



Smaller
Scholars
MONTESSORI
Academy

Teaching a Lifelong Love of Learning

Since 1985

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Parent Handbook

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INTRODUCTION

WELCOME

Thank you for enrolling your child in Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy. As a premier leader in Montessori education, we are proud and privileged to have your family as part of our school community. Your questions, concerns and comments are extremely important to us. To address any issue, please do not hesitate to contact any school administrator. We look forward to an exciting partnership in teaching your child a lifelong love of learning.

MISSION STATEMENT

Our most important goal is to provide your child with an environment that champions children to grow intellectually, emotionally, socially and physically and to cultivate a lifetime love of learning. To achieve this goal, we continue to invest in replacing and upgrading Montessori materials throughout the year, and in hiring, training, retaining, and compensating high caliber teaching and administrative support staff.

PHILOSOPHY

The basic idea in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. In order to develop physical, intellectual, and spiritual potential to the fullest, the child must have freedom – a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline.

Dr. Montessori has recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teachers prepare the environment, direct the activity and offer the stimulation, but it is the *child* who learns, who is motivated through work itself to persist in a given task. Montessori children are free to learn because they have acquired an inner discipline from their exposure to both physical and mental order. This is the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Patterns of concentration and thoroughness, established in early childhood produce a confident, competent learner in later years. Montessori education teaches children to observe, to think and to judge. It introduces children to the joy of learning at an early age and provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline go hand-in-hand.

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The main objective of Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment that will help the children develop within themselves the foundational habits, attitudes, skills and ideas that are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend the school are:

1. To foster a respect of the rights and dignity of each child as an individual, recognizing that every child has unique abilities and interests.
2. To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning.
3. To develop a sense of high self-esteem through mastery of the work.
4. To build concentration skills needed for lifelong study.
5. To develop and foster an abiding curiosity.
6. To develop habits of initiative and persistence.
7. To foster inner discipline and a sense of order.

8. To develop sensory-motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge.

STAFF AND FACULTY

Smaller Scholars staff is dedicated to encouraging self-directed, competent, caring, and enthusiastic learners. Our certified Montessori teachers with the help of their assistants prepare an environment that is carefully planned with beautiful equipment and is peaceful as well as unhurried. All staff receives on-going support and training. We are extremely proud of our professional and caring team of teachers, assistants and administrators at Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy – they make a difference.

Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy employees are encouraged to receive vaccines for Vaccine Preventable Diseases listed by the Center for Disease Control & Prevention; however, vaccines are not required for employees at this time.

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT

If we suspect a child may be a victim of abuse, suspicions will be reported to the Head of School or other school directors. Child Protective Services may be contacted.

Anyone “having cause to believe that a child’s physical or mental health or welfare has been or may be adversely affected by abuse or neglect” must report the case to a law enforcement agency or to the Texas Department of Protective and Regulatory Services.... Failure to report suspected child abuse or neglect is a class B misdemeanor.... The law does not require the person reporting to be certain that a child is being abused or neglected before reporting, only to have reason for believing it....

NON-DISCRIMINATION

We comply with the American’s with Disabilities Act and other applicable regulations pertaining to providing services to individuals with special needs. We do not discriminate in our acceptance of clients based on the basis of race, creed, color, national origin, disability, religion or gender.

However, the school reserves the right to exclude, withdraw or dismiss any student from classes or from school for the violation of any rules, regulations or payment of fees and tuition, and at the discretion of the Director. Children and adults are expected to respect the rights and needs of others and the environment. New students entering the school are accepted on a four-week trial basis.

ADMISSION/ENROLLMENT

ENROLLMENT PROCEDURES

The school is open from 7:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Monday through Friday twelve months per year as per the school calendar.

1. Each student is required to submit the required documents listed on the Enrollment Procedure form **prior to admission/entry** to the school.
 - a. Classroom placement for all ages will be determined by the Program Directors. New students entering the school are accepted on a four-week trial basis.
2. A **non-refundable Application Fee** of \$150.00 per child is due upon application. Families enrolling more than one child will pay \$140.00 for each child after the first child.
3. Parents of newly enrolled Elementary students will then be contacted to set up a student interview/assessment and parent observation. Parents will be notified of acceptance within two weeks of a completed student interview. Upon acceptance, admission is based on availability.
4. Parents of Primary/Toddler students are accepted on a four-week trial basis. At the end of the four-weeks, the Lead Teacher may have a Parent/Teacher conference to discuss your child's transition and progress in their new class. **All classroom placements will be determined by the Education Director based on availability, personality, and needs; therefore, we will not accept specific parent requests.**
5. A deposit of one-half (1/2) of the monthly tuition for EACH CHILD is due during your enrollment process or before the first day of attendance. Deposits are refundable provided the school is given written notice on the first day of the month PRIOR to the child(ren) departing the school permanently. (Ex: Written notice must be received by May 31 for a departure any time in June)
 - a. All financial obligations as stated in the policies must be met; otherwise, the deposit will be forfeited. Children who do not attend the summer program without re-registering for the next school year and/or do not return to the school as scheduled will forfeit the deposit.
6. Parents who withdraw their child from school, for any reason, including summer months, or do not pay the monthly tuition and then, later, re-enroll must pay another registration fee. When your child is withdrawn, that space is immediately filled. If you pay the annual registration fee and not a monthly tuition, your child is placed on a waiting list. As a result, there can be **no guarantee** that your child can return to his/her former classroom or that there will be space available in another classroom once he/she returns. A **non-refundable Re-Registration Fee** \$125.00 is due annually thereafter during the re-enrollment period for the upcoming school year.
7. Notification of policy changes will be sent electronically to each family for review and signatures.

PARENTAL ACCESS

In connection with the implementation of the School's policies, as these may be amended from time to time, the School will assume that each parent of the child (regardless of whether that parent is a signatory to the Enrollment Agreement) is entitled to equal access to the child while in attendance at the School and to the child's records (with the exception of financial records regarding the child's attendance which shall be made available only to the parent(s) signing the Enrollment Agreement). It shall be the sole obligation and responsibility of the parent(s) to inform the School of any reason that such equal access should not be granted and to provide to the School any and all relevant legal documents in connection therewith.

KINDERGARTEN ENROLLMENT

All children who turn 5 years of age by September 1st of the current school year will be enrolled in our Kindergarten program. **Those students who turn 5 years old after this cutoff date will not be eligible to enroll under this classification.** The Education Director determines all classroom placements.

Testing and Material Fees are due upon entering this program. The annual standardized nationally normed test is required for all Kindergarten students.

Kindergarten children who are promoted to 1st grade will move into our Elementary Community for the summer program even if your child is not continuing at Smaller Scholars for the next school year. Student promotions are based on the recommendations of the Teacher, Education Director, Elementary Director and in conjunction with yearly test scores and progress report.

ELEMENTARY ENROLLMENT

Children must be 6 years of age by September 1st of the current school year to be enrolled in our Elementary program. **Those students who turn 6 years old after this cutoff date will not be eligible to enroll under this classification.** The Elementary Director determines all classroom placements

Testing and Material Fees are due upon entering this program. The annual standardized nationally normed test is required for all Elementary students.

Student promotions are based on the recommendations of the Teacher, Elementary Director and in conjunction with yearly test scores and progress report.

SUMMER SEMESTER (JUNE, JULY)

In addition to the Montessori curriculum, monthly themes, cooking, and other exciting events to provide enriching learning experiences highlight our summer program activities. Computer activities and field trips are included for Elementary students. Visitors are also scheduled to perform each month, e.g. theatrical groups, marionette shows, magic shows, etc. On Splash Days, children must wear special water shoes on the Water plex. Wading pools are not used.

Summer fees and schedule of events are provided in the spring.

A written notice of withdrawal is required no later than the 1st day of the last Full Month of attendance (ex: last day June 20, notice needs to be received by May 1) **for a portion or the entire summer. You will be able to indicate this on the Re-Registration Form.**

A **non-refundable re-registration fee** of \$125.00 is required prior to your child's last day of attendance at the school to be placed on the waiting list for the next school year.

TUITION

Tuition for all students is due and payable the **first** of each month. Families enrolling more than one child will receive a 10 percent (10%) discount for each child after the first based on the lowest tuition. **There is no pro-ration except for the initial entry month.** Tuition rates are subject to change each year.

No refunds or tuition adjustments will be applied for illnesses, vacation, inclement weather, school holidays, school breaks, summer months or other reasons. This is because staffing and operational expenses are based on total enrollment. These costs are not reduced when a child is absent.

Tuition payments are calculated on an annual basis and are published by yearly. Therefore, full monthly tuition is due whether your child is enrolled on a full day or school day schedule during the months when holidays, breaks, in-service days or summer vacations occur. All children are considered enrolled for **12 months** and full tuition is due for each month, including summer months unless **we have a written notice of withdrawal on the first day of the month PRIOR to the child(ren) departing the school for any reason. (Ex: Written notice must be received by May 31 for a departure any time in June.)**

1. Payments. Parents **are required to set an auto-payment through their Parent Portal.** Information on how to create an account will be sent via email. This process needs to be **completed before first day of attendance.**
2. Late Payment Penalties. Tuition for all students is due and **payable by 1st of each month.** Any tuition not paid by the **3rd** day of the month will be assessed a late penalty of \$25.00 which is non-refundable. Persistent failure to pay on time may result in your child's enrollment being terminated. You hereby agree that if the School must take collection action to collect unpaid fees you will be responsible for the outstanding fees and the cost of collection.
3. Delinquencies. If tuition is not **received by the 3rd day of the month or your child is absent without payment, your child may be automatically dropped from enrollment.** This includes payment for annual Registration, supplies and other fees.
4. School Day Early drop-off / Late pick-up. Children enrolled in the Primary/Toddler school day (9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m.) programs or the Elementary classes which meet from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. may arrive at school 10 minutes before class begins and must be picked up on schedule. An hourly fee of \$20.00 per hour will be charged for additional hours for early drop off or late pick up, which should be **arranged with the office one day in advance.** Arrangements are made on an emergency or onetime basis only dependent upon availability – not ongoing.
5. Enrichment classes. Children enrolled from 9:00 a.m. – 2:30 p.m. (Toddler/Primary) or 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (Elementary) may attend afternoon enrichment classes without an additional charge if scheduled within 15 minutes after the Montessori program has ended. Otherwise, children should be picked up from school at the regular time. Arrangements must be made with the office. Children must be attending our School program to be eligible to participate in our Enrichment classes.
6. Late charges. Any child not picked up at closing time will be assessed a late fee of \$1.00 per minute and your account will be charged. This policy is strictly enforced. We are not licensed after 6:00 p.m. If picking up late is more than 5 times per month, state licensing will be informed.
7. Returned Checks/Electronic Payments. Declined payments will automatically be charged a non-refundable \$25 fee.
8. Statements. Monthly tuition statements/reminders will not be sent out. Parents can access tuition statements/year-end statements through their Parent Portal.
9. Refund Policy. Deposit refunds will be issued if the parent has complied with the termination policy, and/or an overpayment of tuition has been made on the account. Refund will be granted only after bank documentation shows funds have cleared the customer's account. **There are no refunds on application, registration, activity or supply fees. No refunds are provided other than described under this policy.**

TERMINATION OF CARE POLICY

Termination of Care by the School: The program reserves the right to dismiss any child from care for the following (but not limited to) reasons:

- Failure of parents to adhere to policies such as payment of tuition, signing children in and out, supplying the necessary records or not adhering to our policy on sick children.

- Behavior by child or a guardian/parent that is a disruption or is offensive to the program.
- Special needs that are unable to be met in a group care setting.

Termination of care from the school, by the school, may be effective immediately or could be issued with notice; the policy is dependent on each individual situation. If enrollment is terminated because of the occurrence of any of these events, any prepaid tuition and deposit shall be forfeited.

Children and adults are expected to respect the rights and needs of others and the environment. New students entering the school are accepted on a four-week trial basis.

Immediate Termination: The School may terminate your child's enrollment, effective immediately, if in the judgment of the School Director or Designee, the child's behavior or guardian/parent behavior interferes with the School staff providing a safe and nurturing program. If enrollment is terminated for this reason, any prepaid tuition and deposit shall be forfeited.

Five Days' Notice: The School may terminate your child's enrollment with 5 days notice to you, if any of the following events occur:

- (i) Tuition, including late fees, is not paid per policy for any other payment options, including monthly payment schedules.
- (ii) Your child is picked up later than the School's scheduled closing time 2 or more times in a 30-day period.
- (iii) Your child is ill when brought to the School more than 3 times within a 30-day period, or you fail to pick up your sick child within 1 hour after being notified of the sickness, more than 2 times during any 6-month period.
- (iv) You or your child display disrespect or disregard for any School staff.

If enrollment is terminated because of the occurrence of any of these events, any prepaid tuition and deposit shall be forfeited.

Two Weeks' Notice: The School may terminate your child's enrollment upon 2 weeks' notice to you, if any of the following events occur:

- (i) In the judgment of the School Director, (a) the School's program does not meet the developmental or special needs of your child, or (b) it is not in the best interest of the School or other enrolled children to have your child continue in attendance; or
- (ii) You fail to comply with any of the terms of this Agreement or any of the rules or policies of the School, as may be amended from time to time.

If enrollment is terminated because of the occurrence of any of these events, any prepaid tuition and deposit shall be forfeited.

Termination of Care by the Sponsor: Deposits are refundable provided the school is given written notice on the first day of the month PRIOR to the child(ren) departing the school permanently. (Ex: Written notice must be received by May 1 for a departure any time in June). Full months tuition is due for the entire month whether or not your child is in attendance the last month. All financial obligations as stated in the policies must be met; otherwise, the deposit will be forfeited, and school records will not be released.

HEALTH & SAFETY

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICY

Our program believes in teaching healthy living. We encourage our students to make safe and healthy decisions. Not only is this concept a part of our program but is also modeled daily by our staff. Hand washing and personal hygiene are expected in every program.

MEDICAL REQUIREMENTS

Certain state health forms are required for enrollment in our program as noted on the Enrollment Form. Health statements and current updated immunization records are required to be kept in each child's file. It is the parent's responsibility to update records in accordance with Texas law. Updated medical records are due each year and are to be given to the office. Children who do not have up-to-date required health information on file will be denied enrollment.

The Special Senses and Communication Disorder Act requires a screening or a professional examination for possible vision and hearing problems for the following children:

- a. First-time enrollees who are four years of age through 12th grade.
- b. Children who are four years of age by September 1.
- c. Kindergartners
- d. Each child who is in the first, third, fifth or seventh grade.

The school offers this screening by a certified specialist at a nominal cost, or your private doctor can do it.

IMMUNIZATION REQUIREMENTS

The "Recommended Childhood and Adolescent Immunization Schedule" can be found on the National Immunization Program Web site at or call the National Immunization Information Hotline at 800-232-2522. Requirements for tuberculosis screening and testing vary across the state. You will receive written notification when the local health authorities require tuberculosis testing for children in our area.

EXCLUSION and/or SICK CHILDREN'S POLICIES

One of our primary concerns at Smaller Scholars is the health of the children. We realize many of our parents are working professionals, and it is sometimes difficult to take time off from work. However, a sick child must be excluded from attendance so that the illness does not spread to others. We must also meet the minimum Health Standards mandated by the state. However, our hope is that parents will follow a higher standard than the minimum required.

The information below will help define when we will/will not exclude a child from attendance. Should one or more of the following conditions exist, your child cannot be admitted to school. If your child is already in attendance and becomes ill or has any of the following symptoms, we will contact you to pick up your child or make the necessary arrangements to do so within 1 hour. If we cannot reach you in a timely fashion, we will call the "names to be contacted" on your registration form. (It is important to keep these names and phone numbers updated.)

I know you will support the school in promoting and maintaining a healthy environment for all our children.

If your child is absent from school three or more days, please notify the office of the reason for the absence.

Temperature – Any child who has or develops an oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater (99.4 degrees under arm temperature) will be excluded from attendance and cannot return to school the next day. **IN ADDITION**, the child must be fever free at least a day and without the use of medication before re-admittance.

Colds, Bad Cough, or Colored Runny Nose - We realize many children have allergies due to the Houston climate. However, if your child is constantly coughing or has green or yellow nasal discharge, you will be contacted to address this issue to clear up the symptoms. If symptoms continue, your child will be excluded from attendance and cannot attend school until symptom free. All bodily discharge is considered unhealthy regardless of cause.

Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) – A child whose eye is red and/or has discharge or crusting around the eyes will be excluded from attendance until medication is started and a statement from the doctor states the child may safely return to school.

Vomiting – A child who is vomiting will be excluded from attendance and cannot return to school the next day. In addition, the child must be symptom free for at least a day before re-admittance. All bodily discharge is considered unhealthy regardless of cause.

Diarrhea – A child will be excluded from attendance and cannot return to school the next day. In addition, the child must be symptom free for at least a day without the use of medication before re-admittance. This includes children who have diarrhea that is not contained in the child’s underwear or diapers. All bodily discharge is considered unhealthy regardless of cause.

Strep Throat – The child may return to school 24 hours after antibiotic treatment has begun **if** he/she is fever free. In addition, you must provide the school with a doctor’s release before re-admittance.

Influenza (Flu) – Children with flu-like symptoms will be excluded from attendance and cannot return to school the next day. In addition, the child must be symptom free at least a day without the use of medication before re-admittance.

Lice – A child will be sent home when evidence of lice or nits are in the child’s hair. Your child may return to school when there is no indication of lice or nits.

The ultimate determination that someone is no longer infested can only be accomplished with a thorough manual screening to confirm the **complete absence of lice and nits**. For more information about head lice and treatment go to www.headlice.org.

Other Symptoms, Undefined Viruses or Rashes – Children may be restricted from attendance at the discretion of the Director for other symptoms and undefined viruses or rashes.

MEDICATION

Medication can affect your child’s behavior and classroom learning experiences. Please send medication only when absolutely necessary.

1. Medication will be administered **only at 12:00 noon and at 4:00 p.m. upon written authorization** by the parent each day on the Medication Register. All non-prescription and prescription medication must be in the original package and labeled with the child’s name and dated. Parents of students who require prescribed medication on an ongoing basis should complete a **monthly** Medication Form. Please check with the office.
2. The school must administer all medications according to instructions on the label. If the label directs “Consult physician” for your child’s age or weight, then we may not administer the medication unless we have written directions amended and signed by a physician. Most prescription can be administered on a timeline that does not include being given at school. Ask your doctor about scheduling medication so that they can be administered by the parent at home.

3. Medications are not to be left in lunch boxes, cubbies or a child's school bag. All medications, prescription or over the counter, must be signed in and given to an administrator and will be kept in the front office.
4. A designated staff member dispenses medication. The school does not employ medically trained staff that are licensed or certified to identify and provide care for periodic or recurring medical problems, such as headaches, asthma attacks, or allergic reactions. I release the school, its directors and staff from all liability should any medical problems occur resulting from the request by family members to administer any medication.
5. Children must be fever-free without any medication to attend school. **Children who are sent home due to fever or other illnesses may not return to school the next day.** See the Exclusion/Sick Children Policies for other re-entry criteria.

MANAGEMENT OF LIFE-THREATING ALLERGIES

Allergies to foods and other allergens can be highly dangerous. The state mandated form stating your child's allergy and the possible reactions along with your doctor's instructions and signature must be included in your child's records. All children with an allergy must have a protocol in place and necessary medication with the office. Parents will be notified if medication is administered for an allergic reaction.

It is not completely possible to avoid all allergy-causing foods or other life-threatening allergens because they can be hidden or accidentally introduced. Peanuts are the most common source for severe reactions. Food allergies can even be life threatening, especially when foods contain nuts. We are finding that some children can have severe reactions from an accidental casual contact simply smelling these products.

As a community, we must be aware of what foods you send for your own children and for classroom snacks and how it may affect all the children. **Therefore, we ask that you do not send any items that contain nuts.** Likewise, we suggest that all children with dietary restrictions bring their own snack and lunch daily.

This will alleviate many of the possible reactions' children can experience.

Any food that is brought to school for birthdays or celebrations should have an ingredients list attached.

MEDICAL EMERGENCIES

The staff with the help of local paramedics and physicians will handle all emergencies. 911 will be called for any life-threatening or serious medical emergency. All efforts will be made to contact parents or authorized contacts immediately. It is the parent's responsibility to ensure enrollment records are current with correct phone numbers and emergency contact information.

Permission to Perform Minor Medical Treatment: In the event of an emergency you hereby give the School and its employees and agents, permission to perform minor medical treatments on your child while awaiting medical help, and you hereby waive and release the School and its employees, agents, owners, members, successors and assigns from any liability in connection with any claims arising from such treatment.

CARE OF CHILD

SEPARATION

Sometimes children and parents have difficulty separating when arriving at school. We find that it is most helpful when the parent leaves the child with a reassuring staff member and calmly, but promptly, exits. Generally, the child feels more comfortable within 5 minutes. We certainly invite you to call the school later to check on your child.

TOILET TRAINING

The independence of a “potty-trained” child is a prerequisite for the Primary (2.5-6) class. Independence means that the child must have the awareness to use the bathroom without reminders, be able to manage clothing without help and have the ability to wipe or clean themselves appropriately in order to maintain clean hygiene.

In the Toddler rooms, we never force toilet training. Teachers work closely with parents who are committed to move their child from diapers to underwear. After a child has adjusted to the new environment, or by 2 years of age, we will begin the toilet training process. Children are invited and encouraged to use our special size toilets. We do not use pull-ups once training has started; we use padded cotton underwear. If your child has a bathroom accident, we will place the wet or soiled clothes in a plastic bag in your child’s cubby to be taken home.

MEALS/SNACKS

Some children and staff are highly allergic to certain foods. Please avoid sending items that contain nuts products especially nut butter sandwiches, crackers or peanuts.

1. Children who arrive early to school may bring a breakfast. Children must have time to finish breakfast before 8:00 a.m., so please bring breakfast no later than **7:45 a.m.**
2. Children may bring their own lunches. Families who choose to provide lunch from home are responsible for providing foods of nutritional value and meeting the daily food needs of their children. Be sure to send utensils and napkins and label all items that are not disposable. A microwave is provided to warm foods for those children who eat lunch at school. Please note that we will not heat frozen dinners requiring more than 1 minute to warm because of time allowances. Items that need chilling should be sent in a small, insulated container that fits in the cubby or include an ice pack. Lunches brought from home are not shared with other children.
3. An optional catered lunch program is offered for an additional fee per month. The menu is published monthly and cannot be individualized. Orders are due and payable by the 20th of the PRIOR month in order for your child to participate in this lunch program. If you miss the deadline for purchasing lunch for any reason, you must provide your child’s lunch until the next ordering date. There are **no refunds or adjustments** for missed lunches or any reason. Payment for the catered lunch program is done online.
4. Children are encouraged but not forced to eat.
5. A snack is served during the morning classes. Afternoon snack is served between 2:45 – 4:00 p.m. for full-time students from Toddlers - Kindergarten. Elementary full-time students who are enrolled in the afterschool program receive a snack after 3:15 p.m. We are asking you to send healthy snacks for your child. If your child has any food allergies, **YOU MUST** provide the snacks for your child each day.
6. It is always best to bring a water bottle so that children can stay hydrated throughout the day. No sippy cups or baby bottles allowed for children in our Toddler and Primary programs.
7. Children in our Infant/Beginner program are still learning tastes, textures and allergens. We ask that all meals and snacks be provided by the parents.

NAP AND REST POLICY

A rest period is vital for the physical well-being of active children. The school supplies cots for your children 1 year old until 4 years old. An assigned crib is provided for infants.

1. All children in the program up to 4 years of age participate in a time of rest or sleeping in the early afternoon. Each child will have a cot and will be expected to remain quietly on it during rest time. It is our belief that if a child falls asleep, his body requires that rest.
2. Children must bring a labeled child-size nap mat only for naptime. Each Friday, this should be taken home and washed. (No separate pillows or extra blankets)
3. Infants cannot be swaddled for nap. As per our Safe Sleep Practices, only approved sleep sacks may be used. Sleep sacks must be fastened under the arms, restraint and swaddle-free, and no thicker than a regular weight piece of clothing. Quilted, heavyweight, shearling, weighted, or outdoor winter weight fabrics are strictly prohibited as these products contribute to the SIDS risk factor of overheating. Please see an administrator if you have questions.

OUTDOOR PLAY

The children are expected to play outdoors daily, weather permitting. Our feeling is that if your child is well enough to be in the program, he/she is well enough to play outdoors. The fresh air and movement is something that each child needs daily for general well-being and healthy development. We will not take the children outdoors in inclement weather, based on the judgment of the Director.

You can help your child enjoy this time outdoors by being sure that he/she is dressed for the existing weather conditions.

INCIDENT/ACCIDENT REPORTS

In the event an incident/accident of any significance occurs at school (social or medical) a written report will be made. This incident/accident report will be specific as to what occurred and what actions were taken. The report will be completed and signed by the staff member involved, management personnel and the child's parent. The report will be placed in the child's file. If requested, a copy will be given to the parent.

BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE AND DISCIPLINE

Smaller Scholars' staff guide children into developing safe and appropriate ways of interacting with others and with their environment. One of our goals is to help children develop tools to problem solve. Young children learn by experimenting, testing limits and experiencing the consequences of their behavior. In the process of setting and enforcing limits, our teachers assist the children in developing self-control and respect for the rights and property of others. Children learn how to get along in a group while balancing the need for individual rights and self-expression

Our staff is trained to help your child by word and example, to realize that the following actions are not appropriate behavior:

- Hitting, biting or harming other children or adults
- Teasing, name calling or making rude remarks
- Leaving the group without accompaniment by a staff person or a parent
- Showing disrespect for adults, students, the school environment, materials and equipment

Occasionally, children may be invited to work independently for a short time in order to regain self-control. In these cases, the child has an open invitation from the teacher to return to the group when he feels ready. Any separation from the group will always be within sight and hearing of the staff, and the length of time will be related to the child's age and maturity.

Inner Discipline: The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal at our Montessori school. Self-discipline is fostered in many ways. The classroom environment is organized in an orderly, logical manner. Children choose work, which they are capable of doing and are free to use it for as long as they wish without interference from others. This approach alleviates many problems of discipline, which might be present in another kind of environment. In addition, the mixed age group allows the younger children to emulate the older children's more mature behavior.

However, the school reserves the right to exclude, withdraw or dismiss any student from classes or from school for the violation of any rules, regulations or payment of fees and tuition, and at the discretion of the Director. Children and adults are expected to respect the rights and needs of others and the environment.

If, in the judgment of the Director or designee, your child's behavior interferes with the School staff providing a safe and nurturing program, the School will contact you to remove your child for the remainder of the school day. The School requires that the child be picked up within 1 hour of being notified. There will be no refund for the time missed during this suspension. Re-admission of your child to the program will be discussed at the time of the suspension.

In the case of repeated inappropriate behavior at any age level, consequences will be determined by the Director and teachers and could result in removal from the environment. Blatant or continued misbehavior of any kind is considered grounds for expulsion.

BITING

Biting can be a frustrating problem among young children. All school staff are trained on preventative strategies for this issue. Biting incidents will be communicated to the parents of both children involved, in an attempt to understand and prevent this behavior. In order to ensure the safety of all children, if attempts fail to stop the biting, we reserve the right to remove the biting child from our program. If a child bites more than three times in one day, we will call the parent to remove the child from the program for the remainder of the day.

CLASSROOM PROCEDURES & POLICIES

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

According to Texas state law, all child(ren) must be signed-in/signed-out. This helps determine the actual days and hours the school has provided services. It is also used in emergency situations such as evacuations. At our front entrance (in all buildings), we have provided a computer-generated tracker. Each parent will be given a code to clock their children in and out and must be completed daily by the adult dropping off and picking up the child(ren) from school. Emergency contacts will also be given their own code as well.

All children must be brought into school by their parents and left with the supervising teachers. In addition, parents must come into school to pick up their child. No child will be sent out to the car. Children must be picked up by a parent, legal guardian or specified adult who is at least 18 years of age.

For a child to be picked up by someone other than the parent, the parent must first complete and sign the "Parent Authorization Pickup" form or in emergency cases, call the school and give the name of the person picking up their child. When the parent-authorized person arrives, they will be asked to show a driver's license for identification. Please make them aware of this.

The parent or authorized adult who brings or picks up a child is liable for that child's safety and well-being until he/she is turned over to a staff member and after the staff member is notified that the adult is here for the child. Please keep close control of your children when entering or leaving the school and in the building. The children may not enter or depart the school building without the parent's supervision. The playground is closed to all children when not supervised by Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy staff.

A flag will be hung outside the east classroom door in the Administration building whenever the students in Pr 1 and Pr 2 are in their classroom.

UNIFORMS

Smaller Scholars requires the children to wear the carefully selected uniform. We believe it gives them a sense of pride and a feeling of belonging to a group. A prepared environment should be free of hindering distractions and this includes the dress of the adults as well as the students. The Montessori Method ensures that children continue to develop as individuals through their own personality and abilities. Uniforms can be ordered at anytime during the year from the designated school vendor.

1. The official school uniform is worn Monday through Thursday for all Children Toddler age through Elementary during the school year. Friday is Free Dress as well as Special School Events, Winter Break, Spring Break and summer months.
2. **Notices will be sent home with children not wearing proper uniforms. After 3 notices, parents will be called, and students will be sent home to change.**
3. Boys and Girls have official and optional uniform combination. There will be no substitutions.
4. Girls must wear tights/leggings/shorts under the dresses (solid navy ONLY)
5. During colder months children may wear undergarments in solid gray, white, and navy ONLY
6. The school spirit t-shirt with the school telephone number is required for fieldtrips and Elementary PE days.
7. Appropriate summer attire may be worn from June until the fall semester begins.

8. For the safety of your child, please dress your child in tennis shoes daily. Rubber soles prevent children from slipping and falling. Children with boots, crocks, flip flop style sandals or other leather soled shoes may not be allowed on the play equipment as they are slip hazards.

MONTESSORI CLASSROOM HOURS

Toddler and Primary children should arrive **no later than 8:50 a.m.** and Elementary children by **8:00 a.m.** each morning so that they do not miss any of the morning activities. It is important that your child arrive at school consistently by their designated start time. Introductory lessons may be given during line activities, which are an essential part of the school routine. This is also an important “adjustment” time for your child. It can be embarrassing and awkward for children when they are consistently late and may affect your child’s learning.

After our classes have started, parents will be greeted at the door and your child will be escorted to their classroom. To avoid classroom disruption, kindly inform the teacher of any early dismissals.

CLASSROOM INFORMATION

School-wide notices are electronically sent via email. Please make sure we have your current email address on file. If needed, please leave a message for your child’s Montessori teacher with a school administrator. The call will be returned within 24 hours.

Classrooms may have class pets, such as guinea pigs, hamsters, fish, etc. The student’s personal pets cannot be brought into the classroom. The parent may notify the office if they prefer that their child not have contact with the pets.

CLASSROOM MATERIALS

There are many interesting items in a Montessori classroom. It is natural for these small objects to sometimes be discovered in a pocket or show up at home. We ask that you **please** return them to school when this is found. Materials are often difficult to replace and any incomplete classwork is removed from the shelf. Gently remind your child that the items belong at school so that all children may use them.

All Montessori work is closed when the lead teacher is away. You are welcome to visit during work time (see Administration for details). Please do not have your child demonstrate his work before or after the school day is over. This is a prepared environment for all the children.

PERSONAL BELONGINGS

The School will do its best to maintain personal belongings; however, the School is not responsible for loss or damage to clothes and/or personal belongings.

1. All children must have a bag/tote bag. Personal belongings will be stored in this bag.
2. Children (Infants thru Kindergarten) should always have 3 **complete changes** of labeled clothing placed in a plastic bag at the school. These replacement clothes need not be a uniform. The child’s soiled clothing will be put in the plastic bag to take home. We will call the parents of children who soil their clothing at school without replacement items and ask that those parents bring clean clothing for their children. We do not borrow or share clothes from other children.
3. Parents must label all items of clothing and bedding in order for staff to locate lost items. Check for missing items in the Lost & Found behind the fish tank in the Primary Building. Notify the office about misplaced items, so that we can help you locate them. Items, which have not been claimed after 1 month, will be given to charity.
4. Children are not allowed to bring candy, gum, toys, stuffed pets or other personal belongings to school. The school will not accept responsibility for any of these items that may get lost. For Show and Tell, the children may bring

something special. Check with your child's teacher for details and suggestions. Children may bring a book to school for the teacher to read to the class, but please make sure his or her name is on it.

PROGRESS REPORTS, CONFERENCES AND OBSERVATIONS

Progress reports are sent out three times a year for Primary, Toddler, and Elementary students. Conferences are also held at those times with an optional scheduled conference in May. The Montessori teacher will share information regarding your child's individual learning experiences and progress. Conferences may be arranged on other dates as needed by contacting the school administrator.

Further questions regarding policies and procedures can be addressed by making an appointment with a school administrator. We hope you will support the school by being informed and involved in your child's school life.

PARENT CONTRIBUTIONS AND PARTICIPATION

Each Friday parents have the opportunity to provide special snacks. A sign-up sheet is located in each classroom. There are various celebrations and field trips (Elementary) during the school year when we ask for parent volunteers. During these times, you will be contacted directly.

Parental visits are important to your child. If you have knowledge of a specific educational topic or materials you would like to share with the students, please schedule a time with the teacher for a class presentation.

Any food that is brought to school for birthdays or celebrations should have an ingredients list attached.

BIRTHDAY/ OTHER CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays are very special and the children love to celebrate them together. If your child would like to bring a treat on his/her birthday, we recommend a nutritious one like muffins, fruit cups, date or banana bread, or oatmeal cookies. However, **traditional birthday cakes or cupcakes with frosting are NOT ALLOWED**. Some children and staff are highly allergic to certain foods. Peanuts are the most common source for severe reactions. Reach out to your child's teacher for a list of allergens or food restrictions in the class. Please avoid sending items that contain peanuts products especially peanut butter sandwiches, crackers or peanuts. Each class has its own traditional birthday ceremony to honor the "Birthday Child". Party favors/Goodie bags and balloons are prohibited, as they tend to cause disputes, hurt feelings and upsets among the children who are not allowed to play with them in class or at home. An alternative might be a gift for the classroom from your child such as a book. This is something the entire class will enjoy using throughout the school year.

Other celebrations are noted on the school annual or monthly calendar.

Any food that is brought to school for birthdays or celebrations should have an ingredients list attached.

FIELD TRIPS – Elementary Age Children

Field trip t-shirts and/or school identification bracelet will be required for all children going on field trips. These may be purchased with school uniforms. A signed permission slip will be required for every child. Notices of field trips will be posted, and the children transported in chartered, air-conditioned buses. Any child whose behavior is deemed unsafe may be barred from further field trips unless accompanied by his parent or specified by school administration.

SCHOOL POLICIES & PROCEDURES

EXTRA-CURRICULAR CLASSES

After school extra-curricular classes are available and require an additional fee. Please contact the office for further information if you are interested. Fees are determined by each individual vendor; the front office staff will not accept payment for these activities. Coordination of class scheduling is handled by the vendor.

CHANGE OF PROGRAM

All children are in the program that was chosen at the time of Enrollment (School Day or Full day). If you would like to change your child's scheduled program, you must use the "Request for Change of Program" form available at the front office. Your request will be taken into consideration depending on an opening being available for that time. This signed form must be received by the first day of the prior month to be activated for the next month. Student programs cannot be changed during the months that have 3 or more Teacher In-Service days.

WINTER/SPRING BREAKS AND IN-SERVICE DAYS

Only Full Day students may attend school during Winter/Spring breaks and In-service days. Montessori classes will not be in session those days, but special activities will be planned. These days are not included in the tuition for the School Day program. *Please refer to the school calendar

PROFESSIONAL DAYS

The school provides staff training twice annually. During these days the school will be closed to all students. Dates are noted on the annual School calendar.

ONE-WAY DRIVE, PARKING AND SECURITY

For the safety of our children and families, please respect the **ONE-WAY** drive. The speed limit is 5 mph.

Parents may park their cars in the designated parking areas in the primary or elementary parking lot. Please **do not park** along the curb in front of the preschool at any time. This is the designated Fire Lane and your vehicle could be towed.

To protect your valuables (including handbags, computers, briefcases, etc.) remove them from your vehicle and lock the doors. (Note that it is against the law to leave any child unsupervised in a vehicle even if only for a moment.) Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy is not responsible for your vehicle or items left in your car.

CLOSING HOURS

Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy closes at 6:00 p.m. All parents must either pick up their child by 6:00 p.m. or make arrangements for someone else to pick up their child. **Please do not request or expect us to keep the school open past 6:00 p.m.** The school will contact those persons who are listed on the registration form & authorized to pick up your child(ren) if you cannot be reached by 6:00 p.m. There will be a late charge of \$1.00 per minute for every minute your child is picked up after 6:00 p.m.

If your child is picked up more than 30 minutes after the scheduled closing time 2 or more times in any 30-day period, we reserve the right to terminate your child's enrollment.

If no one can be reached, Child Protective Services may be called to pick up your child.

However, please note the Elementary and Administration buildings are locked at 5:00 p.m. (or as noted on the door). These students may be picked up from the Primary building after 5:00 p.m.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the case of inclement or severe weather the School may be closed. The school follows the Katy Independent School District closing information. This information will be posted on all local major news channels. If it is determined by our corporate office that driving conditions for our families and staff are hazardous, or if opening the School is deemed unsafe, parents will be notified via e-mail and social media. There will be no refund or tuition credit for any such closing. In the event of an early closing due to weather, you agree to make arrangements to pick up your child promptly when notified by the School. Information regarding potential Late Opening or other Emergency that may affect hours of operation will be provided at the time.

EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS PLAN

Smaller Scholars has designed an Emergency Preparedness Plan in case of an emergency. Please see the office for a copy of this plan.

PESTICIDES

We shall make written pesticide information available to a parent, upon parent's request, at least 48 hours before a pesticide application occurs on the school grounds. The information will include: The brand, concentration, rate of application, and any use restrictions required by the label of the herbicide or specific pesticide; the date and time of the pesticide application; the pesticide label and the material safety data sheet; and the name and telephone number of the pesticide business licensee and the name of the licensed applicator

INSURANCE

The School has an extensive safety awareness program along with inspections and regular maintenance of the building's playground and equipment. In spite of the precautions the Company takes to ensure the safety of the children, and school, we respect that accidents may happen. Therefore, we are insured providers of childcare that includes, but is not limited to, General and Vehicle liability and primary Child Accident Insurance.

Liability Release and Indemnification: The School maintains an insurance policy in connection with its liability for any injury, loss or damage that may occur to your child, your child's property or your property because of fire, theft, storm or other causes. Acting on behalf of yourself and your child, you hereby waive and agree to release any claims that you, your child, or you and your child's legal representatives and heirs may have against the School or any employee, agent, owner or member of the School, or any successor or assign of the School, arising from or related to any injury, loss or damage to the extent, (a) that such injury, loss or damage is not covered by the insurance policy maintained by the School, or (b) that the monetary amount of such injury, loss or damage exceeds any amount payable under such insurance policy. You also agree to be responsible for and to indemnify and hold harmless the School, any employee, agent, owner or member of the School, and any successor and assign of the School from and against, any and all claims, liabilities, damages, judgments and costs (including attorney's fees and court costs) that may be brought against or incurred by the School, any employee, agent, owner or member of the School or any successor or assign of the School, arising from or related to any act or omission on the part of you or your child. The School is also not responsible for personal items lost, stolen or broken while in our care.

LICENSING

The School is fully licensed and inspected on a regular basis to ensure it complies with regulations. The School's current license is on display. Parents may review a copy of the minimum standards at the DFPS website at https://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Care or upon request from the school's Director along with the school's most recent Licensing inspection report. Our local Licensing office number is (713) 940-5200 and the child abuse hotline number is (1) 800-252-5400.

DEPARTMENT OF SOCIAL SERVICES

The Department of Social Services performs such duties as are authorized by state regulations. The Department has the authority to interview children or staff and to inspect and audit childcare school records without prior consent. The School shall comply with the Department and we shall make provisions for private interviews with any child(ren) or staff and the examination of all records relating to the operation of the School. Furthermore, the Department has the authority to observe the physical conditions of the child(ren), including conditions that could indicate abuse, neglect or inappropriate placement.

GANG FREE ZONE

Smaller Scholars Montessori Academy is located in a gang-free zone. A gang free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of a childcare center. Therefore, certain gang related criminal-activity or engaging in organized criminal activity with 1000 feet of Smaller Scholars is a violation of the Texas Law and is therefore subject to increased penalty under state law.

SMOKE AND DRUG FREE CAMPUS

Smoking and Drug use is strictly prohibited on our campus.

POLICY PROHIBITING FIREARMS AND WEAPONS ON SCHOOL PROPERTY

The school is committed to providing a safe and secure environment for its students, their families, employees, and visitors by prohibiting the possession of firearms and other weapons on School property.

This Policy applies to all employees, students, student families, vendors, and visitors to the School. Possessing a firearm or weapon (concealed or otherwise) while on School property is strictly prohibited.

This Policy does not apply to (i) law enforcement officers who are required to carry a weapon or firearm as a condition of his or her employment, (ii) external government agency officers required to carry a weapon or firearm while conducting official business at the School or (iii) private security firms or individuals hired by the School while providing security services at the School.

Any person who violates this Policy will be required to leave the School and may be permanently banned from School and/or referred to law enforcement. Any employee who violates this Policy is subject to disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment.

COMPLIANCE – SCHOOL POLICIES AND PROVISION OF AUTHORIZATION AND INFORMATION

You agree (a) that you and your child will comply with all policies of the School, as those policies may be amended from time to time, and (b) that you will deliver promptly to the School all signed authorizations and any and all other documents and information, including without limitation, authorizations and information related to the emergency medical care of your child, as may be required by the School from time to time

OTHER INFORMATION

Your questions, concerns and comments are extremely important to us. To address any issue, please do not hesitate to contact any school administrator.