations

Our teachers build in time on a daily basis to observe the student's engaged in their work without adult interference or assistance. The teachers keep antidotal records, in order to inform them of student progress.

Developmental Assessments

Students five years of age and older are required to participate in an annual fall assessment scheduled by the school. The results of these assessments assist the teachers in meeting the students where they are developmentally and academically as well as prepare a reasonable academic plan for the upcoming school year.

Standardized Tests

Christian Montessori School students receive the experience of standardized testing beginning in the first grade with the Stanford Achievement Tests (aka the Stanford Ten). Test-taking skills are another practical life lesson for which children will need to be prepared. The teachers will be happy to go over your child's individual scores at a pre-conference time.

Grading Periods

Grading Periods are strategically spaced throughout the academic school year on a Quarterly basis (every 9 or 10 weeks). Grading periods impact the Elementary and Middle School programs and are also useful for the Primary and Toddler programs as they all prepare for Parent/Teacher Conferences.

Progress Reports

At the Toddler and Primary levels, teachers maintain ongoing observations and records of each child's progress, development and learning. At Parent/Teacher conferences, your child's teacher will provide you with an opportunity to review this progress report with them.

At the Elementary level, teachers also maintain documentation of learning and development. Four times a year, parents will receive a report of their child's progress. At the elementary level, narrative formatted report cards are used. Though these assessments are more traditional, efforts have been made to reflect the Montessori goals (e.g. independence) for students.

These progress reports follow the child throughout the three-year cycle they are in their classroom. When a child advances to the next level, these progress reports are housed in the Student Records office and become part of the child's permanent file.

Parent/Teacher Conferences - A Required Event

Dates for Parent/Teacher conferences have been established and are included in your school calendar. Any additional conferences may be scheduled upon request by parents or teachers if and when they feel the need to discuss the child's experiences at Christian Montessori School.

Student Led Conferences

Students who are in kindergarten and above may be asked to attend conferences to review their progress.

Elementary classes will have their students prepare a self-evaluation of their progress during the reporting period just ended. The children go over their self-evaluations with the teachers, who will add their comments and observations.

Promotion From One Grade Level to the Next

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

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

As a college preparatory school, Christian Montessori School has established expectations for the normal baseline achievement that we expect to see in our students. While they may surpass those standards, they represent a normal index of skills and knowledge that we expect most Montessori students to gain.

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

Advancement to the next class level (for example from the primary to the lower elementary level) is based on an evaluation of the child's total academic, social, emotional and physical/motor development. Because the classes can individually tailor the child's academic program to a large degree, regardless of which group he or she is placed in, the most important criteria for advancement to an older group is often the student's social adjustment, independence, work habits and maturity.

We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

When Learning Issues Arises

Because we teach the very young, developing child and because our Montessori approach allows the child to reveal himself in the learning environment, we often are the first to recognize an exceptional need. A protocol has been established and will be followed by your child's teacher should observations at school indicate the need to gather further information or to recommend assessment. Parents are always informed throughout this process.

A Partnership Between Parents and School

At Christian Montessori School we believe in the power of collaboration. The triangle symbolizes this dynamic, in that each entity-the child, the parent and the school are points.

CMSLN does not have educational specialist on staff therefore it is the sole responsibility of the parent to provide the necessary support. Anytime we endeavor to support a child in the learning environment we will expect 100% participation and support from both parents/legal guardian(s).

We always invite parents to work with us in reaching these decisions, and focus on what will be in the child's best interests.

Student Support Program

Because we practice individualized education methods, addressing the whole child (not just cognitive and academics), we believe all learners are unique. Therefore, at Christian Montessori School the phrase "special needs" takes on new meaning because we believe all children are considered to possess

Our school does offer a Student Support Program, however, for times when a student is in need of extra support. Whether a child is diagnosed with a learning issue, experiencing emotional, physical or social challenges or simply demonstrates learning in a novel way, we will attempt to work together as a team to support the child in our environment.

Referral Services

There are times in a child's development when additional services may be needed for the child and family. To support families with need, the school maintains a professional reference file for specialized services such as:

- Psychological evaluations
- Physical, occupational and recreational therapies
- Developmental assessments

Files are maintained in the school administration offices.

Transcripts

By written request, the parent/guardian or, upon attaining the age of majority, the student, may ask that a photocopy of the student's file, along with completed recommendation forms, be issued to another school. Copies sent directly are marked "Official Transcript" and are noted in the file.

Report cards and transcripts cannot be issued if a student has an outstanding balance on his or her account that is more than sixty days past due. They will be forwarded once the account has been brought up to date.

Privacy of Student Files

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Each student file contains a log (name, date and purpose) of those persons or agencies who have had access to the student's file.

Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file must be viewed in the presence of a Christian Montessori School staff member, and if the parent or guardian disagrees with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the permanent file with their comments.

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

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

XI. Ground Rules and Discipline**Philosophy of Discipline**

The discipline, which reveals itself in a Montessori class, comes from within than from without. Moreover, it does not come into existence in a day or a week or even a month. It is, in Dr. Montessori's words, "the end of a long process of maturation." (*The Absorbent Mind*). This inner discipline indeed will not reveal itself at all if there is a complete dichotomy between the home and school environments. (Kathleen H. Futrell/*The Normalized Child*)

Our Rationale

At Christian Montessori School we follow the principles of the Montessori philosophy. We believe that inner discipline for the growing child is a developing process. Our environment is one based on mutual respect and regard for all life, which is also learned and modeled. We are trained to see each child as a unique individual. We are committed to preserving the child's sense of self-esteem.

Our Assumptions

- Children are intrinsically good.
- Children's behavior, frequently perceived as "bad behavior," is more often than not developmentally appropriate and must be dealt with as such.

- It is in our classrooms that children begin to learn social skills that they will use for the rest of their lives.... among them are conflict resolution, cooperation and good decision-making.
- Misbehavior is communication. Often what's communicated is what the child needs to learn at the present moment.
- The home/school connection, as well as the parent-child-teacher paradigm must be congruent in order to aid the child's self-discipline.

Our Fundamental Ground Rules

"Children who persist in (disturbing) others must be stopped, as such activity is not of the nature that needs completion of its cycle." Maria Montessori

Our Golden Rule:

We will ask ourselves, is it..

- DESTRUCTIVE?
- DISTRACTING? ...to the child, others or to the environment itself
- DANGEROUS?

This behavior(s) will call for INTERVENTION from the adult in order to maintain a peaceful, productive and safe environment.

Our Ground Rules

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

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

Please review these rules with your child:

- Do not leave your teacher's supervision without permission. Stay where your teacher can see you.
- Be kind and gentle to one another.
- We work out our disagreements and problems peacefully.
- We work toward win-win solutions.
- We listen to understand.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. Please don't express anger or upset feelings in a way that insults or threatens someone else.
- Everyone here has the right to be physically safe. Please don't do anything that might hurt or endanger anyone.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Please don't disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on his or her work.
- Everyone has a right to his or her personal belongings. Please do not touch anything that is not yours without the owner's permission.
- If you accidentally lose or break something, please replace it without a fuss.
- Clean up after yourself and make the space or the work ready for the next person.
- At Christian Montessori School, no one is allowed to fight, push, trip or use any other aggressive behavior.
- Use the playground equipment safely. For example, do not try to walk up the slides.
- Let everyone who wants to play join in your games. Invite everyone or no one. It is your right to play alone, but you may not leave anyone out.
- Stop chasing or playing scary games when asked.

- Please don't tackle or trip one another in any games. Please do not roughhouse or play carelessly.
- Keep sand and sand toys in the sandbox.
- Do not enter the parking lot or ever leave campus without an adult.
- Play tag and ball games in the designated play areas.
- Keep wood chips, sand, sticks and stones on the ground. Never throw them.
- Please put all balls, ropes and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Park all tricycles and bikes when you are finished playing with them.
- The fenced in areas outside the primary classes should not be used after school hours.

When Ground Rules are not respected..

When a child is engaged in dangerous behavior, the adult present must intervene immediately.

The following steps will be taken whenever a child exhibits behavior that is disturbing or distracting..

1. OBSERVE BEHAVIOR and ask
 - “Is it purposeful?”
 - “Is it disruptive to the others?”
 - “What’s causing this behavior...anything in the environment?”
2. REMOVE the OBSTACLE
3. REDIRECT to PURPOSEFUL WORK/ACTIVITY
4. LIMIT FREEDOM/CHOICES
5. If the child is an obstacle to learning, REMOVE THE CHILD FROM THE ENVIRONMENT*
6. THE CHILD IS BROUGHT TO THE FRONT OFFICE to discuss solutions.*
7. THE CHILD IS SENT HOME WITH PARENT/GUARDIAN*

When this occurs, the School Administrator may require the parents (and child, when developmentally appropriate) to conference prior to the child being allowed to return to the classroom. Often, when deemed appropriate, a Behavior Contract may be established between the child and the school.

Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Head of School.

*** These steps require official notification to the parent.**

Biting

Biting causes more upset feelings than any other behavior in childcare programs. Because it seems so primitive, we tend to react differently to biting than we do to hitting, grabbing or other aggressive acts. It is upsetting and potentially dangerous; it is important for caregivers and parents to address this behavior when it occurs. Though it is normal for infants and toddlers to mouth people and objects, and for many two-years old to try biting, most do not continue after the age of three.

When a child bites another child:

- We intervene immediately.
- We talk briefly to the child who bit.
- We help the child who was bitten.
- We encourage the child who bit to help the other child (by getting an ice pack, etc.).
- We observe Universal Precautions (if there is bleeding).
- We notify the parents of all children who were involved.

- We watch to see when and where the biting occurs, who is involved, what the child experiences, what happens before and after each incident.
- We ask ourselves why the child bites others. Is there a pattern to the behavior, situations, places, times or other children around when biting occurs? What might have influenced the behavior?
- We adapt the environment, schedule or guidance methods to teach gentle and positive ways to handle the child's feelings and needs.

When biting continues after several weeks:

We meet with parents of the child who is biting to discuss possible reasons and create an action plan.

We remove child from environment where biting occurred; redirect to isolated space.

We seek outside professional help and explore possibilities that the child needs an environment with fewer children or more one-on-one adult attention.

We refer older preschoolers for more assessment

Parent Tip

Positive ways to handle a growing Toddler!

When a child experiments by biting, immediately say "no" in a firm voice. Give him/her a variety of toys to touch, smell and taste and encourage sensory-motor exploration.

When a child has teething discomfort, provide cold teething toys or chewy foods such as frozen bagels, teething rings or bananas.

When a child is becoming independent, provide opportunities to make age appropriate choices and have control (the pretzel or cracker, the yellow or blue ball). Try and give positive attention as new self-help skills and independence develop

When a child is using muscles in a new way, provide a variety of play materials (hard/soft, rough/smooth, and heavy/light). Plan for plenty of active play both indoors and outdoors.

When a child is learning to play with other children, try to guide behavior if it seems rough. (Take the child's hand and say, "touch George gently. He likes that.") Prevent conflicts by redirecting one child to another attractive activity. Reinforce pro-social behavior (like taking turns with toys or pacifying a crying child.

When a child is frustrated in expressing his/her needs or wants, "read" the child and say what he is trying to communicate. ("Are you mad when Ari takes your truck?" "You want me to pay attention to you.")

When a child is threatened by new or changing situations such as a mother returning to work, a new baby or parents separating, provide some special nurturing and be as warm and reassuring as possible, adding some stability and continuity to the child's life. Also help the child talk about his feelings when he or she says things like "I hate my new baby."

On biting, according to the Mecklenburg Health Department and North Carolina State Law:

In the case of a bite where there is broken skin and blood exposure (documented), both parties are required to be tested for HIV and Hepatitis B. Should this occur at CMSLN, the School Administrator or Head of School will approach both parents individually and request voluntary

agreement to have their children tested for HIV and Hepatitis B. The parents will also be asked to share the results of the tests with the other parents. The testing should be done at a private pediatrician's office; however, tests can also be done at the local health department. The Health Department may be called upon to intervene should parents disagree or refuse this request by the school.

Drugs and Alcohol:

Although we assume that it will never happen, as the school begins to extend through the higher grades it seems important to be clear about our position regarding the use of alcohol and drugs. We expect our students to avoid any and all contact with drugs or alcohol. This is defined to include the use, possession, or sale of any controlled substance (drug) nor alcoholic beverage and tobacco.

The possession or sale of any alcohol or controlled substance, either during the school day or during any school sponsored trip, party or function, is immediate grounds for expulsion.

Smoking

Christian Montessori School is a smoke-free environment. No one may smoke on campus or at any school sponsored trip, party or other activity. The Christian Montessori School will do everything in its power to discourage students from ever beginning the habit of smoking. We are equally committed to protecting the rights of non-smokers and offering support and assistance to any smokers who are ready to quit.

Respect for others Property

Any theft, vandalism or damage to property, whether deliberate or accidental, must be repaired or repaid.

Violence and Harassment:

Christian Montessori School cannot tolerate any irresponsible or dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment or verbal abuse directed toward anyone.

Student Honor Code and Rights

Attendance at Christian Montessori School is a privilege. Like all privileges, it comes with certain responsibilities. While preschool students should work towards the Honor Code and Rights, Elementary Students should personally accept each of the following:

To God Almighty:

- I will seek to honor the Lord in all I think, say and do. (Deuteronomy 26:17)
- I will submit myself to the authority of His grace and His commands. (2 Timothy 3:16-17)
- I recognize that my appearance reflects on Him as much as on me. (1 Corinthians 10:31)

To My Parents:

- I will attempt to honor my parents in everything I think, say and do. (Exodus 20:12)
- I will seek to learn all that I can from them. (Ephesians 6:1-3)
- I acknowledge that I cannot receive what I need in life or Godliness without them. (Psalm 78:1-8)

To My Teachers:

- I will demonstrate respect, attentiveness, gratitude and obedience to my teachers. (Hebrews 13:1)
- I will seek to do all the work I have been assigned with diligence and integrity including the use of computer technology. (Ephesians 5:8-17)
- I will do my utmost to learn and achieve as much as I possibly can. (Philippians 4:8-9)

To My Classmates:

- I will honor and respect the time, work and feelings of my fellow students. (Romans 12:9-18)
- I will model honesty, integrity, kindness, and modesty in my relationships. (Philippians 2:3-7)
- I realize that disturbances affect everyone at school and will thus strive for peace. (Ephesians 4:1-6)

Parental Commitment

Christian Montessori School operates on the belief that God has given parents the responsibility for the education of their own children. Parents may take advantage of the resources that a school can provide, but parents should not abdicate this responsibility to the school. Christian Montessori School encourages parents to actively participate in their children's education. The vision for ministry in education at CMS-LN depends on the prayerful, financial and time commitments of parents as we seek to glorify God in all we do. Parents of children at Christian Montessori School should agree with the following:

- We have carefully examined and agree with CMS-LN's Mission Statement, Vision Statement, Faith Statement, Position Statement, Philosophy of Education and Discipline Policy. We desire the school to work with us in the best interest of our child. We further recognize that CMS-LN is not ordained or equipped to handle the complete educational needs of our child.
- In full cooperation with the school, we pledge to support the school in its policies by attending school meetings and conferences. We commit to actively participate in the education life of our child by keeping regular contact with teachers regarding our child's progress and by providing 10 hours of volunteer service to CMS-LN annually.
- We pledge our loyalty to the aims and ideals of the school and will bring any and all criticisms directly to our child's teacher or to the Administration when appropriate.
- We pledge to cooperate with disciplinary standards of the school (including dress code, care of school property and conduct). We acknowledge that CMS-LN reserves the right to dismiss, suspend or discipline any student who does not adhere to the standards outlined in the school handbook.
- We agree to pay our tuition and fees when they are due. We understand that if we become delinquent in this obligation, our child can be subject to dismissal from school.

XI. Appendix Articles

A. Basic Elements Of The Montessori Approach by Tim Seldin

The Montessori Classroom

Montessori classrooms are bright, warm and inviting. They are filled with plants, animals, art, music, books and interest centers filled with intriguing learning materials, fascinating mathematical models, maps, charts, fossils, historical artifacts, computers, scientific apparatus, perhaps a small natural science museum and animals that the children are raising.

You will not find rows of desks in our classrooms at Christian Montessori School. Montessori learning environments are set up to facilitate student discussion and stimulate collaborative learning. One glance and it is clear that our children feel comfortable and at home.

Students will typically be found scattered around the classroom, working alone or with one or two others. They will tend to become so involved in their work that we cannot help but be tremendously impressed by the peaceful atmosphere.

It may take a moment to spot the teachers within the classrooms. They will be found working with one or two children at a time, advising, presenting a new lesson or quietly observing the class at work.

In her research, Dr. Montessori noted specific characteristics associated with the child's interests and abilities at each plane of development. She argued that a school carefully designed to meet the needs and interests of the child will work more effectively because it is consistent with basic principles of psychology. Rather than fight the laws of nature, Montessori suggested that we "follow the child" and allow our children to show us how to facilitate the development of their human potential.

This focus on the "whole child" led Montessori to develop a very different sort of school from the traditional adult-centered classroom. To emphasize this difference, she named her first school the "Casa de Bambini" or the "Children's House."

There is something profound in her choice of words, for the Montessori classroom is not the domain of the adults in charge, but rather a carefully prepared environment designed to facilitate the development of the children's independence and sense of personal empowerment.

This is a true community of young children. They move freely within the rooms, selecting work that captures their interest, rather than passively participating in lessons and projects selected by the teachers.

In a very real sense, even the very youngest students at Christian Montessori School take care of their own child-sized environment. When they are hungry, they prepare their own snack and drink. They go to the bathroom without assistance. When something spills, they help each other carefully clean things up. Parents are often amazed to see small children in Montessori classrooms cut raw fruits and vegetables, sweep and dust, carry pitchers of water and pour liquids with barely a drop spilled. These little ones normally go about their work so calmly and purposely that it is clear to often the casual observer that this is their environment: The Children's House.

The Montessori classroom is commonly referred to as a prepared environment. This name reflects the care and attention that is given to creating a learning environment that will reinforce the children's independence and intellectual development.

Respect, Intelligence and Independence

We know that young children are full and complete individuals in their own right. They deserve to be treated with the full and sincere respect that we would extend to their parents. A respect breed respect and creates an atmosphere within which learning is tremendously facilitated.

Montessori schools believe very strongly that intelligence is not fixed at birth, nor is the human potential anywhere near as limited as it sometimes seems in traditional education.

Success in school is directly tied to the degree to which children believe that they are capable and independent human beings. If they knew the words, even very young children would ask: "Help me learn to do it for myself."

By allowing children to develop a meaningful degree of independence and self-discipline, Montessori sets a pattern for a lifetime of good work habit and a sense of responsibility. Students are taught to take pride in doing things for themselves carefully and well.

Montessori Teaches Children to Think, Collaborate and Discover

Our program is designed to help each of our students discover and develop his or her unique talents and possibilities. We treat each as a unique individual learner. We know that no two students will learn at the same pace, nor will they necessarily learn best from the same teaching methods, and our goal is to be flexible and creative in addressing each student as a unique individual.

At Christian Montessori School, students and teachers learn to collaborate in the process of education rather than mindlessly compete. Our students discover their own innate abilities and develop a strong sense of independence, self-confidence and self-discipline. In an atmosphere in which children learn at their own pace and compete only against themselves, they learn not to be afraid of making mistakes. They quickly find that few things in life come easily, and they can try again without fear of embarrassment.

One way of thinking about the difference between our approach and one that is more traditional is to consider that while learning the right answers may get our children through school, learning how to become a life-long independent learner will take them anywhere! Our children are learning to think, observe and reflect not memorize and quickly forget.

Rather than present students with loads of right answers, their teachers ask the right questions and lead the children to discover the answers for themselves. Learning will become its own reward, and each success will fuel their desire to discover even more. The Elementary students are encouraged to do their own research, analyze what they have found and come to their own conclusions. The teachers encourage our children to think for themselves and become actively engaged in the learning process.

Freedom of Movement and Independently Chosen Work

Montessori children are free to move about, working alone or with others at will. They may select any activity and work with it as long as they wish, so long as they do not disturb anyone or damage anything, and so long as they put it back where it belongs when they are finished.

The Integrated Montessori Curriculum

Classrooms at Christian Montessori School are organized into several curriculum areas, which include language arts (reading, literature, grammar, creative writing, spelling and handwriting), mathematics and geometry, everyday living skills, sensory awareness exercises and puzzles, geography, history, science, art, music and movement. Most rooms will include a classroom library. Each area is made up of one or more shelf units, cabinets and display tables with a wide variety of materials on open display ready for use as the children select them.

Christian Montessori School's curriculum is organized into a spiral of integrated studies, rather than a traditional model in which the curriculum is compartmentalized into separate subjects, with given topics considered only once at a specific grade level. In the early years, lessons are introduced simply and concretely and are reintroduced several times over succeeding years at increasing degrees of abstraction and complexity.

The course of study uses an integrated thematic approach that ties the separate disciplines of the curriculum together into studies of the physical universe, the world of nature and the human experience.

Literature, the arts, history, social issues, political science, economics, science and the study of technology all complement one another. This integrated approach is one of Montessori's great

strengths. As an example, when our students study Africa in world history, they will also read African folk tales in world literature, create African masks and make African block print tee-shirts in art, learn Swahili songs in music and make hieroglyphic calendars in math, as well as study African animals in zoology.

Our mathematics curriculum follows a European model of unified mathematics through which students are introduced to concepts in algebra, geometry, mathematical logic and statistics from the early years of their education, rather than waiting until high school as is normal in the United States.

The same is true in our science curriculum, weaving principles of physics, chemistry, the earth sciences, botany and zoology together from the preschool years and up, with far greater emphasis on the sciences in general than is common in most American elementary curriculums.

Typical Class Size

A typical Montessori class is made up of from twenty to twenty-five, representing a three-year age span, taught one certified Montessori teachers and an assistant. Parents often wonder if it would not be better to organize classes into smaller groups, but there is actually a great deal of research, thought and successful experience behind this particular model. The key is to remember that in Montessori, the teacher is neither the center of attention nor the sole source of instruction. The children are learning on their own by independent discovery and from each other, as well as through lessons presented by the teacher. This approach allows the children to explore and learn independently as much as possible. The stimulation of older children and the encouragement of peers fuels the process, and all so often the best teacher of a four-year-old is an older child rather than an adult. Children learn best from one another. We create classes to ensure that each child will have enough classmates of the same sex and age group, as well as the stimulation of the older children.

Montessori Classes Encompasses a Three-Year Age Span

Montessori classes are organized to encompass a two or three-year age span, which allows younger students to experience the daily stimulation of older role models, who in turn blossom in the responsibilities of leadership. Students not only learn with each other, but from each other. We find that most often the best tutor is a fellow student who is just a bit older.

Some parents worry that having younger children in the same class as older ones will leave one group or the other short changed. They fear that the younger children will absorb the teachers' time and attention, or that the importance of covering the Kindergarten curriculum for the five-years-old will prevent teachers from giving the three and four-years-old the emotional support and stimulation that they need. Both concerns are misguided.

Working in one class for two or three years allows students to develop a strong sense of community with their classmates and teachers. The age range also allows especially gifted children the stimulation of intellectual peers, without requiring that they skip a grade and feel emotionally out of place.

Each class is an essentially stable community, with only the oldest third moving on to the next level each year. At each level within a Montessori school, the curriculum and methods are logical and consistent extensions of what has come before.

B. How Can Montessori Teachers Meet the Needs of So Many Different Children?

Montessori teachers play a very different role from those played by traditionally trained educators. While the stern disciplinarians of the past may be an endangered species, many teachers are focused on maintaining order and on covering a pre-defined curriculum. Most see their role as dispensing facts and skills to complacent students.

The Montessori teacher's role is that of a facilitator and guide. He or she is usually not the center of attention and will not normally spend much time working with the whole class at once. Her role centers on the preparation and organization of appropriate learning materials to meet the needs and interests of each child in the class.

The Montessori teacher has four primary goals:

1. to awaken our children's spirit and imagination.
2. to encourage their normal desire for independence and high sense of self-esteem.
3. to help them develop the kindness and self-discipline that will allow them to become full members of society.
4. and to help them learn how to observe, question and explore ideas independently. The Montessori teacher is a coach, mentor and friend.

The teachers rarely present a lesson to more than one or two children at a time and limit them to a quick, efficient presentation. The objective is to intrigue the children so that they will come back on their own to work with the materials. Lessons center on clear and simple information that is necessary for the children to be able to do the work on their own: the name of the material, its place on the shelf, the ground rules for its use and some of the possibilities inherent within it.

The teachers closely monitor their students' progress, keeping the level of challenge high. Because they come to know the children so well, Montessori teachers can often use their own interests to enrich the curriculum and provide alternate avenues for accomplishment and success.

C. The Montessori Materials - A Road from the Concrete to the Abstract

The basis of our approach is the simple observation that children learn most effectively through direct experience and the process of investigation and discovery. In her studies of children's learning, Dr. Montessori noted that most children do not learn by memorizing what they hear from their teachers or read in a text, but rather from concrete experience and direct interaction with the environment. Asking a child to sit back and watch us perform a process or experiment is like asking a one-year-old not to put everything in his mouth. Children need to manipulate and explore everything that catches their interest. This led Montessori to emphasize the overriding importance of concrete learning apparatus and to the development of the Montessori materials for mathematics, sensory development, language, science, history and geography.

The Montessori learning materials are not the method itself, but rather tools that we use to stimulate the child into logical thought and discovery. They are provocative, simple, and each carefully designed to appeal to children at a given level of development.

Each material isolates and teaches one thing or is used to present one skill at a time as the child is ready. Montessori carefully analyzed the skills and concepts involved in each subject and noted the sequence in which children most easily master them.

To facilitate the prepared order of the environment, the teacher arranges the materials on the shelf following their sequence in the curriculum flowchart. The materials are displayed on low open shelves that are easily accessible to even the youngest children. They are arranged to provide maximum eye appeal without clutter. Each has a specific place on the shelves, arranged from the upper-left-hand corner in sequence to the lower right. Materials are always arranged in sequence, from the most simple to the most complex, and from the most concrete to those that are the most abstract.

D. Preparing Tomorrow's Innovative Thinkers Today

In a world of rapid change and new discoveries, we can only guess at the skills our children will need to succeed in the 21st century. Now, more than ever, the essential lesson is learning how to learn.

The most important years in our children's education are not high school and college, but, instead, their first twelve years of life. This is when their character and values, self-image, basic skills and knowledge and appreciation for culture and the arts are formed.

Christian Montessori School offers our children a world-class education, along with an education of the heart that nurtures their self-confidence, personal creativity and entrepreneurial spirit.

It offers them the most challenging academic program that they can handle in a course of study that includes the Junior Great Books, creative writing, unified mathematics, geometry, pre-algebra, history, geography, economics, philosophy and ethics, computers, botany and zoology, the physical sciences, foreign language study, art, music, dance and physical education.

We can see our children as they truly come to love learning and begin to discover their true potential as young men and women.

Christian Montessori School's goal is to nurture the student's intelligence and creativity, helping your child become renaissance individuals in the intellectual tradition of Thomas Jefferson, Buckminster Fuller and Maria Montessori.

Granted, this lies beyond the scope of traditional education, but then Christian Montessori School has set out to become a rather unusual school.

As families we come to schools like Christian Montessori School to give our children an outstanding preparation for high school, college and life.

E. What Your Child Knows About a Montessori Classroom

- We use quiet voices. Our friends might be concentrating and we don't want to disturb them.
- We only sit in chairs or on the floor, never on worktables.
- We do our work on rugs or tables.
- We carry trays and baskets with two hands -fingers on the bottom, thumbs on top.
- We always return our work to the shelf where we found it, ready for the next person to use.
- We love and respect nature. We are kind to trees, flowers and insects. Rather than step on a bug who is lost in our classroom, we capture it and put it outside.
- We love and respect our classroom and all the materials within. We treat our environment with care.

F. Applying Montessori in the Home

1. Whenever you can, arrange your home so that the child can manage for himself. Make his table and chair low enough, his toys shelves easily accessible, his clothing equipped with fasteners he can operate, his clothes rods the right height, etc
2. Don't do anything for him that he can do for himself. "Any unnecessary aid is a hindrance to learning," said Maria Montessori.
3. Teach your child with real things. Take the time to show him how to handle materials and equipment carefully, and he will be capable of far more than you realize.
4. When you want to teach your preschooler a new activity or skill, plan it out first as a programmed teaching exercise. Break it down into small precise steps. Ask yourself, "What points of interest does this activity hold for my child? How can error be controlled by the activity itself? How can I isolate a single learning element I want my youngster to absorb?"
5. When teaching a small child, slow down your movements. Use as few words as possible. Let your movements guide your youngster's eye to what he is to learn.

6. Give your child enough time to do a task without hurrying. He usually works at a slower more deliberate pace than an adult and needs to repeat activities often after he appears to have mastered them.
7. See that your child has as much choice as possible in his activities. He can't live up to his potential unless he has the opportunity for independent work.
8. Don't insist that your child try a new activity if he isn't interested. Don't make him stick to a learning task when he doesn't want to.
9. Make discipline interesting when ever you can. Say, "See how quietly you can close the door."
10. Make creative use of silence. Encourage your youngster to be still for a moment so he can hear more acutely. This not only stimulates his sense of hearing, but also gives him a feeling of self-mastery.
11. When that child pleads to "help me do it myself," he means to help him develop his capacities to the fullest, whatever those capacities may be to become what he is and was meant to be, a unique, remarkable human being. (Tomorrow's Child, Aug. 1965)
12. Emerson tells us that what each one of us needs most of all is someone confidently to express us to do what we are capable of doing.

F. The Outcomes of a Christian Montessori Education

Studies focused on children attending a Christian Montessori school have identified the following educational outcomes.

- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Intrinsic motivation is the innate desire that drives the child to engage in an activity for enjoyment and satisfaction.
- **Ability to Handle External Authority:** The student is able to accept the ground rules established by external authority as appropriate boundaries in his or her interactions within the school community. These ground rules are internalized, enabling the student to function with or without the presence of the external authority.
- **Creativity and Originality of Thought:** Students are confident using the knowledge and skills they have acquired to express their own ideas and creativity. They recognize the value of their own ideas, respect the creative process of others and are willing to share regardless of risk. Students find joy and satisfaction in self-expression.
- **Social Responsibility:** Social responsibility requires the awareness that one's actions impact the welfare of the group and that one cannot attain complete independence and autonomy until one contributes constructively in a group process. Individuals are able to make a positive contribution to their community and groups within that community.
- **Academic Preparation:** Academic preparation entails providing students with skills that allow them to become independently functioning adults and life-long learners. As students master one level of academic skills they are able to go further and apply themselves to increasingly challenging materials across various academic disciplines. Students recognize that there is always room to grow in their abilities to read, write, speak and think clearly and thoughtfully. Children learn how to learn by doing - experiential learning. Students are encouraged to explore materials, integrate new concepts, analyze data and think critically. Academic skills are essential to the process of learning and knowing, not the aim of learning and knowing.
- **Autonomy:** The autonomous child is self-directed, composed and morally independent.
- **Confidence and Competence:** The confident and competent child perceives himself as being successful, has a realistic understanding of accomplishment and has the ability to learn from his mistakes. Competence is the capability for success through taking risks, reflection and self-correction.
- **Spiritual Awareness:** Spiritual awareness is embodied in the child who is compassionate, empathetic and sensitive to the natural world and the human condition.

Bibliography

The following are a few suggested readings you may find stimulating as a part of your continuing adventure as a parent:

About the Work

Montessori - A Modern Approach(Paula Polk Lillard)

Maria Montessori - Her Life and Work(E.M.Standing)

Maria Montessori - A Biography..... (Rita Kramer)

Education for Human Development.....(Dr. Mario Montessori, Jr.)

Direct Source- Readings by Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind

To Educate the Human Potential

The Secret of Childhood

The Child in the Family

From Childhood to Adolescence

Education for Peace

Education for a New World

The Discovery of the Child

Spontaneous Activity in Educations, Vol. I and II

The Formation of Man

Everything is Related

Sensory Integration..... (Jean Ayers)

A Matrix for Modern Education..... (John Bremer)

Children the Challenge.....(Dreikurs)

Discipline Without Tears..... (Dreikurs)

How to Parent.....(Fitzhugh Dodsens, MD)

How to Father..... (Fitzhugh Dodsens, MD)

How to Discipline -With Love.....(Fitzhugh Dodsens, MD)

Education Through Movement (Moshe Feldenkrais)

How Children Learn.....	(John Holt)
How Children Fail.....	(John Holt)
Education and Ecstasy.....	(George Leonard)
Transformation.....	(George Leonard)
Liberated Parents ñ Liberated Children.....	(Adele Faber/Elaine Mazlish)
Toward a Psychology of Being.....	(Abraham Maslow)
Human Teaching for Human Learning.....	(Brown)
Grow Up Free to Be Themselves.....	(Carrie Carmichael)
Between Parent and Child.....	(Haim Ginott)
Between Parent and Teenager.....	(Haim Ginott)

