



# Parent Handbook

Revised 2/2017

*Versailles Montessori School actively seeks  
a wide variety of staff and children in order to share the rich  
resources we all have to offer.*

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**The mission of Versailles Montessori School is:**

To provide a carefully planned educational environment based on Dr. Maria Montessori's educational principles.

To create peace through education ... one child at a time.

**VMS Goals**

The specific goals for the children who attend VMS are:

To encourage a positive attitude toward school and learning.

To encourage a sense of independence.

To encourage concentration and positive study habits.

To foster an abiding curiosity.

To encourage initiative and persistence.

To foster self-discipline and orderly thinking.

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# Versailles Montessori School - Parent Handbook

## Section 1: Introduction

### **How VMS came to Versailles, Kentucky, Woodford County**

In 1965, in Lexington, the first Montessori school in Kentucky opened. Among the students of that inaugural class was a young three year old boy named Tony Guagliardo. Tony was the youngest of five children, raised by two working parents who struggled to make ends meet, yet who realized the sustaining value of a Montessori educational experience.

Flash forward to 1986 and Tony is finishing college at the University of Kentucky. During that year he met, wooed and married René. Just days after their wedding they arrived in Perugia, Italy to take their Association Montessori International (AMI), Montessori Primary training. During the year, they were completely submerged in their studies under the direction of Signorina Paolini. Paolini was one of the individuals who worked with Dr. Maria Montessori, dedicating her life to Maria's ideas about child development. In the spring of 1987, after taking written, oral and practical exams from an international board of examiners, Tony and René received their AMI Primary diploma and returned to Kentucky.

In July of 1987, Tony and René bought a church and parsonage in Versailles, Kentucky and opened the town's first Montessori school called Montessori's House of the Children. They started with twelve children between the ages of three and six years. Seven years later in May 1994, Versailles Montessori School was incorporated in Kentucky, received tax exempt status from the IRS and by the fall of that year expanded their services by offering a toddler program and an elementary class.

In September of 1997, the school's campus relocated onto 10 acres of donated land allowing for outdoor science opportunities, organic gardens, a sporting field, small farm animals, a small orchard, wild flower areas, and bird sanctuaries. The school's new building includes rooms for the toddler, primary and elementary classes, along with a staff lounge, laundry room, basement and office space for administration. Each classroom exits onto a 8 foot wide covered porch and fenced play area. The elementary program has regular access to a 1,900 sq. ft. library/media center.

At the end of the 2010/2011 school year, after 24 years of dedicated service, René retired from VMS.

VMS is an Accredited Private School through the Kentucky Department of Education. VMS holds full membership with the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the elementary program is also recognized through the Association Montessori International (AMI). VMS administration and lead teaching staff are AMI or AMS certified.

### **School Structure**

VMS is a non profit 501(C)3 organization allowing donations to the school to be tax deductible to the full extent permissible by law. VMS administration is responsible for day to day operations, finances and school policy. They submit proposals for approval to the board of directors.

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### **VMS Board of Directors**

Tony & René Guagliardo - Founders of the school. AMI certified primary teachers and Montessori School Administrators since 1987. They are responsible for all submittals to the board of directors. The Guagliardo's have two children and live in Versailles.

Russ Crawford - Mechanical Engineer, CMTA, designs commercial HVAC systems with an influence in school design. Russ is an expert witness on structural damage due to blasting. He is single and lives in Lawrenceburg.

Tina Leininger - Health Insurance Claims Representative. She has managerial, health insurance and inventory experience. Tina is married with two children and lives in Lexington.

Peg Snyder - Peg has an economics background and is involved in various business ventures. She is a VMS alumni parent, with two VMS graduate sons. Peg is married and lives in Colorado.

We all - families and school staff - want to give children the best this world has to offer. We want the best of prepared environments - those that are beautiful, peaceful and enabling. That is what prompted the need for our new school building. This incredible feat was accomplished because parents and staff joined together in a common goal. In recognition of that fact, an organization is set up for advising and supporting the staff and administration with their continued efforts to maintain an environment that best supports the students of VMS. Parent volunteers serve on committees in an advisory capacity. Although final decisions lie with VMS staff, administration and the Board of Directors, our parents can be a part of the process. The labor, talents and organizational efforts of these parent committees *keep tuition costs down!* Whatever projects we cannot do ourselves, we must pay someone else to do. These costs would have to be shared among us all.

### **Location**

*VMS is a smoke free environment.* **Address: 480 Pinckard Pike Versailles, Kentucky 40383.** The school's 10 acre rural campus is located on the left, ½ mile down Pinckard Pike (Hwy.169). Pinckard Pike is off Hwy. 33 south, approximately 1 mile past the Bluegrass Parkway. VMS has a variety of animals on campus. We have reptiles, amphibians, fish, sheep, cats and a dog. Cat and dog vaccinations are current. **By enrolling in VMS you acknowledge and give consent that your child may interact with any of the animals on the campus.**

### **School Schedule**

VMS basically follows the Woodford County Public School calendar, operating between August and May, Monday through Friday. However, the school has several closings during the school year so **alternate child care arrangements will be necessary.** You may want to use your school directory and calendar to make needed arrangements ahead of time with hourly staff or other families. **VMS reserves the right to amend the closing schedule.**

### **Hours**

VMS is open from 7:30 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. excluding "early dismissal" days when we close at 1:00 p.m. for staff meetings.

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### **Student Programs**

VMS offers three programs.

- Toddler - 18 months to 3 years

The toddler child must be taking only 1 nap per day (no longer taking morning naps), walking securely on their feet, going up and down stairs, eating finger foods, etc.

- Primary - 3 years through kindergarten

The primary child no longer is wearing a diaper and is past daily bowel movement accidents. Additionally, the child is losing the toddler gait, is able to communicate verbally as well as respond to simple spoken instruction. Finally, the child must be able to function physically and comfortably within the primary environment.

- Elementary - 6 years to 12 years, grades 1-6

The elementary class requires prior Montessori experience with any exceptions made on an individual basis. The elementary student must meet academic standards set by the Montessori primary program, and also show physical, emotional and social signs of entering the second plane of development (explained in further detail later).

Elementary Students 1st - 3rd grade refine the basic skills acquired during the primary years such as reading, writing and mathematics but in a more intellectual than sensorial realm. The Montessori curriculum includes several major areas of study - geography, mathematics, language, history, biology, earth science, art, music and physical education.

Elementary Students 4th - 6th grade further extends their knowledge base through the more advanced materials. They also interact more independently in the outdoor environment both on the land and with the community in general. While having a more independent role in their learning process, they are still guided by the teacher. Classic Montessori materials are used less as the students move toward more abstract and integrated ways of reasoning.

### **Program Placements**

Although each program serves children within general age guidelines, these age ranges are not absolute. Because children are unique, program placement is made with consideration of their individual needs.

### **Administration and Head Staff**

- Tony Guagliardo – Administration
- Becky Morgan – Fundraising Director
- Amy Ford - Toddler Program Teacher
- Alicia Guagliardo – Toddler Program Teacher
- Karyn Jankowski - Primary Program Teacher
- Melissa Hall - Primary Program Teacher
- Marie Marefat - Upper Elementary Program Teacher
- Ryan Branstetter - Lower Elementary Program Teacher
- Elaine Potts - Librarian

*Administration* and the *Teachers* have been trained in the Montessori method by an international or national training center. Teacher accreditation is granted by the Association Montessori International (AMI) in Amsterdam, Holland or the American Montessori Society (AMS) in New York City, New York.



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All teacher assistants are trained directly by administration and the teaching faculty. Assistants are individuals who have a desire to work with children and/or are interested in receiving their Montessori teaching certification.

All staff have a background check conducted through the Kentucky Administrative Office of the Courts and the Cabinet for Health and Family Services. Each staff member participates in state mandated training, 15 hours minimum per year.

### **Forms**

All the documentation listed below must be completed and returned to us *before* your child's starting date. Most of these forms are required by State regulation and all contribute to the safety and well-being of your child. These include:

- Application of Interest
- Family/Child History
- Student Contract
- Authorization Forms
- Prior School's Reports
- Immunization Certificate
- Preventative Health Care Exam
- Kentucky Eye Exam For School Entry (Kindergarten and above)
- Kentucky Dental Exam For School Entry (Kindergarten and above)

Please be sure to report any changes to any of these forms as they occur, especially any change to the Authorization Forms. We must always be able to reach you in case of emergency.

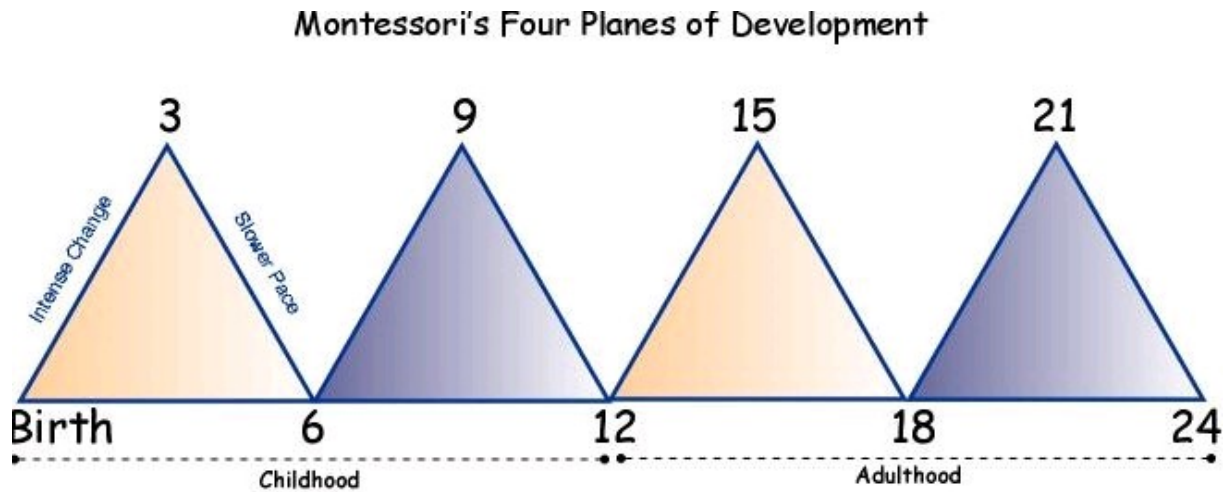
### **Fee Schedule**

The fee schedule is posted on the VMS web site, [www.versaillesmontessori.org](http://www.versaillesmontessori.org), or you can request a copy from the office.

## Section 2: Montessori and VMS

### Montessori Basics - in a nutshell

Through her research, Dr. Montessori identified the growth of an individual from birth to age 24 in four "planes of development": birth to 6, 6 to 12, 12 to 18, and 18 to 24 years of age.



In each of these planes she noted unique and specific needs and defining characteristics associated with the child's interests and abilities. Those needs and characteristics grow and then diminish in importance during each six-year plane. That is, the needs/characteristics are at their strongest at each midpoint of the plane of development (ages 3, 9, 15, 21) and are diminished at the points of transition from one plane to the next (ages 6, 12, 18).

Dr. Montessori believed 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, Dr. Montessori suggested that we 'follow the child' and allow our students to show us how to facilitate the development of their human potential. This focus on the child led Dr. Montessori to develop a methodology and materials to respond to the needs and characteristics of the evolving individual at each plane. The materials and methodology are implemented in what is commonly referred to as the 'prepared environment.' This name reflects the care and attention that is given to creating a learning environment which will reinforce the children's independence and intellectual development. Each classroom is a specially furnished environment designed to support the child's need for **purposeful** activity.

Part of the prepared environment is the AMI and AMS Montessori teacher, who serves as a link between the children and the environment. Older children help with younger ones, just as they would in a big family, and in doing so reinforce what they have already learned and strengthen their own integrity and responsibility. The younger children in turn benefit because children often learn better from their peers. There is spontaneous sharing among the children, who work individually, or in small groups, at self-chosen activities and at their own pace.

### **The Three Year Developmental Cycle: Key to Our Children's Education**

The three-year developmental cycle is at the very heart of the Montessori educational experience for our children at VMS. It is what assures our children success and it is one of the features that distinguishes our educational program from others. Curriculum development, staffing, classroom design, and student admission, re-enrollment, and placement all revolve around it.

It drives the educational continuum (our academic scope and sequence), determines materials purchased and placed in the classrooms, and defines student record keeping, progress, and assessment. It is a clearly defined and discrete educational unit with a beginning, a middle, and an end for each child, with the third year in each sequence a capstone year that is a culminating experience academically, emotionally, socially, and developmentally. If not followed, a child's work in that three-year sequence is simply incomplete.

With each plane divided into two three-year developmental cycles, conventional "Kindergarten", Third Grade, Sixth Grade, and Ninth Grade are endings, or rather completions that are culminations. They are *not* beginnings. This runs directly counter to the paradigm in schools across the country where Kindergarten is the start of the elementary sequence, Sixth Grade is the start of Middle School, and Ninth Grade is the start of High School.

We respectfully but vigorously disagree.

We know that ages 3 and 4, and grades 1 and 2, 4 and 5, 7 and 8 are years of academic and intellectual explosion. Additionally, Dr. Montessori observed that in the Kindergarten children, Third, Sixth and Ninth Graders, their great work is social and emotional development, laying the foundation for the next "explosion". She concluded that unless the social and emotional growth was addressed directly and effectively, rather than suppressed, academic growth could slow and suffer. Rather than fighting the social and emotional growth of the children in the third year of each sequence, Montessori encourages it.

Instead of making those students in their transitional years the youngest of the children in a sequence, we make them the oldest and most mature in their group. We give them age-appropriate responsibility. We make them educational and civic leaders in this community.

The leadership of the older children has remarkable impact on the health of the three-year community they help lead. It allows the oldest children in each cycle to stand tall with confidence during an uncertain time while internalizing the academic work of the first two years by sharing their knowledge and expertise with the younger students in the group. They become role models for the younger students, who long to reach their level of academic accomplishment and community responsibility.

We embrace the maxim, "You do not understand something until you can teach it," and giving lessons to the younger students in the group requires that the oldest children reduce complex concepts to their simplest elements and then convey them with clarity and understanding. If they cannot, it is clear that *they* need a lesson before going on! Thus, without fully realizing what they are accomplishing, our "third-years" internalize and consolidate the academic skills they have garnered for two years before exploding into the next three-year cycle.

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The three-year grouping also makes sense because we know from experience that five year olds have much more in common with 3 and 4 year olds than they do with 7 and 8 year olds. Sixth graders have much more in common with 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students than with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students. And 9<sup>th</sup> graders have much more in common with 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students than with 10<sup>th</sup> through 12<sup>th</sup> grade students.

[Consider this, 6<sup>th</sup> grade students are separated from 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade students at Woodford Middle School and 9<sup>th</sup> grade students are separated from 10<sup>th</sup> - 12<sup>th</sup> grade students at Woodford County High.]

Finally, each of our Montessori Faculty members is trained for the 3-year developmental cycle with which he or she works. Clearly, the full benefit of the educational program accrues to our children in the third and capstone year of each cycle, and a student's educational experience is greatly diminished without it. So, too, is the program and the educational experience for the younger students left behind without the gift of the leadership, mentoring, and instruction from the older children they have come to admire.

<p>The article above was written many years ago but is of critical and lasting importance. It comes from the Montessori School of Raleigh's Newsletter, Vol X, No 2. Minor modifications have been made to reflect significance to <b>Versailles Montessori School</b>.</p>
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## **The Montessori Approach - more detail**

### **The Child's Work: Toddler - Kindergarten**

Play is the work of young children. The object of their efforts is creating the adults they will become. The children clearly show an inner need to learn, to know themselves and their world. They want very much to develop their intelligence, to learn to control movement precisely, to explore and order their impressions of the world, to become independent and responsible.

### **The Young Students Work: Elementary**

Students in the elementary grades make most of their educational discoveries through hands on research. They are introduced to their studies via stories that capture their imagination and compel them to want to discover more. Elementary students are driven by the need to understand and relate their education to mankind on whole.

### **The Prepared Environment**

All human beings, from conception to maturity, form themselves, taking from the environment (the womb, the home, the school, the community) the materials for self-construction. We adults prepare and provide these environments upon which the children's work depends. We assist in the fulfillment of the children's potential.

The Montessori classroom is prepared to help children accomplish their goals whether we call it work or play. Gradually the children reveal qualities for which they are not usually given credit, such as intense concentration and surprising attention span, exactness and precise movement, a sense of order, maximum effort even by the youngest ones, self-discipline and respect for others, peacefulness, kindness and an obvious joy in "work".

Each classroom is a specially furnished environment designed to support the child's need for **purposeful** activity. For toddler and primary students it is the children's house: the child-sized furniture is easily moved, pictures are hung at the children's eye level. Plants are easily watered by children. The sink is not a toy, but a real, child-sized sink. There are many carefully designed materials to meet the children's natural interests. The atmosphere is positive, supportive, and noncompetitive.

The elementary environment incorporates the ideas of the primary environment but the size of the tables, chairs and materials have increased to support the physical growth of the students. Another main difference in the elementary environment is the support of group work since they now express a deep interest in their peers.

Television and computers are not used in the toddler or primary program as they are developmentally inappropriate.

Another important component to the prepared environment is the Montessori trained teacher. Each Montessori teacher has been instructed on the particulars of the Montessori approach for their age group. Their training also consists of child development, record keeping, observation techniques, curriculum development and more.

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### **Sensitive Periods -- Windows of Opportunity**

Media coverage from Time magazine to Newsweek support Montessori's theory from 100+ years ago. Sensitive Periods occur only during the formative years, from *birth to six years of age*. During this particular time, around a particular area of learning development, the children absorb information if exposed to it. An example is the sensitive period for language acquisition, which is present at birth and continues through the age six. After six, language acquisition gradually wanes. If you and your two year old child went to a foreign country, your child would soon speak the new language. You, being long past your sensitive period, would struggle for many years and probably never achieve the exact accent. Montessori observed many sensitive periods in young children for language, order, academics and for each of the developing senses. Montessori toddler and primary classes are especially attractive to children because the materials appeal to their sensitive periods.

### **Spiral Curriculum**

In the elementary program the Montessori materials and activities lead the child gradually from concrete concepts to abstract understanding. The curriculum spirals on itself, picking up on direct and indirect preparations for each new step, widening and deepening the child's knowledge as it continues. The curriculum becomes increasingly integrated, so that what most adults call "subjects" are rather facets of a larger design.

### **The Individual Programs**

#### **Toddler Program: 18 months - 3 years**

**Daily Schedule** 7:30-8:30 children arrive. 8:30-10:30 work period. 10:30-1:00 tasting, recess, songs/stories, lunch. 1:00-3:00 nap. 3:00-3:30 snack, 3:30-5:30 recess.

In the first two months of life, the infant, having moved from the comfort of the womb, learns to trust the new outside world. During the rest of the first year of life, infants learn to trust in themselves: "I can do; I am able." In the next two years they confirm that they are able to act in the world: "I am worthwhile; I can contribute."

The Montessori philosophy is unique in its approach to toddlers. Some of the key concepts of a Montessori toddler class are: communicating respect for the individual child, the importance of freedom of movement to aid the child's physical and cognitive development, and allowing the child to participate in daily routines of self-care and care of the environment. All of these assist learning and the development of independence.

The class is lively and spontaneous, but you will see the beginnings of concentration and genuine social awareness. The program is rich with language acquisition and budding social skills. The room is arranged to allow toddlers to move about freely, and to socialize among themselves. The teacher moves peacefully about, conversing, encouraging or simply observing. As the children become able, they take an active role in the running of class, preparing food and feeding themselves, as well as their toileting needs. The materials look simple, but are very precisely designed to enhance gross and fine motor skills. Most of the activity is individual. There are two to three adults for each group of 10-12 toddlers.

**We expect incoming toddlers to have reached the following developmental milestones before entering the toddler program: securely moving on their feet, drinking from an open cup (not a sippy cup) and, using silverware.**

### **An Environment Designed for Independence**

Toddlers are intrepid explorers. They require an environment worthy of their exploration, one that encourages but does not overwhelm. They are constantly making new discoveries and are striving to perfect the skills that will allow them to pursue their explorations more independently. Our job is to provide a supportive environment (space, materials, and staff) in which these things can take place. Everything is designed to allow children to function independently, to whatever extent they are able, so they will view themselves as capable individuals. This sense of independence and self-reliance is fostered from the time toddlers arrive at the toddler room - carrying in their own diapers, taking off their own coats, choosing their own work - until the time they leave - cleaning up their space, putting on their own coats.

### **Activities**

**Practical Life Exercises** - care of self, care of the environment, and snack (including an introduction to forms of courtesy). The toddlers practice putting on clothes and help prepare fruit snacks. It is a wondrous sight seeing a child not-quite-two carefully setting a table for snacks and then adding a bouquet of flowers.

**Sensorial Exercises** - focusing on individual sensory qualities of the environment (sight, sound, touch, smell, and taste). Food tasting and the tone bells are examples.

**Language** - vocabulary building (overlapping with all other areas) and conversation. The toddler environment is rich with language which is very exciting for them. Real objects and photographs of common objects are used for learning names of things. Abstract words are attached to experiences: "Would you like a sweet taste, or a sour taste?" Stories, songs, conversations, simple explanations and questions add to their understanding.

**Social Skills** - Through daily interaction with each other and adults, the children learn appropriate language to foster interaction.

**Music** - Exposure to a variety of music such as Jazz, Classical, Blue Grass and more, singing with the children, and discovering rhythm and movement are examples.

**Art** - Discussion of pictures on the walls, as well as drawing on the chalkboard and expression of personal drama are the beginning to art.

**Physical Development** - Movement is essential to toddlers, thus special care is given in arranging the furniture and providing materials that encourage and help the development of movement.

### **The Teacher's Role**

As teachers, we monitor the environment and observe the children in order to provide those elements needed for each child to act constructively and independently. We also acknowledge the respect of self, others, and the materials by operating within a consistent set of limits, all derived from the children's need to feel safe and secure.

### **Toileting**

Between 18 months and 28 months toddlers have both the physical ability and interest to control bladder and bowel. In the toddler class, we observe and follow the child's interest. We then help the child to acquire useful information and skills that will make toileting come easily and naturally. Pulling down their pants, sitting on the toilet (usually backwards since this provides more support), wiping their bottoms, pulling their pants up, flushing, and washing their hands are all practiced. The child is changed while standing up in the bathroom, allowing her to participate and gain experience. We also work with the parents as to when the child should begin to wear underwear. Once the toileting process has begun it is generally complete within about two weeks.

### **Napping**

Parents provide a plain (no animated characters) crib sheet and blanket for napping. We don't use pillows or sleeping items.

### **Primary Program: Three - Six Years**

**Daily Schedule** 7:30-8:30 children arrive. 8:30-11:30 snack, work period, recess. 11:30-1:00 songs, stories, lunch. 1:00-5:30 nap, work period, snack, recess.

In the next phase, from age three through kindergarten, children strengthen coordinated movement, articulate language and independence. The overall goal, one that overshadows the particular goals of "curriculum areas," is offering many opportunities for the child to develop a profound self-confidence and a healthy, happy, strong self-image.

Academics are presented at this level. Language, Math, Zoology, Geography, Practical Life and Sensorial areas are part of this classroom. Their work leads to concentration and is therefore often individual. The teacher moves quietly among the children, presenting activities to individuals or small groups. Large group activities are less frequent since their development is still an individual or internal construction.

### **Practical Life**

Practical life activities are basic, vital and continuous, though they take different forms at different ages. They appeal to sensitive periods for order and for the control and perfection of movement. In the primary class much of practical life has to do with adapting to one's own culture. Children learn to snap, button, tie bows, shine shoes, scrub tables, dust, polish and sweep, sew and cook. They also learn forms of manners common in our culture such as shaking hands, closing doors quietly, and not interrupting.

These activities are designed in a sequence of steps, through which the child comes to realize order and logic in activity. Concentration (watch a little one wash a table!), carefulness, exactness and coordination, independence, social awareness, helpfulness and self-esteem are some of the qualities that grow through this work.

### **The Senses**

The sensorial section of material is unique to the primary class, where the children are passing through sensitive periods related to perception of form, texture, color, weight, sound, smell, taste, temperature: the ways in which we take in information about the world. The materials are not intended to give new impressions, but to order, classify, refine, explore and realize the sense impressions the child has already had. Each piece of material isolates a single quality; for example, the pink tower shows only variations in mass (each cube changes in size by 1 cm from 10 cm - 1 cm) - the color, texture, and shape of each piece are the same.

The sensorial materials serve as keys to other areas of learning. The sound exercises lead into music and composition. Texture is used giving shapes of alphabet letters. Discrimination of forms extends into geometry, botany, geography, and so on. The language of the material is usually given after the child has explored it: long, longer, longest; blue, violet, purple; triangle, trapezoid, corolla, calyx; Japan, Ghana, B flat, F sharp ... the words crystallize the concept for the child.



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### **Language**

Language, as we have already seen, is woven into all parts of the program. In the primary class enrichment of vocabulary continues through the use of classified cards, sensorial materials, and games. Fine distinctions between words (broom/brush, string/thread) and long words (tyrannosaurus rex) delight the children. Stories, poems, plays and ordinary conversation are important in the environment, but no one is ever pressed to perform. The aim is to increase children's knowledge, organization of thought, and confidence in the ability to use and express their minds.

With the sandpaper letters, children learn sensorially the cursive forms and phonetic sounds of the alphabet. They make words with a special moveable alphabet in cursive form and write the words in this way for a long time before they realize that the words can also be read. After this great discovery, various materials and games lead the children through cursive, print and capital letters, phonics, puzzle words, parts of speech, forms of sentences, and finally into "total reading." Our aim is to delight the children with the magic of language, not to pressure them.

### **Mathematics**

Montessori proposed that all humans are born with a "mathematical mind". In the primary class the children are given mathematical concepts in the form of objects that represent abstract ideas; the objects can be felt and moved about so that (as with most Montessori work) the hand and movement are always involved in the learning process. The children are introduced to counting and arithmetical processes with numbers into the thousands. In Montessori math materials, arithmetic, algebra, and geometry are integrated into a system in which these concepts are absorbed sensorially.

### **Cultural Areas**

History, geography, botany, zoology, physical science, music and other general subjects are first presented to the children through sensorial materials and stories. In botany, for example, the children analyze a real plant into basic parts: corolla, calyx, stem, leaf, root. With pictures and games each part is broken into more parts: types of leaves, venation of leaves, margins of leaves, enabling the child to observe carefully, and to classify. Various cultures are respectfully presented through stories and collections of pictures, music and celebrations.

### **The Arts**

Montessori environments are aesthetically pleasing and enriched with fine art, crafts and music. Children's ability to create is essentially realized from what is known and understood. The child's own creative energy is used everywhere in the program as he discovers and teaches himself painting, writing stories and music appreciation. In an environment that is ordered, beautiful and rich in possibilities, the child acquires something to paint about, dance about, write poems about.

### **Physical Education**

In the primary class, children are interested in refining the skills they acquired during their first years. Materials and activities encourage precision and control. Children spend time outdoors each day (weather permitting). The playground equipment includes climbing structures and slides, for exercise and bravery.

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### **Napping and Rest Periods**

State guidelines require a rest period. Those children who need a longer rest period are free to nap up to two hours. For those children who don't require a nap, they are free to return to class. Parents provide a plain (no animated characters) crib sheet and crib blanket for napping. We don't use pillows or sleeping items.

### **Extended Day - Kindergarten**

Students in their Kindergarten year have outgrown their need for a nap. Dr. Montessori realized that these students desire, and are capable of, more opportunities for purposeful work. The afternoon session is a smaller class because many of the three and four year old children are napping, allowing for more individualized collaboration between teacher and student.

### **Toileting Requirements**

**It is very important that the toileting milestone in child development be attained before starting the Primary program.** Students should be using the toilet independently, without accidents, on a regular basis. The class has 26 - 30 students with two adults and it becomes logistically difficult for one adult to be with one student for toileting reasons. VMS staff understands that an accident can happen due to illness or because the child is excited with the new environment, but our experience shows us that when a child is regularly using the toilet those accidents seldom occur. Please direct any questions to VMS Administration (Tony).

### **Elementary Program: First - Sixth Grade**

**Daily Schedule** 7:30-8:00 students arrive to class and prepare for the day. 8:00-11:00 work period. 11:00-12:00 recess, lunch. 12:00-3:00 work period, reading, group and classroom chores. 3:30-5:30 snack and after school program.

As with the primary program the special developmental needs of the 6-12 year old children are met in the elementary program. While Dr. Montessori saw that the young child had a unique ability to *absorb* almost a limitless amount of factual information, she also observed that the older child could in fact take this base to a new height with his ability to reason and create. Whereas the young child seems most at ease with individual instruction and work, the older students are equally compelled to work and learn in groups and begin to learn how to relate to society at large.

### **Responsibility**

The elementary age child is encouraged at all times to take responsibility for his or her actions, thereby developing a strong sense of personal awareness, respect for oneself, time management skills and **his** contribution to society. Keeping a work journal and individual student-teacher conferences (described below) are a few examples of how this is supported.

### **Reading Comprehension And Creative Writing**

Reading, vocabulary, and writing skills are developed with the materials using oral, self reading and written formats. Materials focusing on parts of speech and sentences are used while still effectively enhancing the fundamental skills in language. Modern and classical literature are integrated throughout the elementary program, including book studies for the older children where they specifically work on vocabulary and comprehension questions.

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### **Mathematics**

The mathematics foundation has been laid in the primary class. Montessori materials are now used to take the children to full abstraction in the four basic functions. Work with materials demonstrating fractions, decimal numbers, squaring, square root, cubing, cube root, bases other than 10, and pre-algebra give the child a formative and visual foundation for higher mathematics.

### **Geometric Concepts**

Materials used in geometry enable the children to learn a conceptual and practical foundation for advanced work. Analysis of basic geometric shapes leads to a sensorial-based understanding of theorems and their applications learned in later schooling. This includes the study of equivalence, area, and volume.

### **Biology**

The study of plants, animals, and humans is expounded on in elementary with imaginative stories to create pictures in the children's minds on how these organisms function. For example, the function of the leaf is presented as a food factory inside the leaf that breaks up the particles needed for food and is cooked by the sun to make it useful to the plant. As they mature and research further, they classify and learn the scientific names. The long term result is experiencing how life is interdependent.

### **Physical Fitness And Development**

The elementary children are building on the basic refined primary skills and taking them to another level. Physical fitness and development are closely related to academic achievement. It is encouraged through planned and spontaneous outdoor recreation. Elementary children often start up a game of kick ball, soccer, croquet, dodge ball, touch football, freeze tag, etc.

### **The Arts and Humanities**

Dr. Montessori believed that arts and humanities should be available daily. To that extent, the children are free to study and practice a variety of information and skills such as: composers, poets, authors, dance, music, story writing, etc. The students can choose to do a "performance" each Friday for the class and visiting parents. Also, the elementary class puts on plays, musicals and exhibits for the school. Visiting artists and special programs are offered so that creative energy may be encouraged by other professionals and learning can extend beyond the classroom.

### **Practical Life**

The practical life skills taught and developed in both toddler and primary are continued in elementary as well. Care of the environment is emphasized with daily chores at the end of the day where a child is responsible for a particular section of the classroom. Sewing skills are developed further to the level of working with a sewing machine or making moderate level craft projects. Cooking is also supported by preparing menus, examining recipes, shopping for ingredients and finally cooking an entire meal with minimal adult involvement.

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### **Student Conferences**

Student conferences are meetings held by the teacher with the student to check on the progress of their work. This is a tool to help encourage the freedom and responsibility that we are trying to instill in our children. This is a brief meeting to assess the work performance for each individual child, going over together the child's finished work, work in progress, and work journal (a log kept by the child of work done per day).

These meetings initially start off weekly with each student. However, as time goes on and students show their personal growth in their responsibility for their work, the meeting may be extended to every two weeks. By the time children reach the older levels, often times they show a level of responsibility for only needing to meet on a monthly basis. In the event that progress is minimal, then the teacher will make an agreement with the child for when certain pieces of work will be completed. If the pattern continues, then other commitments/consequences will have to be met by the student, including meeting more frequently.

By meeting this way, the child becomes personally involved in their educational process and the importance of personal responsibility is emphasized. This is a positive meeting to discuss progress, offer ideas for follow up work, and for the child to request lessons in which he is personally interested. If the child does not happen to be ready for that lesson, then an outline of what needs to be accomplished first is discussed. This time also allows for uninterrupted dialogue with the teacher for any personal concerns the teacher *or* child may want to discuss. If further time is needed, then that time is scheduled for a more detailed discussion.

### Section 3: School Procedures

#### **Orientation of New Students**

##### **First Days of School - Orientation**

In order to support your child's transition, we need to follow a few procedures. The orientation process is to take place before your child begins school full time, and can be shortened or lengthened to meet your child's needs.

Orientation gives the teacher an opportunity to impart the fundamental guidelines of the class while also giving an opportunity for bonding. VMS orientates students in a unique fashion with each program varying slightly in their orientation process. Orientation will be arranged on an individual basis with your child's teacher. **ORIENTATION IN AUGUST IS DIFFERENT FROM ORIENTATION MIDYEAR OF THE SCHOOL CALENDAR.**

##### **Toddler Program Orientation**

August Orientation: Each class orientates one toddler per week in order to give the maximum attention needed to each new student. This means your toddler could start the orientation process as late as September depending on the number of new toddlers enrolled each year. Midyear orientation will begin when the teacher and parent agree to a schedule. The first step in the orientation process is a home visit by the toddler teacher.

During the **week** of orientation, toddlers visit the classroom with their parent (or trusted adult) **for one hour** at the start of the morning class and then leave with that individual. The adult will remain seated in the same chair at each visit and occupy themselves with work (newspaper, knitting, etc.).

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This allows the toddler to come and go from them as they explore the classroom setting. No matter where that child is in the room, they can turn and see their loved one. This fosters the ability to trust the adults and the environment.

### **Primary Program Orientation**

August Orientation: The primary teachers will call you to set an appointment for you to bring your child for a brief visit at the end of July, with the parent staying at school until the visit is over. On the first day of school in August new primary children come to school from 8:00am - 11:00am and then go home. On the second and third day of school they are here from 8:00am - 3:30pm and then go home.

During the school year, new primary children visit the playground with their parent after 3:30 for playtime. During the first visit, we ask the parent to stay in the yard and visit with the staff. During the second visit, maybe run a short errand and then return, etc. In addition, the teacher will introduce your child to the classroom environment and offer a few lessons. If more "visiting" time seems needed, arrangements will be made before your child's first full day without parents.

**Elementary** students usually do not require the presence of their parents to transition into the program. However, there is a morning dedicated (before school starts with the full class) where the teacher and only the new students can bond, get some lessons and become acclimated to the classroom. This is not done for midyear moves because class is already in session. However, the child will visit at recess for a couple of weeks prior to her starting in the elementary class.

### **The First Good-Bye**

Once orientation is complete the first good-bye can be painful for both child and parent. Often this step is the child's first major separation from the secure and familiar world of home and family. It marks entrance into a new world of friendships, learning and adventure. Parting is easier for some than for others.

Over all our years we have discovered that in most cases lingering at the classroom door does not facilitate a painless departure but merely prolongs it and can make other children who have settled into class become nervous and uncomfortable. After arriving at school (and before class starts) if you or your child needs additional time together before you depart, please make yourself comfortable on one of the couches where you are free to snuggle or look at a book together.

Children easily read the tender hearts of reluctant parents. Your loving, confident, matter-of-fact approach will help your child take this big step positively. Once you have decided it is time to leave, walk your child to the classroom door, and if possible, allow them to enter the room on their own. If they are reluctant to do so, step in with them and catch a VMS staff eye, signaling them over to your child. Once the staff is with your child you should say good-bye and leave the room. You are always welcome to go into the observation room (please don't tell your child you will be doing so) to see how they are settling in. If your schedule doesn't permit that, please call so we can let you know how things are going.

### **Arrival Procedures**

Please drive cautiously on the road. The road is wide enough to accommodate traffic entering and exiting school grounds. Even though we have designated play areas away from traffic, children can often be found with their teacher/parent exploring areas beyond the play area fencing.

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### **Parking**

VMS has three designated types of parking. **Visitor/short-term parking** is located opposite the portico. **Long term parking** is located on the right after driving up the driveway. **Handicap parking** is located just past the grave site. Please do not use handicap parking unless you have a decal. We have no smoking on campus and ask that cigarette butts remain in the car. Inevitably, a cigarette butt will find its way into a child's mouth if one is found in the parking lot or school grounds.

\* **Please do not park in areas that aren't designated with the white lines.**

\* **Parking under the portico is prohibited unless you are unloading items.**

### **C.V.S. - child valet service**

Between 7:30 - 8:00 a.m. VMS offers a child valet service for primary through elementary to expedite your arrival to work and provide an opportunity for your child to build their independence and self-confidence.

When you arrive at the top of the drive follow the arrows to the portico. If there is a line, drive forward as far as possible so an additional car can be under the roof. A VMS staff member will greet you and assist your child if needed. All pertinent information for the day can be relayed **by a written note**. After 8:00 a.m. you will need to bring your child into the building. Toddler parents must walk their child into the building, unless directed otherwise by toddler staff.

### **Checking In**

Toddler parents check in their child. All other students can check in themselves or use the help of a student intern. To check in, go to the computer and enter the parent PIN, to be found on a list next to the computer. Walk to class.

### **Departure - Checking Out**

**All children and guardians must leave the building through the front door only.**

There are three steps to check your child out.

1. Before leaving your child's class/playground always sign out with a staff member on duty.
2. At the front desk, enter your PIN into the computer for the child leaving school.
3. Always check the message book located near the front desk on the podium.

Children are not allowed to leave school with anyone who is not on their Student Pick-up Authorization Form unless you inform us **in writing** that day. If plans change during the day, e-mail or fax the front office **prior** to your child's pick up. Make sure the person has identification when they pick up.

### **Before You Leave the Classroom**

If you have time, we encourage you to stay with your child outside or, if your child is willing, go into the classroom for a lesson. This gives both parent and child an opportunity to share the learning experience. It also provides openers for conversations about what your child did at school that day.

“Did you prepare a snack today or did you embroider? Did you work on the thousand chain, or do sentence analysis today?” You will need to pick up your child between 3:30pm and 5:15pm to take advantage of this opportunity.

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### **Late Arrival**

Although the entire day at VMS is a learning opportunity, the particular way in which we start each morning and the particular lesson with which we begin greatly affects the rest of the class. It is essential that your child arrive promptly. We realize delays are sometimes unavoidable; however, **Toddler and Primary students need to arrive in class by 8:30 a.m. Elementary students arrive in class by 8:00 a.m.** A written valid excuse from the parent will be needed to keep the tardy from being unexcused.

### **Attendance**

Regular student attendance at VMS is vital for your child to progress through the programs. Family vacations are educationally valuable in many ways and are not frowned upon by VMS. However, irregular attendance (illness or otherwise) creates difficulties for both student and teacher. VMS policy is: if your child is absent, a note from the parent / guardian is required to keep the child's absence from being unexcused. After six parent excused absences during the school year, a doctor's note will be needed for any absences for the remainder of the year.

### **Truancy**

State law requires the principal in charge of a private school to report to the superintendent of schools of the district in which the school is situated (Woodford County) any student who is truant. KRS 159.150 defines truant and habitual truant as:

- ◆ Any student who has attained the age of six (6) years, but has not reached his or her eighteenth birthday, who has been absent from school without valid excuse for three (3) or more days, or tardy without valid excuse on three (3) or more days, is a truant.
- ◆ Any student who has been reported as a truant two (2) or more times is an habitual truant.

### **Closings**

**Planned Closings** - Check the school calendar on the VMS web site for scheduled closings.

### **Snow Days**

If Woodford County Schools **close or are on a delay**, VMS will **automatically** be on a one hour delay, opening at 8:30 a.m. By 7:00 a.m., if not sooner, the school will decide if it is necessary to close. Things we take into consideration are: ability of staff who live out of town to make it to school, road conditions, or no electricity. Watch channel 18, 27, 36 or 56 or visit their web site. If VMS remains open, but you don't feel safe traveling the roads, please call and let us know that you will be staying home.

### **Emergency Early Dismissal**

Should we have the need to dismiss students from school early we will contact you by phone or e-mail.

### **Natural Disaster Procedures**

We have special, practiced procedures for events such as tornadoes and fires. School evacuation plans are posted in each classroom and will be followed in the event of a fire or other need to quickly evacuate the building. Monthly fire drills and quarterly disaster drills are conducted to familiarize the staff and children with the procedures relating to emergencies or natural disasters. If Woodford County is under a Tornado Warning, all students will remain in the school's 2,400 sq. ft. basement until the warning is over.

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### **Healthy Food at VMS - Lunch Policy**

Adults and children alike need to eat nutritious food. However, children need to have something nutritious four to six times per day. A variety of good food aids in maintaining energy, strength, skin, muscle tone and overall good health. It also plays an important role in your child's school day and their ability to pay attention to the teacher, behave appropriately and to be able to focus and do their school work.

We are not equipped to prepare regular group meals, however microwaves are available for warming up food. We provide table settings, dishes, glasses, and serving utensils and you provide the food. We encourage healthy food and may give you our suggestions on nutrition. Snacks are purchased by the school.

For the toddler and primary programs, the Kentucky Cabinet for Health and Family Services (CHFS) requires VMS to *offer* a meal. If you desire, at a cost of \$50 per week, we will provide a meal. We recommend you pack a lunch from home. CHFS also requires that lunches from home include: protein, 2 vegetables or 2 fruits or 1 vegetable and 1 fruit, whole-grain or enriched bread and milk. VMS provides milk. CHFS requires VMS to have a plan on ensuring parents send a healthy lunch. To that end, if VMS needs to regularly supplement your child's lunch so that it meets the regulations, we will charge \$10 per day. We have not needed to do this yet.

VMS has a school wide policy of no more than 9 grams of processed sugar, per item, with lunch (excluding yogurt). Anything with more than 9 grams of processed sugar may be eaten for snack after 3:00pm. Please understand we do not want to be the food police but it is well documented that processed sugar is bad for the brain.

It is not always easy to think of healthy lunch items and snacks. Below is a list of suggested healthy foods from the various food groups. Foods sent to school should be high in nutritional content in regard to complex carbohydrates, vitamins and minerals. A general rule of thumb when sending lunch to school would be, not to send anything that you wouldn't give your child 10 minutes before going to bed at night. As far as our toddler and preschool students, that is exactly what they are doing. Eating lunch before taking a nap.

Packing lunch is a daily challenge. Planning with your child and preparing the night before can ease morning stress and the temptation to include less nutritious items. Please be sure to notify, **in writing**, the teacher in your child's class of any food allergies or restrictions. Place a cold pack in your child's lunch if something needs to be kept cold. Candy, gum and soda pop are not allowed.

### **Cereals**

This is just a sample of breakfast cereals with 9 grams of sugar or less. Crisp X, Puffed Wheat, Puffed Rice, Rice Krispies, Shredded Wheat, Corn flakes, Cheerios, Cheerios with berries, Special K, Kix, Life, Cinnamon Life, King Vitamin, Wheat Chex, Rice Chex, Corn Chex, Multi-grain Cheerios, Wheaties, Oatmeal, Cream of Wheat, etc.

### **Bread, Rice & Pasta Group**

Bagels, breads: fruit, nut, zucchini, carrot, pumpkin. Crackers: wheat, graham, saltine, vegetable, peanut butter, cheese, etc., Nature Valley Granola bars, granola mix, home baked muffins, pita pockets, popcorn, pretzels, pretzel rods, rice cakes, tortilla chips with salsa or bean dip, *Unsweetened* cereal mixed with raisins, pretzels, dried fruit.



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### **Vegetable Group**

Raw vegetables, served plain or with dip, “Ants on a Log” celery, filled with peanut butter and dotted with raisins, Power Boats: celery sticks or cucumber boats filled with cottage cheese or cheese spread, Stuffed celery: celery filled with creamed cheese and topped with green olive slices

### **Fruit Group**

Apples, natural applesauce, bananas, blueberries, cantaloupe, grapes - seedless, kiwi, oranges, nectarines - pitted, peaches, pears, plums, pineapple, strawberries, tangelos, tangerines, watermelon.

### **Milk, Yogurt and Cheese Group**

Cheese cubes, slices or sticks, cheese spreads, cottage cheese, cream cheese or yogurt.

VMS provides healthy snacks for the students while at school, except for elementary morning snack that is provided by the parents in their lunch box. Snack Provided by VMS are: fruits, various crackers, vegetables and dip, popcorn, cheese, chips with salsa, Nutrigrain bars, pretzels, peanut butter, Cheerios, yogurt.

### **Lost and Found**

A lost and found compartment is located in each room for toddler and primary and in the media center for elementary. Please check it regularly.

### **Clothing**

Remember the maxim, "There is no wrong weather, just wrong clothing." We try to go outside every day, in all kinds of weather but will remain inside if there is thunder/lightning, or if temperatures are below 25 degrees (with wind chill calculated in) or above 95 degrees (with heat index calculated in).

Please make sure your child has the appropriate clothing and that all clothing is LABELED with your child's initials. As a rule of thumb, it is important for kids to feel at ease with what they are wearing. It is equally important for young children to manage their own clothing as much as possible because children take pride in being able to dress without help. Clothes that are simple and functional allow the child to move and "work" freely. Natural fibers clean more easily and "breathe" better. Two pieces are usually easier than one.

In general, when choosing clothes with your toddler or primary child, look for front openings and simple fastenings. Sweat pants, or shorts with elastic bands instead of zippers or buttons are wonderful for children potty training or newly trained. Often they have just seconds to get out of their pants before the flood waters come pouring down!

Overboots for outdoors, a size larger than the shoes, are easier for children to take off and put on by themselves. \* All VMS STUDENTS MUST SUPPLY A PAIR OF “MUD BOOTS/WATER SHOES” (depending on the season) THAT ARE TO REMAIN AT SCHOOL.

Children's **clothes are bound to get dirty** or wet while at school! Activities that include gardening, washing dishes, cleaning stalls, digging or just playing in the yard will show by the end of the day. Please bring your children in clothes you do not mind them getting dirty in. For the **Toddler and Primary programs** we ask that you keep several changes of clothes and underwear, including socks and shoes if you can manage it, in your child's cubby. As the seasons change, so should the changes of clothes.

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Clothing that is detrimental to the learning process for a variety of reasons are: spaghetti strap shirts/dresses, pants/shorts with words across the bottom, clothes that expose the midriff region of the body. **Don't send your child to school with these types of clothes.**

Children mastering and perfecting the way they move and walk can succeed best in simple, flexible, nonskid shoes. **Don't send your child with cowboy boots, jellies, high heels, flip flops, shoes with wheels, etc.** Please **mark in permanent ink** all clothes, boots, mittens, blankets, sheets, Tupperware, lunch boxes, etc. - basically everything with your child's initials!

### **Birthday and Holiday Celebrations**

How each class celebrates a child's birthday and the holidays is left up to the discretion of that teacher. Contact your child's teacher before bringing a **healthy snack** for these occasions. Also, inform the teacher if there is some personal and/or religious reason for your child not to participate with a birthday or holiday celebration. Birthday party invitations are best delivered by mail or in the message book so feelings don't get hurt.

### **Food and Toy Drives**

We feel it is important for our students to understand that there are families within our community who go without during the holidays. Therefore, the entire school participates in a **food and toy drive** during the holidays. Having your children pick out nonperishable food items, and even help pay for some of it themselves, is a great way to include them in this important life lesson. The primary and elementary students are encouraged to look through their belongings for gently used toys and books, or earn some money to buy a new toy or book. All unwrapped items are brought to school for the Woodford County Sheriff to pick up and distribute.

### **Field Trips and Excursions - Elementary**

Transportation for field trips will be provided by the Woodford County School System. VMS will adhere to their embarking, disembarking and safety procedures. There will always be VMS staff aboard the school bus. On the **rare** occasion that parents drive, we must have on file the following: a background check, a current negative TB test, a valid driver's license and proof of insurance.

From time to time, all classes will have walking trips on and around the school's campus. The state considers these to be field trips and require authorization from parents. Be sure to initial the Walking/Field Trip Authorization located on the Student Pick-up Authorization Form.

### **Toys & Treasures**

Each classroom environment is filled with beautiful equipment available to all. We ask that no toys, stickers, jewelry, candy or other like items be brought to school as they might distract unsettled children from activities that would be helpful to their development. A great gift for a child is an analog watch for when they have mastered telling time.

If they choose, Primary and Elementary children are welcome to bring projects or natural objects (flowers, leaves, stones, animals, etc.) or items from other cultures or times. In general, if it can be of some educational interest your child may bring it to school. Valuable items are not recommended. All items have the potential of being inadvertently destroyed.

Occasionally a school object might "fall" into a child's pocket and be brought home. Please assist the child if needed with returning the object to school. This **does not** need to become an issue about stealing.

## Section 4: Student Health

### **Medicine & Health Issues - keeping children developmentally healthy**

Our goal is to contribute to children's healthful and joyful development. Basic to this is physical health. Each parent wants their child and family protected from contagious illnesses. As parents and teachers, we know that some children may arrive at school apparently well then become ill during the day. We will notify you immediately of your child's symptoms. Because many childhood illnesses are contagious, ill children must be picked up as soon as possible. Please carefully look over our **Health Policy in the Appendix** so you will know exactly which illnesses or conditions require your child to stay at home. We consider you family, so please call if your child is sick. This helps us keep track of the latest illnesses going around. We try to post illnesses on the front board to let the other families know what to look for.

### **Medical Emergencies**

Staff members are trained and equipped to respond with First Aid and CPR. If a doctor or paramedic is required, parents will be notified immediately. Upon arrival at the emergency room, we will continue to try and reach you or one of the people listed on your Medical Release Authorization. In any emergency, a staff member will remain with your child, accompanying them in the ambulance to the hospital until a parent/guardian has arrived.

### **Medications**

VMS recognizes that some children will need to continue taking medication (an antibiotic for example) after they have returned to school and are no longer contagious. **We will provide medicine at noon each day.** CHFS and our insurance company have regulations we must follow, **one being we are not allowed to dispense any medicine that is not signed in by a guardian.**

If you need VMS to provide your child with any prescribed medicine, a doctor's note must accompany it. For **prescribed medicine**, the original container will suffice. For **over the counter medicine**, a doctor's note is not needed.

For all medicine, a VMS Medicine Authorization Form must be filled out. A supply of medicine forms are available at the front desk. This allows you to fill them out at home and send them to school with your child's medicine.

The procedures required by state regulations are:

1. All medications must be in the original container, with the child's name on it. *Keep a portion of your child's medicine at home in case it is forgotten at school. The staff is not available to reopen the school if medicine is left at night.*
2. An authorization form must give exact time, exact amount, name of medication, date to be given, and signed by the guardian before it can be administered.
3. All medicine must be handed directly to a staff member by the child's guardian or parent. **No medicine may be brought to school by the child or put in a backpack or lunch. Per CHFS this includes cough drops, vitamins, lip balm.**
4. You must sign in sunscreen & insect repellent one time per school year.

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### **Parenting Issues and Special Needs**

If a child's teacher and the administration jointly agree that a particular child is having difficulties cooperating with parents, staff or students, or other special needs, a conference with parents will be made to discuss the concern and to determine if a referral to a professional for further evaluation is needed. The goal of a referral is to provide additional strategies to the staff and parents so they can work jointly in helping the child be successful at home and in school. At that conference, VMS will provide contact information for outside professionals that VMS feels are competent. However, you are not required to use individuals from that list. All fees for tests, tutors and specialists are the responsibility of the student's parents.

### **Referrals**

The school keeps a list of various agencies available in the Lexington area and will share our knowledge of these services with you whenever you wish. If you are seeking special services for your child, we would like to conference with you throughout the process. A release of information from the specialist, to the school will be required.

### **Privacy**

Student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. 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 or guardian, with notation of pertinent papers to be sent.

## Section 5: Parents and the School

### **Open Door Policy**

Once your child is enrolled at VMS you never have to call or make an appointment to observe them. We understand it takes time to earn your trust and it is of most importance that you are comfortable that everything is above board. The observation rooms/windows can accommodate 2 people comfortably. Observers in the elementary classroom will be limited to one person so as not to overwhelm the class with too many adult visitors. In order to have a picture of how your child's work relates to what has gone before or what lies ahead, you may enjoy observing another age group.

### **Lunch With Your Child**

After the first month of school, you are invited to share lunch with your primary or elementary child at any time. Because we have a limited number of "extra" place settings, please call the school for a "lunch reservation" at Chez' Montessori. Eating lunch in the toddler program is difficult to accommodate due to the nature of that child. Please consult with the toddler teachers for more on that topic.

### **Volunteering**

There are some things that even money can't buy, and one of the most valuable contributions that families make to Versailles Montessori School is the gift of their time and expertise. Parents, grandparents, and friends of the school are often found helping out in the office, serving as field trip drivers, planning the next special event, mentoring, or serving on school committees. Parents and grandparents who give of their time and talent share with their families special memories of experiences and friendships that endure well beyond their children's graduation. Per the Student Enrollment Contract, each family is required to donate a minimum of ten hours in service to VMS per school year.

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### **Committees**

There are a few committees that parents can serve on to keep the school operating smoothly and to fulfill the volunteer requirement.

- Fundraising Committee - Plans and implements all fundraising activities.
- Worker Bee Committee - For parents who can't commit to serve on one of the committees listed above, you will be called as activities and projects become available.

### **Religion**

Montessori has been used in schools of all the world's major religions, but the Montessori program itself does not have a specific religious persuasion, nor does VMS. The program does, however, assume a universal intelligence, or God. It views creation as a continuum of which we are a responsible part. Religions of the world are alluded to in multicultural studies. Parents are invited to contribute to the celebration of their religious holidays in their child's class.

### **Montessori Education**

Evening meetings are set aside for a Teacher-Parent study group. **These sessions are required for new parents** to provide you with knowledge about the inner workings of Montessori. It also offers you an opportunity to meet one another, share ideas about rearing children, and become better acquainted with the staff. Returning VMS parents are encouraged to attend and share their knowledge and experiences with the new families. We feel these sessions are so beneficial to you and your child that we suggest at least one parent participate.

### **Communication Between Home and School**

When asked, our parents have always said that **there is no such thing as too much communication!** Montessori students are working with hands on, concrete manipulative materials. Most of their work is done in the classroom, hence parents do not tend to see too many dittos. We always encourage parent/child lessons with the materials after class.

### **Message Boards**

There is a message board outside the front door of the school that will list important, current reminders for the parents. There is an illness board just inside the front door so you can see what germs we are sharing in our "VMS petri dish of life". Please help your young child refrain from wiping the information off the board as they walk by.

### **Newsletter**

Our almost monthly newsletter will include calendar updates, events planned, news, articles on Montessori and classroom activities. They will be emailed.

### **Daily News**

Please check your child's message book located in the media center. You may find a school newsletter with current information on parent events, reminders or forms that need a prompt response.

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### **Conferences**

Parent/teacher conferences take place in the fall and spring to collaborate on your child's unique development. It is during this time that we deepen our collaboration on behalf of your child, looking at his or her development from our respective places. **It is essential both parents attend** conferences, so all adults in the child's life are informed and working in consistent partnership. Each conference is approximately a ½ hour. You or the teacher may ask for a conference at any other time during the year as may be needed. We would like you to observe your child's class before conference time.

### **Changes**

We want to be in close touch with you. The importance of parent-teacher communication cannot be over estimated and we promise to respect confidentiality. We encourage a two-way discourse at all times. It is especially important that sharing take place in the case of unusual circumstances that might affect your child. Often we can help with a little added attention, understanding, and loving care. It is very difficult for teachers to chat during class hours, so communication is more productive if you leave a note or call the office for a time to confer. Also, it can be confusing and sometimes humiliating for children to be talked about, positively or negatively, in their presence. We like to set aside a private time and place for conferring or a convenient time for a telephone call.

## Section 6: Academic Policies

### **Program Promotions**

Before a child moves from one class to another, parents and staff will meet to discuss the child's needs. The expectations of both teacher and parents will be openly discussed as well as how the classroom functions. The student orientation process into the new classroom will also be explained.

The Montessori curriculum covers emotional, physical, social and academic development. We are taught to look beyond the ABC's and 1,2,3's when determining a child's readiness to move from one level to the next. Academics certainly play a part, but it isn't the last and only component considered by Montessorians. The physical, emotional, and social development are held equally important in the well being of the child.

Also, we are looking past the years your child is at VMS. We are thinking about the years of middle school, high school and college, when dealing with social pressures can have dire consequences on both academic performance and emotional well being.

Children, as a whole, manifest certain characteristics at generally expected intervals. While each child develops these characteristics on their own personal time frame, there is an overall composite progression of these traits around three and six years of age. Those developmental markers are what dictate which prepared environment is best suited for that group of children. A child that is not ready for the new environment, but moved along anyway, is equivalent to throwing a baby bird out of the nest before it can fly. Both bird and child will struggle to be successful. VMS staff are trained and experienced in recognizing these characteristics in order to better fulfill the needs of the child and prepare them for the future stages of growth and development.

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Why would a child need to stay in a program longer if they are academically ready to move on? Usually it is because the child isn't emotionally or socially mature enough to function in the next program and maturity isn't something that can be taught. Montessorians trust the plan laid during conception that determines when a child is developmentally ready to walk or begin to talk, and we have the same trust that a child will mature in their own time. To assist the young child with gaining maturity, offering life experiences in an environment the child is developmentally comfortable in is the recipe for success.

By design, Montessori is a flexible teaching system with the teacher training programs overlapping each other with their educational content. As a result, any child that stays longer in a program will continue to progress with her academic development.

### **Homework**

From a Montessori standpoint there isn't any homework. A Montessori class schedule is required to have large blocks of work time in the morning and afternoon, especially at the primary and elementary levels. This scheduled, large block of time, along with more personalized teaching, allows the children to repeat as much as needed/desired to absorb the key concept being taught during school hours. Also, much of the curricula is taught with hands on materials that must stay at school.

On occasion, there may be times that elementary children have homework as a consequence to not working during the work period in class. This homework may be done during the after school program as a consequence for playing during work time as well. A discussion with parents to explain the circumstances and expectations would be handled by the teacher or administrator.

Starting in the second half of the sixth year, small amounts of homework will be assigned in order to give the students experience with time-management outside of the classroom. This is direct preparation for the skills they will need to accomplish homework in middle school.

Other types of homework beneficial for the child to pursue include his own interests or that of the family's morals and values. This work should be purposeful, support the goals of the family, encourage independence, responsibility, positive study habits and self-discipline. Your child's teacher might suggest activities that relate or could more fully support what is being done in the classroom if they feel it is needed for your child.

Below is a brief list of life activities that could be "homework" for the child to encourage his thinking ability and family bonding. Parents can be as involved as they like or are needed.

- letter writing (thank you notes, invitations, etc.)
- writing stories
- regular library trips
- reading aloud to your child
- occasionally having your child read aloud to you
- scanning the newspaper for headlines and discussing news topics with your child
- drawing objects in the home environment/neighborhood
- experimenting with clay, string, etc.
- allowing your child to help plan the dinner menu

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- allowing your child to help prepare dinner or if older, prepare the dinner independently
- have your child help write out the grocery list
- practicing math facts with games
- take a walk with your child
- age appropriate household chores
- play a board game
- invent new rules
- repair something
- compose songs
- make a model
- care for plants and pets

### **Standardized Testing**

VMS administers the TerraNova to all students in 3rd - 6th grade. For VMS, testing is another tool we use to help the teachers monitor the effectiveness of their lessons. The scores from the test are reviewed along with the questions that were missed so we might discover gaps within the curriculum. Sometimes the results foster minor changes on the teacher's behalf and other times they do not. Additionally, VMS teaching staff will work on an individual plan for our students so we can support their progress in the areas they are weak. Standardized testing is one of many tools used to evaluate student progress at VMS.

### **Section 7: Ground Rules**

#### **Liberty and Limits**

Very young children test the environment to learn how the grown-up world works, and to learn to make responsible choices. To help them do this, we allow the children liberty and support in learning to make choices giving them clear, consistent limits. Montessori is based on peace. VMS does not believe in corporal punishment. We use logical and natural consequences. Our goal for the child is to develop self-discipline. We seek to lead the child to cooperative behavior and membership in a productive, loving, caring classroom community. We all help each other grow.

Methods of behavior modification used in the classroom include:

1. Modeling of desired behavior by adults. 2. Problem solving skills that teach children "to use their words, not their hands." 3. Careful classroom structure and ground rules. 4. Clear and consistent communications of behavioral expectations by all teachers. 5. Giving the child opportunities to make "good choices" regarding their behavior (Positive Discipline & 1-2-3 Magic). 6. Time to rethink one's actions. 7. Regular opportunities to "role play" social situations and conflict resolution throughout the entire school day.

For the occasional primary student who is repeatedly aggressive with their peers we implement the S.I.R. method (separate, isolate, relocate). The aggressive child is separated from his peers and parents are called to pick up. Once the child is relocated at home, he should be isolated in his room that has been stripped of most play value until dinner time. After dinner, the child is sent immediately to bed, but no sooner than 7:00pm. S.I.R. is recommended by John Rosemond, renowned child psychologist and has proven to be successful in eliminating aggressive behavior.



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### **Code of Conduct for Student Behavior**

As a school founded on the Montessori ideals, we assume that every person deserves respect. VMS expects students to demonstrate kindness, courtesy, and respect toward the school and fellow students, parents, teachers, and staff. The goal of all Montessori education is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments within which we teach students positive and appropriate ways to handle situations, rather than to assume that misbehavior and punishment are inevitable; to develop a strong sense of self-discipline, responsibility and courtesy; to develop an atmosphere conducive to peaceful studies.

When anyone at VMS finds it difficult to follow the school's expectations about interpersonal conduct, we will quickly bring the student, family, and staff together to work toward a solution. We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, are allowed at VMS.

If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of their actions. For example, if something is broken, it must be replaced or repaired, preferably not by the parents alone, but by the student whose actions led to the damage. Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or who on even one occasion endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Principal.

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 different levels. Please review these rules with your child as they become age appropriate:

- Be kind and gentle to one another. We expect everyone at VMS to treat everyone else in the school community - staff, students, and parents with kindness and respect both in words and actions.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Never disturb anyone who is trying to concentrate on their work.
- Everyone has a right to their 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.
- Everyone here has the right to feel safe and secure. Please express yourself without anger or upset feelings and in a way that doesn't insult or threaten someone else.
- At VMS, no one is allowed to roughhouse, fight, push, trip, tackle or use any other aggressive behavior.
- Use the playground equipment as intended. For example, you go up the ladder and down the slide. Stay off the railings and roof of the tree house.
- Let everyone who wants to play join in your games.
- Stop chasing or playing scary games when asked.
- Keep the mulch on the ground.
- You must have your teacher's permission to leave their supervision.
- You must have an adult with you when you are in the parking lot.
- Play games in the designated play areas.

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- Please put all balls, ropes, and other outdoor equipment away when you are finished playing with them.
- Children must be carefully monitored by their parents/ guardians when playing on the school grounds after school. They must follow all of the rules above.

### **Elementary Students**

**In House Detention:** Under certain circumstances, students may be required to spend their lunch, recess, or field trip opportunities in house detention. Often this involves completing unfinished assignments, assisting in one of the classrooms or with maintenance around the grounds.

### **Suspensions and Expulsions**

Versailles Montessori School does not discriminate with regard to its student enrollment or employment procedures, and although VMS accepts students and staff without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin, VMS may in the exercise of its sole and inferred discretion, deny enrollment or suspend a child's enrollment if it is determined that the child or the child's parent(s) are not abiding by the rules and/or policies of VMS or if the child's enrollment or continued enrollment would be detrimental to the interest of VMS, its staff, or students. Each case is handled individually and the cooperation and participation of parents and school is mandatory in order for continued enrollment in VMS. Your financial responsibilities to VMS continue during a suspension period.

**Violence and Harassment:** VMS cannot tolerate any irresponsible and dangerous behavior, acts of violence, threats of violence, emotional or sexual harassment, or verbal abuse directed toward anyone.

### **Resolving Problems Between Adults**

1. Any person with a concern relating to school matters is encouraged to discuss the problem with the individual perceived as responsible, be it another parent or VMS staff member, as soon as possible. The school's administration is counting on the parents to come to the staff with any concerns. VMS administration is always available to help mediate if necessary.
2. If it is perceived that the situation continues to be unacceptable, a written complaint should be submitted to all parties involved, including VMS administration
3. The administration will then take all documentation to the Board of Directors and a final decision will be made on the matter.

If you have any questions, concerns or suggestions about your child's classroom progress, whether it is about the relationship to the environment, the teacher, or other children, please talk to the teacher directly and promptly. Assistants are instructed to send questions about the above topics to the head teacher because they are not Montessori trained.

Questions relating to the operations of Versailles Montessori School should be directed to the school administration. Remember, VMS staff and administration are always available to conference with anyone involved with the school.

## Section 8: Financial Policies

### **Tuition Policies**

Versailles Montessori is a non-profit organization completely dependent on tuition as its principal source of income. 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.

**Fees** - Current Fee Schedule is located on our web site. *When you enroll your child in VMS you are agreeing to pay the full tuition for that session regardless of your child's attendance. Withdrawing or temporary suspension from the program does not relinquish your responsibilities for full payment. If VMS fills your child's spot, further payments toward your child's tuition will not be required.*

### **Financial Aid**

Financial aid is limited and based on both the school's funds and the family's need. We use SMART-Aid to help the school determine who receives financial aid. There is a \$35 fee to submit an application for tuition assistance. Contact the school for additional information.

### **Re-enrollment**

Invitations to continue at Versailles Montessori are normally automatic, but are not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the administration and faculty, based on an annual review of each student's academic progress, social and emotional development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. Our goal is to help each family find the best match between the student, home, and school. To protect the integrity and quality of the entire program for those children who stay to complete it, siblings of children who prematurely leave VMS will not receive sibling preference as experience shows that these siblings are also likely to leave prematurely. Also, it is important to note that sibling preference does not guarantee admission, as many factors go into the decision process.

Reenrollment material will be available in January and is due back by January 31. If the school has not received the student reenrollment materials, the space will be made available to new students applying for admission. **No student may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on her account.**

### **Fundraising**

Versailles Montessori School is an IRS approved 501-C3, non-profit, tax-exempt charitable organization. Voluntary contributions to VMS, where no goods or services are received in turn, are tax deductible as defined in the IRS guidelines.

VMS relies on contributions from families and friends of the school who want to invest in the school's development. Each winter we encourage families to donate to our Staff Bonus Fund that is distributed to them just before the winter break. Each spring the school sponsors a wonderful gala (dinner, dance, and auction). Throughout the year there are small fundraising opportunities in which to participate.

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Additionally, we encourage each family to participate with the Kroger Community Rewards Program. Eligible purchases earn VMS a donation from Kroger. Please speak with the Fundraising director for details on enrolling. Remember, the purchases you make at Kroger is money you would be spending one way or another.

Fundraising money could be used to bring in specialist for the students, to replace equipment, to train staff or in general to help the school achieve its goals listed at the beginning of this handbook.

### **The Spirit of Philanthropy - Why Give to Versailles Montessori**

People, like us, contribute hundreds, or even thousands of dollars to worthwhile charitable organizations like VMS, for reasons that are as much selfish as altruistic. Why do we do it? Some of us give to VMS because we are part of this community and feel strongly connected to it. We also give to fulfill a very personal need to see ourselves as patrons of something that we feel is truly worthwhile. We believe in Dr. Montessori's vision of global community and her campaign for world peace and human dignity.

At VMS we believe in people, especially the promise inherent within children, and we have a great respect for what great schools can contribute to their lives. We want to give our children, and the children who follow them in the years to come, an extraordinary opportunity that wasn't available to most of us when we were young. We want to make a contribution back to life. By lending our support, we hope to improve the quality of life, and help develop solutions for some of our most deeply nagging social concerns with children. Every time we make a contribution to VMS, we are making an investment in our children's future and in the larger Versailles community.

## Appendix

### VMS Health Policy

According to the National Health and Safety Performance Standards: "A child that is not feeling well cannot work at a rewarding level and may also expose other children to a communicable disease. The parent, legal guardian, or other person authorized by the parent shall be notified immediately when a child has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the school, as described below ..."

- a) The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in school activities;
- b) The illness results in a greater care need than the school staff can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children; or
- c) The child has any of the following conditions:

*(Italicized print is the illness, bold is when your child may return to school.)*

- 1) *Temperature: 101 degrees or higher* accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness - **24 hours after temperature returns to normal. \*Please note that a child cannot be dosed with Tylenol/Motrin and sent to school with a fever. They will be sent back home. A fever is an indication of communicable illness.**
- 2) *Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness* (such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing, or other unusual signs) - **until medical evaluation indicates returning to school is okay.**
- 3) *Diarrhea*, (one or more episodes of diarrhea in the previous 24 hours) that is, increased number of stools, increased stool water, and/or decreased form that is not contained by the diaper. One bout requires exclusion. No matter the cause from teething to roto virus because we have no way of knowing - **until diarrhea stops, after the stools are formed.**
- 4) *Vomiting illness* (one or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) -**until vomiting resolves and the child is not in danger of dehydration.**
- 5) *Mouth sores with drooling* -**until a health care provider or health official determines the condition is non infectious.**
- 6) *Rash with fever or behavior change* -**until a health care provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.**
- 7) *Conjunctivitis* (pink eye) defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow eye discharge, eye can be swollen and/or teary – **Bacterial: Symptom-free, 24 hours after first dose of antibiotic. Viral: Once drainage symptoms are gone.**
- 8) *Scabies, head lice, or other infestation* - **After treatment and removal of lice. Upon return to school, must be checked by trained office staff before being cleared to stay at school.**
- 9) *Tuberculosis* - Symptoms: cough, fever, fatigue, weight loss, cough producing bloody sputum, night sweats - **until health care provider or health official states that the child can attend school.**
- 10) *Impetigo* - Symptom: Itchy, red sores, with yellow or gray crusts on face, legs or arms -**until 48 hours after treatment has been initiated and no oozing fluids from wounds.**
- 11) Strep throat or other streptococcal infection - **until 24 hours after initial antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever.**
- 12) *Chicken Pox* - **until all sores have dried and are completely crusted.**

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- 13) *Pertussis, Whooping cough*, Symptoms: Sneezing, nasal congestion and tearing; loss of appetite, malaise, hacking cough, often followed by explosive coughs that end in a high pitched whoop, difficulty breathing, blue lips - **until 5-7 days of effective treatment and physician advises.**
- 14) *Mumps* Symptoms: swollen, painful salivary glands, fever, weakness and fatigue, possible inflammation of pancreas, testes, ovaries or brain - **until health care provider state the child can attend school ~9 days.**
- 15) *Hepatitis A virus*, Symptoms: persistent or recurring jaundice, fatigue, lack of appetite, nausea and vomiting, low-grade fever - **until 1 week after onset of illness or as directed by the health department when passive immunoprophylaxis (currently, immune serum globulin) has been administered to appropriate children and staff.**
- 16) *Measles*, Symptoms: fever, cough, sneezing, swollen eyelids, sore throat, tiny white spots on the lining of the cheek, rash - **until 6 days after onset of rash.**
- 17) *Rubella*, Symptoms: mild fever, rash - **until 6 days after onset of rash.**
- 18) *Signs of a severe allergic reaction* - **until medical evaluation complete.**
- 19) *Asthmatic attack* - **until medical attention is received.**
- 20) *Suspected bone fracture* - **until medical attention is received.**
- 21) *Burns whether chemical or major scalds*- **until medical attention is received.**
- 22) *Persistent ear pain or eye pain* - **until health care provider determines condition is not infectious.**
- 23) *Persistent headache and child looks pale and ill* - **until medical attention received.**
- 24) *Fainting spell* - **until medical attention is received.**
- 25) *Persistent nosebleed* - **until medical attention received.**
- 26) *Any seizure* - **until medical attention received.**
- 27) *Hard tense abdomen with accompanying pain* - **until medical attention received.**
- 28) *Suspected frostbite or heat stroke* - **until medical attention received.**
- 29) *Unspecified respiratory illness* - A child without fever who has symptoms of mild or moderate cases of the common cold, sore throat, croup, shall **not** be denied admission or be sent home from school unless it precludes comfortable participation in school activities, or need for greater care by the staff that could compromise the health and safety of other children in school.

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The school has available for review, a management plan regarding asbestos containing building material, ACBM. Tony Guagliardo is designated as the individual responsible for ensuring the plan is followed. We have on file, a letter from the project engineer, stating no ACBM was used when constructing the building.

### **Pesticide Management Plan**

#### INTEGRATED PEST MANAGEMENT INITIAL NOTIFICATION FORM

Revised - 8/2014

Dear Parent or Employee -

VMS' campus is located in the country and therefore pest control is a necessary part of maintaining a clean and healthy environment for our students and staff. Cockroaches, mold, and mouse droppings, are key triggers for asthma attacks. We diligently work at reducing our student's exposure to these triggers as much as possible.

Please note that if spraying for insects becomes necessary, the school is treated over weekends or breaks, leaving a minimum of 24 hours drying time before students return to the building. Mice are controlled with traps, as opposed to poison baits.

VMS has initiated an Integrated Pest Management Program (IPMP) in order to control pest in a way that minimizes economic, health and environmental risks via a monitoring and inspection program and the judicious use of pesticides. Those individuals applying pesticides will be properly certified in keeping with applicable legal requirements for the IPMP.

If you want to be notified 24 hours in advance of a planned pesticide application, other than when mouse traps are used, or as soon as possible when an emergency pesticide application is necessary, please register at the front office of the school.

If you are confident that VMS representatives will follow all applicable legal requirements you do not need to sign up for advance notification.

This special notice/form letter was mandated by the Department of Agriculture.

Sincerely,

Tony Guagliardo - VMS Administrator

## The Process of Creating a Self-Disciplined Child

### **What you can say to your child that will teach them to follow the rules ... and other helpful phrases.**

One of the goals for VMS students to reach is SELF-DISCIPLINE. We want our students to behave and follow the rules whether adults are present or not. This takes years to achieve. In order for the students to be successful they need many opportunities to make real, authentic choices and receive feedback about them. Those 'choice' opportunities need to be present daily and need to be about everyday options like: what to eat, who to play with, how to play with them, etc. For the students to make good choices they need consistent rules and consistent enforcement of those rules.

CONSISTENCY is the name of the game when it comes to rearing children. The rules are the rules no matter the person, place or time. For example: Rule - "When I say your name you need to stop what you are doing and look at me." or, "You must clean up your toys before going outside, no matter who you are with, no matter where you are. *Each and every time.*"

RULES will get tested by your child. Either by forgetting, refusing, crying, throwing tantrums, or whining that they 'caaaaan't dooooo iiiiiiiit.' You will need to have your game plan in place before testing begins.

Be sure to be very matter of fact - not angry or frustrated. A child that learns they can "push that button" and make you mad, frustrated or even sad has gained a powerful tool. Know that if you do not pass the test - your child will keep 'pushing' to see if you really mean what you say and if you truly **are** the person in charge.

Children want to feel safe and need to trust that as the grown up - you won't let things get out of control. They need to know the 'boundaries/rules' and to know they will be enforced consistently. That knowledge makes them feel safe to be the child. When a child trusts and respects you first, then a child will 'like' you. If the adult is worried about being liked more than getting cooperation from the child, the relationship is doomed from the start. Remember this, after you have disciplined your child, if they tell you they HATE YOU, then you've probably done your job well, meaning your punishment fit the crime, so to speak. In the heat of the moment 'I hate you' means I'm really, really mad at you. Your response can be, "That's okay. I love you enough for the both of us right now."

### **The most important concept a child needs to understand: when my name is called I stop and listen.**

If a parent, grandparent or child care provider has to repeat a child's name over and over (or even worse, chase a child about the room) before the child stops what they are doing, then it will be difficult to teach self-discipline. That issue will need to be resolved first. Always rule out any physical condition that is impeding listening such as ear infections, fluid on the ear or hearing loss deterioration. These tests are simple and relatively inexpensive to conduct by your pediatrician or a physician who specializes in ear, nose and throat conditions.

Once all medical conditions are ruled out teaching your child to listen can begin. Start by playing the 'Direction Game'. The first rule of the game is when your name is called you stop what you are doing and look at the person who called your name. If the person wiggles their finger toward themselves, that is the signal for 'come here please'.



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To begin the game have your child do something (play with a toy, color, set the table, etc), speak their name and praise them when they stop and turn to look at you. Next give them a one step direction to follow. Repeat this several times with a new direction each time. Play the game when you are out and about. As your child shows they are listening, add multiple directions which will help them to develop concentration, attention to detail and sequencing - skills needed in school. Play the game often and soon it will be ingrained that when your child hears their name they stop, look and listen.

### **Time out as a self-discipline tool.**

Time out is commonly used at home and unfortunately misused as well because many adults think they have to be in charge of how long a child spends in time out. We have all heard one minute for each year of age but often that isn't enough or is too long. The burden of how long to be in time out, ideally, should fall to the child. Below is a concrete example.

### **Child refuses to clean up blocks, do their chores etc.**

"Have a seat Johnny. When you decide to clean up your blocks you can get up and put them away. (As the adult you don't care if it is 2 minutes or 2 hours). Your friends are outside waiting for you and you look sad sitting in that chair. So when you choose to clean up, you can head straight outside with your friends."

If the child starts to cry or wail about cleaning up, with a shrug of your shoulders, "I'm sorry you feel so sad but that is the rule at our house." You walk away and check back later to ask if he is ready yet. "Do you need a hug?" Acknowledge feelings, chat a little. "You're the man in charge - so how long do you want to rest in the chair before you are ready for your blocks? OK, I'll tell your friends that is what you have decided to do."

It is important that the child gets the message they are making the decision and are making choices that affect themselves. It is on them and not on you. You are simply following the rules - it is out of your hands and **their** choices are what makes this happen. This is teaching SELF-DISCIPLINE, RESPONSIBILITY FOR ONES OWN ACTIONS, and HOW TO MAKE GOOD CHOICES.

If the job is too big to tackle -- break it down. "OK, I don't want you to pick up ANYTHING but the GREEN blocks. Don't touch the red blocks ... only the green blocks." (Sometimes the child will only pick up the opposite of what you say. Use some humor at this point and run with it. Don't make an issue of not following directions.)

What if a child doesn't choose to pick up the blocks and it is time to go to bed or leave the house for an appointment? Matter of factly tell the child something like, "Well, I see you decided to not pick up your blocks. I'll do it now and when I am done I will put them in the attic/garage and they won't be available for you to play with." Most likely the child will now decide to either help or do the job, but now it is too late. Don't allow them to help because it reinforces that they don't need to listen to your instructions the first time and in their mind the consequence is HUGE - no blocks to play with - when in the scheme of things the consequence is pretty small.

At some point in the future, days to weeks later, when you want to reinforce the good choices your child has been making you can bring the blocks out saying something like, "I have noticed you are listening/choosing well/etc. I think you are ready to have your blocks back." Don't make a song and dance out of it because you expect good behavior from your child.

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You don't want to condition your child to expect over-the-top praise for expected behavior as that won't usually happen in life and you want to save over-the-top excitement for when it is really warranted.

In situations like these and all the gazillion other situations, you have to pass the 'test' (and you thought you wouldn't have to pass any more tests once you got out of school). Having phrases that you use for certain situations - regularly and CONSISTENTLY lets your child KNOW the phrase as well and she might eventually repeat the phrase right along with you. Guess what that same child will hear in their HEAD when you are not around???

### **Phrases to say to your child**

The following list of phrases are just a small sampling of consistent phrases used at school - if you choose to use the same at home - it is all the more CONSISTENT and therefore effective!

Some phrases are geared toward the younger students and some toward the older. **Never add "Okay?"** to the end of your request (unless you mean it) because that means there is an option to refuse you.

The best phrase ever is the first one on the list. It will carry you through many situations, BUT, you must mean it and stick to it.

- ◆ **"You will never get what you want by \_\_\_\_\_.** I was going to let you have \_\_\_\_\_, but because you \_\_\_\_\_, now I can't let you have it. Let's see if you can ask/act the right way the **next time** (not right then) you want \_\_\_\_\_."
- ◆ "I can help you do it or you can do it." - particularly good for toddlers.
- ◆ To a toddler to encourage communication "You say, stop please.", "You say, up please."
- ◆ When hit by friend (by accident or on purpose) you say to the injured child, "How did that make you feel?" To the hitter, "How are you going to fix this?" Offender can say ... "Is there anything I can do to make it better?"
- ◆ At drop off - "Mom will pick you up after nap. She loves you and will never forget to pick you up. She will be here when you ... wake up/ finish snack/play outside/etc."
- ◆ Child with attitude in voice - "You may talk to me with a polite tone of voice - not rude/loud - tone of voice - Try it again with the same words just a different tone."
- ◆ Child you are speaking to is walking away or looking away - "Please look at me when we are speaking to each other. It makes it easier to hear."
- ◆ "You sound frustrated, would you like some help?"
- ◆ "Yes ma'am or no sir are required. I need more than a nod, a grunt, or a yeah."
- ◆ "You say yes, not yeah."
- ◆ Responding clearly to child - "Yes you may, no you may not."
- ◆ To a child who is rude - "If I offer you something, you may say yes please, or no thank you."
- ◆ To elementary child - "When someone is speaking keep your eyes on him or her at all times. If someone makes a comment to you , turn and face that person."
- ◆ 3 years - Kindergarten (hopefully older children aren't still doing this) - "Boogers are not food! Please wipe them on a tissue and wash your hands."
- ◆ Why we use soap on cuts: "If you have a cut, you have to wash it with soap and water. If you don't use soap, you just get the germs wet but you don't kill them. It is the germs that make it hurt."

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- ◆ Kindergarten- Elementary - "If you win a game don't brag. If you lose don't pout. Always congratulate the opponent for a good game. If you can't acknowledge your opponent, don't say anything at all. Don't make excuses why they beat you."
- ◆ 3 years- Kindergarten- "Weapons are made to hurt people. It is against the rules to play pretend weapons. You are pretending to hurt people for fun. It is not allowed to even pretend to hurt people."
- ◆ 3 years - Elementary not responding (or making excuses) to a request/question: "This is a yes or no question."
- ◆ Toddler - Kindergarten: "You decide what happens, I can carry you or you can walk to the car. What do you want?" (Say the thing you want them to do last, not first.)
- ◆ 3 years - Kindy: "Ouch that hurts. Can I help you? What do you think will help that feel better?"
- ◆ 3 years - First grade when lying: "Now you need to tell me that you're kidding or it is lying. Like this. I see a dinosaur .. just kidding." (Explain the difference.)
- ◆ 3 years - Elementary: "How do you feel about your work?" Focus on the process to reinforce the effort.
- ◆ 3 years - Elementary: "It looks like you worked hard on that - you should be proud."
- ◆ 3 years - Elementary: "It looks like you worked hard on that picture. You should be proud of yourself. Look how carefully you colored the sky. You must like the color blue!" - Instead of: "I like your picture." (The idea is for the child to do this work for **self satisfaction**. Not for anyone else.)
- ◆ Toddler - Kindergarten: "I can't understand a whiny voice - use a regular voice or I can't understand you." "Ask me again later in your regular voice." Walk away if whining continues.
- ◆ 3 years - Kindergarten: "You look sad. Can you use your words because I can't understand when you use your tears."
- ◆ 3 years - Kindergarten: "Look with your eyes - keep your hands down or behind your back."
- ◆ Elementary: "Borrowing is taking something with permission - Stealing is taking it without asking."
- ◆ Elementary: "You always tell the truth to your parents and teachers. If you don't, then when you ARE telling the truth, no one will believe you. Even if it is really important, you will have to prove it because you can't be trusted to tell the truth. I want to be able to believe you every time you tell me something. And you can believe me when I tell you something." (Story of the boy that cried wolf.)
- ◆ Kindergarten - Teenagers: "You don't have to like what I say, you just have to do what I say."
- ◆ Child says, "I don't like you." You can say, "I am not here to be your friend, you already have friends. I am your teacher/parent and my job is not to have you like me. My job is to help you learn how to do this yourself. So you can be mad at me, that is ok. But you DO have to do xxxxxxxxxx. Now please."
- ◆ 3 years - Kindergarten: "Use an inside voice please."
- ◆ Kindergarten- Teenager: "What can you do different next time, so this doesn't happen again?"
- ◆ Toddler - Kindergarten: "When you hurt your friends it tells me you want to work alone."
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten (for VMS staff mostly): "After you give your mom a hug you may clean up your work."
- ◆ 3 - Teenager: "You can tell me anything, and if you tell me the truth I will not get angry." (It doesn't mean there won't be a consequence.)

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- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “If you need to say rude words please go into the bathroom until you are finished. We don't want to hear them in the classroom. We don't use those kinds of words because it is bad manners.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “If you need to spit, the toilet is where we do that.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “When you break the materials it tells me you need to be with me so I can watch your hands and make sure you are being gentle and careful with them.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “You sound angry/sad/frustrated - what happened that you didn't like?”
- ◆ 3 - Elementary: “Tell your friend what happened that made you upset.” “What will fix this problem?”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “Use your words and not your hands - it is against the rules to hit anyone. If they won't listen to your words, go get a teacher to help them listen to you.”
- ◆ 3 - 3rd grade: “You hurt your friends feelings when you talked to them like that. - Tell them what you would like them to do. Ask them politely.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “I won't allow anyone to hurt you - and I won't allow you to hurt anyone at school. We don't hurt each other here. It is against the rules.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “Have a seat and when you can walk and not run in the library, you can get up and walk. Good walking!”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: (for VMS staff mostly): “Your mom will wait for you in the media center while you clean up your work.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “It is bad manners to pull down your pants on the playground. Would you do that in the middle of the grocery store? In the middle of the library? That is why they are called private parts. Pull your pants down in a private place like the bathroom to go potty.”
- ◆ 3 - Kindergarten: “No one touches your private parts. Only YOU touch your private parts.”

Of course all these phrases can be tweaked according to the age and intellect of the child. Use the positive action as much as possible:

- ◆ WALK PLEASE (instead of DON'T RUN).
- ◆ BE GENTLE WITH YOUR HANDS.
- ◆ USE A QUIET VOICE PLEASE.
- ◆ ONLY FOOD GOES IN YOUR MOUTH.

With our own two children, (college now, but we started with them in upper elementary), additional chores are added on if they argue/whine/back-talk or generally have a bad attitude with said request. It is a great way to get the house cleaned!! We don't get angry, but just matter of factly start adding up the infractions and chores. We don't fret the back talking or bad attitude because the car needs washing and so do the dogs!

Some last bits of information to keep in mind.

### **Family Dynamics**

During infancy (the first 12 months or so) it is beneficial to dote on the child's needs first and the parent's needs second. It creates a bond and an expectation that as the parent, you are going to provide what the child needs. After infancy, the child can be weaned from the 'throne of attention' with the spousal relationship taking that place. Placing the marriage first and the children second keeps the family foundation secure which is ultimately comforting to the children.

**What is funny now might not be later.**

While it might be cute and funny when your toddler does or says something that at three years or older would be inappropriate, you must do your best to avoid reinforcing the behavior because you are essentially telling your toddler it is okay to do it again.

**Who is in Charge?**

If your toddler is in the habit of giving you orders (instead of making request of you), as they get older they will expect that to be appropriate means of interaction with adults. When your three year old is speaking to you in a disparaging tone, acting bossy toward you or being defiant of your request, take that as a sign that you have more work ahead of you. If that inappropriate behavior isn't squelched soon you will have a much harder time dealing with it when your child is a teenager and less chance of breaking them of that socially unacceptable trait.

**Getting your attention / Interrupting the adult.**

Usually, when your child wants your attention it isn't a matter of life or death, even though they may think so. With that said, if you are engaged in something, for example, a conversation with your spouse or another adult and your child wants your attention, she should be able to wait patiently for your attention. Even a three year old can wait a minute or two - if the adult expects that and requires it. If we condition our children to expect us to stop what ever we are doing to attend to their whim then we are in the process of creating a self absorbed adult which few of us care to be around.

When a child says your name over and over or is patting somewhere on your body, they are rudely attempting to get your attention. Think of your parents or grandparents. Would they put up with such discourteous behavior?

To get your attention a young child (2 years to 3rd grade) can be taught to place their hand on your shoulder or hip and wait patiently for you to respond to them. If a child aggressively pats or hits the parent to get their attention that behavior can be addressed by telling the child to go wait somewhere (e.g. a chair, their room, the couch) until you are able to come see them. Patting or striking you should not be reinforced with attention for the child's request/demand. A 4th grade child and older can easily be taught how to wait for a natural pause in the conversation and then politely say "excuse me".

**Defusing an argument before it becomes one.**

Any time you can head an argument off at the pass it is advisable to do so. This can be done with humor and/or by acknowledging the desire of the child. "I know that you like your friend so much that you wish you could play together for days and days." Another great phrase is 'even though'. "Even though you love puppies, we don't have all the things puppies need at our house right now."

**A definite 'maybe'.**

You don't always need to have an answer for each decision made on your child's behalf. 'Maybe' or 'I don't know' is an effective response that can avoid conflict. It buys you time to think about the request/situation so you can follow up with your decision should you want to. At times, 'Because I said so' is all the follow up needed.

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### **Politely answer.**

‘You may not....’, or ‘No thank you’ is the same as saying ‘no’ which is abrupt and negative by definition. ‘You may not’ conveys the same message. ‘Absolutely not’ is also civilized, firm, but kind. These words don’t usually invite rebellion in the same way as a ‘no’.

### **How to offer your instructions.**

‘Would you like to take your bath now?’ or ‘It’s time for your bath. Okay?’ set you up for an answer you might not want to hear - “no”. Instead, say something like, ‘It’s time for your bath. Should we use bubbles or leave the water clear?’ It’s all in the syntax.

We don’t have to yell and intimidate our children in order to get compliance. Nor do we have to throw up our hands and settle for non-compliant behavior. **Respectful language works.**

The information listed above assumes there is consistent parent - child interaction that provides ample amounts of affection, attention and love.

### **Inspection Reports**

Inspection Reports from various agencies, local, state and national are posted on the bulletin board by the front office.

### **RIGHTS OF CHILDREN IN SCHOOL/CHILD CARE PROGRAMS AND THEIR PARENTS**

The following is required by law to be posted and in our school policies. 199.898.

- (1) All children receiving child care services in a day-care center ... shall have the following rights:
  - (a) The right to be free from physical or mental abuse
  - (b) The right not to be subjected to abusive language or abusive punishment- and
  - (c) The right to be in the care of adults who shall meet their health, safety and developmental needs.
  
- (2) Parents, custodians or guardians of children specified in subsection (1) ... shall have the following rights:
  - (a) The right to have access to their children at all times the child is in care and access to the provider caring for their children during normal hours of operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider;
  - (b) The right to be provided with information about child care regulatory standards, if applicable; where to direct questions about regulatory standards; and how to file a complaint;
  - (c) The right to file a complaint against a child care provider without any retribution against the parent, custodian, guardian or child; and
  - (d) The right to review and discuss with the provider any state reports and deficiencies revealed by such reports.

Versailles Montessori School does not discriminate with regard to its student enrollment or employment procedures. VMS accepts students and staff without regard to race, color, national or ethnic origin. VMS may, however, in the exercise of its sole and inferred discretion, deny enrollment or suspend a child's enrollment if it is determined that the child or the child's parent(s) are not abiding by the rules and/or policies of VMS or if the child's enrollment or continued enrollment would be detrimental to the interest of VMS, its staff, or students.