

# **South Metro Montessori School**

## **Parent Handbook**

**(Updated October 1, 2015)**

South Metro Montessori School (SMMS) is a full day Montessori preschool, operating from 7:00 am to 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday. SMMS is open every day excluding major holidays and staff in-service days.

A calendar listing school closings will be distributed upon enrollment and each fall before the school year begins. An interactive calendar can also be found on the school website.

SMMS provides a full-day, year round program for preschool children ages 33 months to 6 years. While children are in our care we guarantee that they will be under direct supervision at all times. A 1-10 ratio is maintained throughout the day.

SMMS is licensed for 20 preschool/kindergarten children.

SMMS is a non-denominational preschool offering education to all children regardless of race, creed, color or sex. Children with special needs may be admitted to the program if the circumstances can be accommodated within the present program structure. In all cases the children must be able to participate and substantially benefit from our program without risk to themselves and other children.

The SMMS program plan is evaluated in writing by the school Director each year to insure that our program remains current with the developmental needs of the children.

The program plan is included in the Parent Handbook which is given to all parents upon their child's enrollment at SMMS. Parents can ask for additional copies of this plan at any time.

## Curriculum Goals and Philosophy

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that the goal of early childhood education should be to cultivate in each child the natural desire to learn. SMMS has adopted this goal and with its Montessori curriculum and teaching methods, offers an environment, which stimulates and supports each child's individual development.

*"Bring the child to the consciousness of his own dignity, and he will be free. We see no limit to what should be offered to the child, for his will be an immense field of chosen activity.*

-Maria Montessori

SMMS is also inspired by the philosophy of the schools in Reggio Emilia. The founder of these schools, Loris Malaguzzi based his educational philosophy on his research from Maria Montessori as well as many other educators at his time. The Reggio Emilia Approach sees children as strong and capable individuals that have a right to a quality education. The philosophy that guides SMMS is also inspired by these schools in Reggio Emilia, Italy. We plan a curriculum that supports our own context in Lakeville, Minnesota that gives value to time, complex materials, individuality in children as well as the community.

### ***No Way The Hundred Is there***

*The child  
Is made of one hundred  
The child has  
A hundred languages  
A hundred hands  
A hundred thoughts  
A hundred ways of thinking  
Of playing, of speaking.  
A hundred always a hundred  
Ways of listening  
Of marveling of loving  
A hundred joys  
For singing and understanding  
A hundred worlds  
To discover  
A hundred worlds*

*To invent  
A hundred worlds  
To dream  
The child has  
A hundred languages  
(and a hundred, hundred, hundred more)  
But they steal ninety-nine.  
The school and the culture  
Separate the head from the body  
They tell the child  
To think without hands  
To do without head  
To listen and not to speak  
To understand without joy  
To love and to marvel  
Only at Easter and Christmas.  
They tell the child:  
To discover the world already there  
And of the hundred  
They steal ninety-nine  
They tell the child  
That work and play  
Reality and fantasy  
Science and imagination  
Sky and earth  
Reason and dream  
Are things  
That do not belong together.*

*And thus they tell the child  
That the hundred is not there.  
The child says:  
No. The hundred is there.*

**-Loris Malaguzzi**

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## **The basic principals from both philosophies followed at SMMS:**

A pleasant learning environment is prepared with beautiful, varied and complex materials for children to have access to every day.

Montessori materials, which assist the child's motor coordination, sensory and intellectual development are readily available, along with a variety of materials for creative expression.

Certified Montessori teacher(s) serve as guides and helpers for children as they explore and master the environment. Teachers are seen as co-learners and observe and document children in their experiences throughout the day. This documentation is made visible and gives life to the environment of SMMS.

Teachers foster and model a joy in learning.

Dr. Montessori aimed to nurture all aspects of students-the intellectual, the emotional, and the social. The content of SMMS program therefore consists of diverse activities: drawing, reading, writing, dancing, building, counting, sorting, problem-solving, cooking, talking, sharing and listening. It is our belief that SMMS can help children develop self-confidence and fundamental learning skills. Above all, SMMS offers an enjoyable, safe and exciting place for children to spend their day.

The staff is dedicated to these goals and continuously seeks out opportunities for professional development. They complete related training and education on a continual basis throughout their involvement with the school. Each member of our professional staff has been carefully selected based on their specific qualifications, education, and genuine love and caring for children. Each staff person's credentials meet or exceed State Department of Human Services licensing regulations.

The philosophy of SMMS is made up of aspects of both the Montessori and Reggio Emilia philosophies. Following both philosophies inspires both teachers and children in many varied and complex situations.

If parents are interested we offer many other resources for further research on either of these philosophies. Please ask any of the teachers for these.

At SMMS our goal is to help families feel supported and nurtured. Staff and families work as a team to insure that each child is supported in their growth towards reaching their fullest potential.

Parents may request to view SMMS's childcare program plan at any time.

### Pre-Admission Conference and Orientation

An appointment is arranged for the prospective parents to meet with a staff member who will answer questions and aid parents in becoming familiar with the school and school policies. A time will be scheduled for classroom orientation. Orientation with your child is required before the first day of school. The purpose is to familiarize your child with the classroom and teachers while you are present. It makes the first day of school transition easier for both you and your child.

### Observing the Classroom

SMMS has an open door policy. Parents are encouraged and welcome to visit at any time during the day except for naptime, which is between 12:30-2:30.

### Child Observation and Assessment

At SMMS we use a variety of assessment tools including observations and developmental checklist in order to continuously monitor and support your child's development. On a daily basis, children interact with the environment, providing the teachers an opportunity to observe and appropriately assess their skills and developmental levels as well as their interests and needs. Our curriculum and activities are then modified based on the assessments results to meet the needs of individual children. Our assessment results also indicate areas where SMMS will plan program improvement.

Developmental checklists help teachers observe, record, and evaluate the children's skills and knowledge. The checklists reflect common behaviors and expectations in our classroom. These checklists are closely linked to the developmentally appropriate activities that our program offers.

Each of these assessments tools will be administered in our classroom by your child's teachers. It is important that children are able to participate in assessment in an environment that is familiar to them. If the results of these assessments indicate, we will work along with the family to arrange for a developmental screening or referral for diagnostic assessment for the child. Results of all assessments will be kept confidential and will remain stored in the centers office.

Records of assessment shall not be disclosed to any other persons other than the child's parent or guardian, the child's legal representative, or employees of SMMS, unless the parent or guardian has given written consent or as otherwise required by law.

Twice a year we will send home written evaluations of your child's progress.

Twice a year we will schedule parent/teacher conferences to discuss these written evaluations and any other information parents would like to discuss. We strive to provide communication to all families in a manner that is sensitive to family values, culture, identity, and home language. This is a time to talk both about what your child has learned in our program as well as what they have to look forward to.



## Meals/snacks

**Breakfast**-If your child arrives at school **before 8am**, they need to bring a breakfast to eat at school. We will provide milk for cereal. If your child does bring a breakfast, please inform the staff member on duty.

**Lunch**-Children at SMMS will need to bring a bag lunch to school every day, these lunches need to meet the USDA recommendations. Lunches should be placed in a lunch box that is labeled with your child's name and should have an ice pack in it to keep cold foods cold. For lunch we suggest small samples of a variety of foods, such as: sandwiches, fresh fruits, vegetables, or meats and cheeses. A rule of thumb, if your child will eat it at home they will probably enjoy having it for lunch. If they do not enjoy it at home, they will not like it any better at school.

We ask that you consider proper nutrition while preparing your child's lunch. Your child is constantly busy while they are at school. Busy minds burn lots of calories. Filling their bodies with food that contains little or no nutritional value does not allow them to build strong and healthy bodies. Try packing foods from each other food groups. This will satisfy your child's hunger as well as providing them with the daily amount of vitamins and minerals their bodies need. Please follow the guidelines in the Bag Lunch Requirements form that we have included.

**Snacks:** SMMS will provide snacks that meet the USDA recommendations twice a day - mid-morning, and mid-afternoon.

## Clothing/Personal Items

Your child will participate in many activities both indoors and out. It is important that he/she be dressed in comfortable, durable, and weather appropriate clothes that will adapt to food spills, paint, sand and water play. Shoes must be worn at all times. Tennis shoes are recommended, as sandals, thongs, or other open toed shoes may lead to unnecessary injury.

We ask that each child keep an extra set of clothes, stored in a bag and clearly marked, at school throughout the year. All items that are brought to school

should be labeled with your child's first and last name. SMMS is not responsible for lost items, such as hats or mittens.

Please discourage your child from bringing toys or personal belongings to school as they are distracting, can get lost, or cause ill feelings.

### Behavior Guidance

The adults of SMMS respect the children's dignity in all their relationships with them.

Most children respond immediately and in a positive way to quiet, firm guidance from an adult. Sometimes, however, children may engage in challenging behavior. Challenging behavior is any behavior that interferes with children's learning, development and success at play, is harmful to the child, other children or adults, puts a child at high risk for later social problems or school failure. Examples of challenging behavior: Physical aggression (hitting, biting, shoving, hitting with objects), relational aggression ("You can't play with us", verbal bullying), tantrums, whining, testing limits, refusal to follow directions or observe classroom rules.

We stress the positive and try to keep the words "no" and "don't" to a minimum. When persistent unacceptable behavior is exhibited by a child a "time-out" may be used. This is when a child is briefly separated from other children to help make the child aware of his/her undesirable behavior. Separation may not be used unless staff has tried less intrusive methods of guiding the child's behavior which have been ineffective and the child's behavior threatens the well being of the child or other children in the classroom.

These less intrusive methods must insure:

~That each child is provided with a positive model of acceptable behavior.

~Be tailored to the developmental level of the child.

~Redirect the child or group of children away from problems toward constructive activity in order to reduce conflict.

~Teach children how to use acceptable alternatives to problem behavior in order to reduce conflict.

~Protect the safety of children and staff persons.

~Provide immediate and directly related consequences for a child's unacceptable behavior.

A child who requires separation from the group must remain within the enclosed section of the classroom where the child can be continuously see and heard by staff person. The child's return to the group must be contingent on the child stopping or bringing under control the behavior that precipitated the separation. The child must be returned to the group as soon as the behavior that precipitated abates or stops.

When a child exhibits persistent challenging behaviors, a teacher's first response should be to assess the function of the child's behavior: Why or what is causing this reaction? How does the staff person respond to this behavior? Is there a certain time when this behavior occurs? Through observation and communication with parents and other staff, the answer to what is causing the challenging behavior may be determined.

Separations are noted on a daily log (Separation Report). The parent is notified if the child is separated from the group 3 or more times in one day. If a child is separated 5 times or more in one week or 8 times in two weeks, then the behavior will be observed and recorded and a plan will be developed to address the behavior documented in consultation with the child's parents and with other staff persons and professionals if appropriate. Such documentation will be placed in the child's file.

A follow up conference will be set- to go over any improvements in behavior. If significant improvement has not been achieved an evaluation will be made on whether the center is capable of facilitating the recommended treatment, if not the child will be asked to leave. If yes, specific behavior strategies will be put into effect. The follow us conference should include the presence of outside professionals.

The following actions are absolutely prohibited:

~Subjection of the child to corporal punishment i.e. rough handling, shoving, hair pulling, ear pulling, shaking, pinching, slapping, kicking, biting, hitting, or spanking.

~Subjection of a child to emotional abuse which includes but is not limited to: name calling, ostracism, shaming, making derogatory remarks about the child or the child's family, and using language that threatens, humiliates or frightens a child.

~Punishment for lapses in toilet habits.

~Withholding of food, light, warmth, clothing or medical care as punishment for unacceptable behavior.

~The physical restraint other than to physically hold a child when containment is necessary to protect a child or others from harm.

~The use of mechanical restraints such as tying.

## Diaper Policy

When children are 3 years of age we expect that they will be starting and actively working on the independent toileting process at home and at school. For those children not yet 3 and who do not use the toilet consistently:

Parents are to supply disposable diaper/pull ups and disposable wipes. We do not allow cloth diapers. Staff will check for signs that diapers are wet or soiled at least every two hours, before we go outside to play, before we put children down for a nap and once children have gotten up from a nap. Diapers that are wet or soiled are changed immediately unless circumstances make it difficult to do so. The staff will change diapers or soiled clothing in the designated changing area and not elsewhere in the facility.

Diapers are only changed on the changing table located in the bathroom. Soiled diapers are bagged and put into a hands free diaper pail. The diaper pail is cleaned and sanitized daily. The diaper pail lid must remain closed at all times and is kept out of reach of children. Diaper pail is located in the janitor's closet. We ask that parents who change diapers at the start and end of the day please place the diaper in a plastic bag and place it in the diaper pail in janitor's closet.

## Birthdays

Birthdays are special events in a child's life. We acknowledge this with special recognition at our large group time and throughout the day.

For those wishing to provide a birthday snack, only packaged treats that have been purchased from a store can be served. Parents are welcome to but not obligated to share in the birthday celebration.

## Field Trips

We enjoy giving children the opportunity to learn by providing exciting, and educational field trips. These are conducted periodically throughout the year. In all cases SMMS requires your written permission for your child to accompany us on a field trip. On field trip days your child is required to wear his/her SMMS field trip shirt which may be purchased from the director.

For outings away from school, we will rent a school bus to transport the children. You will be notified in advance of all excursions and special visitors through the monthly newsletter. Parents are always welcome to join us.

## **Naps/Rest Time**

Children at SMMS have a rest time from 12:30-2:30.

### **For those children between the ages of 33 months and before they turn 5:**

~A child who has completed a nap or has rested for 30 minutes will not be required to remain on his/her cot. Quiet activities will be provided in the nap room by the staff member on duty

~Each child will have his/her own labeled cot.

~Cots will be placed so that there are clear aisles and unimpeded access for both adults and children.

~Children's heads will remain uncovered during sleep time.

~Children will sleep with foot ware on to ensure a safe evacuation for emergencies.

~Each child is to use his/her own blankets which have been brought from home.

~Blankets will be sent home weekly to be washed, or when it is soiled or wet. All soiled and wet blankets will be bagged and labeled.

~Napping and awake children will be within direct sight of a staff member at all times.

### **For those children who are 5 and parents have requested that their child no longer take a nap:**

~Children are to bring to school an activity bag, which contains 3-4 quiet activities. These activities could be: coloring books and crayons, books, activity books, stuffed animals, etc.

~Activity bags should contain a towel/blanket for rest time.

~Rest time will be 30 minutes.

~After 30 minutes, children will engage in quiet activities.

~Children will be in direct sight of staff at all times.

## Communication

SMMS knows the importance of parents being informed of their child's daily activities. The general behavior of children can be affected by their eating and resting habits. Staff will informally share with parents anything unusual in your child's habits as well as daily progress. This allows both parents and teachers to anticipate a child's behavior and to better understand your child.

Parent/Teacher conferences will be offered twice a year. Teachers will send home written observations of the children's intellectual, physical, social and emotional development. In addition parents will have an opportunity to sign up for a conference with their child's teacher. Parents can request a teacher conference any time they have questions or concerns regarding their child's development.

SMMS will send daily emails to parents to give them a glimpse into the daily lives of the children. These daily journals are a tool for parents to start a dialogue with their children on the experiences of the day. In addition parents are encouraged to read the documentation displayed throughout the school to give them more information on what the children's ideas and interests are. SMMS will also be sending out newsletters throughout the year to inform parents of upcoming themes, special events and other interesting school news.

If you ever have any questions, comments or concerns please express them to a staff member. SMMS has an open door policy. Parents are encouraged to visit and participate in school activities or field trips. Several events throughout the year will be scheduled to help facilitate this participation by parents.

It is crucial that parents and teachers communicate important information clearly and with trust. Such information will always be kept confidential. A child's behavior is greatly impacted by events at home and school. When these incidents are shared between parents and teachers both have a better understanding of the children and their needs. SMMS believes very strongly in parents and teachers being partners in the education of children.



Please report any change of address, telephone numbers, emergency numbers etc. In addition, please advise us immediately of any significant changes in your child's life, such as: changes in living arrangements, new additions to the family, divorce or any deaths in the family.

### Health and Safety

Accidents-In the event of a medical emergency or accident, we will call 911 and then contact you. We require written authorization (found in your registration forms) prior to attendance. You or your designated substitute will be asked to transport your child in less serious situations. In the case of a serious situation, children will be transported to Fairview, Burnsville Hospital.

All teachers are trained and certified in CPR and First Aid

Allergies-Allergies are very common among young children. If your child has an allergy, please discuss this with a staff member in detail. We then may take appropriate precautions to protect your child's health. All staff will be updated on all children's allergies. This information will also be posted in the classroom and where snacks and lunches are served.

### Child Abuse and Neglect-

SMMS will report any suspected abuse or neglect to the proper authorities. Attached you will find our mandated reporting policy.

### Missing Children-

In the rare event that a child is missing, we will notify 911 and then call the parents. The information we will give the authorities is the child's name, hair color, eye color, general description, clothing and information regarding a divorce or custody situation.

### Fire-

SMMS's building is equipped with fire extinguishers, smoke alarms and well defined plans for both fire and weather disaster evacuation. Evacuation plans are posted in the classroom. Monthly emergency drills are scheduled, carried out and documented. Should any emergency evacuation be carried out, parents would be notified immediately when it is safe to do so.

### Severe Weather-

In the event of inclement winter weather conditions during child care hours, parents will be called and asked to pick their children up early. Children will remain inside and staff members will remain with them until all children have been picked up by parents. For an evening/night or early morning inclement weather, the center will post school closing on local TV and radio channels. Usually these closings will follow the Lakeville School Districts closings.

### Illness-

We take every precaution to safe guard your children against illness. However, a normal number of illnesses are part of early childhood.

Children should not be sent to school with the following symptoms:

~Elevated temperature of 100 degrees or more.

~Sore throat

~sever cold

~vomiting

~Diarrhea

~Red or watery encrusted eyes

~An undiagnosed rash

If your child should come down with any of these symptoms while at SMMS, you will be notified and if warranted, you will be asked to pick your child up. If parents cannot be reached, the alternate numbers listed on your registration form will be contacted. In the mean time your child will be isolated from the rest of the children and supervised by a designated staff person until someone arrives to pick them up. We ask that sick children be picked up within 45 minutes after you receive our call.

Please notify the school if your child is absent with a communicable disease, so that we can post a notice for other parents. Children absent due to a communicable disease may not return to SMMS without a signed statement from a physician indicating when the child may return and is not longer contagious.

Medical Forms-In the interest of your child's health and the health of all children enrolled in our program; you are required to submit your child's immunization records upon admission to the school. Immunizations must be up to date. It is your responsibility to notify the school when your child receives new immunizations and to furnish proof to the school. Within 30 days of enrollment, the health care summary form must be furnished to the school, signed by your child's health care provider. It is important that your child's physician, dentist and preferred hospital be listed on our records.

Medicine-We realize that there are times when your child may need medication during the day. With your child's health and safety in mind, SMMS staff will administer only dated, labeled and prescribed medications. Any medications must be in its original container, clearly stating the prescribed dosage, name, date, and physician's name. For your convenience, you may request the pharmacy split a prescription into two containers: one to remain at school and one for home.

You are required to complete an authorization form each time your child is to receive any type of medication. A record of the medicine dispensed is kept on file.

Security- As an important security measure, we ask that you bring your child into the school, sign them in, and see that he/she is under supervision before leaving the building. Equally important is that you enter the building when picking your child up at the end of the day and sign them out.

We will release a child only to parent/s who enrolled the child or to alternate persons listed by parent/guardians on the enrollment form to be allowed to pick up that child. This alternate must be at least 18 years of age. In the event parents need someone else other than those who are listed, they must leave a written note authorizing this. Any unfamiliar person picking up children must present a license to staff members before the child will be released.

### Privacy Rights Statement

The data requested on the registration form and the health care summary form is to be kept in our files and will be kept in complete confidentiality. This information is shared only by the Community Service Department, the licensing consultant from the Department of Human Services and the Administration and teaching staff. The data on the registration form is needed so that we will be able to contact you when necessary or in case of an emergency. The health care summary is required by law for the protection of all children as well as your own child. We cannot accept a child for enrollment at SMMS without this data being provided. SMMS will obtain written permission before any occasion of research, experimental procedure or public relations activity involving a child would occur. Records will not be disclosed to any other persons other than the child's parent/guardian, the child's legal representative, or employees of SMMS, unless parent/guardian has given written consent or as otherwise required by law.

# Grievance Procedure

SMMS has a grievance policy that allows any person being served by the program or their authorized representatives to bring a grievance to the highest level of authority within 48 hours.

Grievance by a parent, guardian, or child's authorized representative

1. If there is a grievance over the child care program or procedure, direct contact with the director should be made. The complaint should be made either verbally or in writing.
2. If the individual making the complaint feels that it is being ignored or if the matter is of a serious nature, the complaint should be made to the director. The director will handle the complaint personally; they will be responsible in seeing that the grievance is handled properly and expeditiously.

## Grievance over a staff member

There may be a situation where a parent or guardian has a personal grievance against a staff member. Due to the personal nature of a grievance, the director will approach the staff member and give them a chance to explain their actions. If an unsatisfactory resolution of the problem occurs, then the next step should be taken. The head teacher or director will provide in writing how the problem will be resolved.

## Grievance over facility or equipment

For complaints about the facilities or equipment, the director should be consulted. They will see to the problem immediately.

The Department of Human Services, Division of Licensing telephone number is 651-431-2000 and they should be contacted when a suspected violation occurs while children are in our care.

## **Financial**

Absenteeism-Because staff assignments are based on daily enrollments, we are unable to extend any credit for absences. To assist us in daily scheduling, please notify the school before 9:00 am if your child will not be attending.

Dis-enrollment- We ask that you give us a 2 week written notice prior to withdrawal from SMMS. Should management of SMMS determine for any reason that a child should be dis-enrolled; parents will be given a 2 week notice in advance.

Late Pickup-SMMS is open for 11 hours a day to accommodate parent's varied schedules. It is especially hard for your child and staff members of SMMS to remain at school after 6:00 pm closing time. If you pick your child up after the 6:00 closing time, we charge a \$20.00 late fee for each 10 minutes after 6:00pm. This fee is not intended to imply that picking your child up after the school closes is acceptable. The school is obliged to call the police in any case where a child is left at school without SMMS being notified of an unavoidable emergency by 6:45.

Registration- Upon submitting enrollment forms for your child SMMS requires a \$50.00 registration fee per child. This fee helps cover various administration costs. This is a one- time fee and is non-refundable.

All forms needed for enrollment at SMMS will be included in a Welcome packet along with a school policy book. Before the child can begin at SMMS we need to have a copy of their immunization records and all other forms included with the exception of the Health Care Summary which is required within 30 days of enrollment.

Deposit-A two week deposit is required upon an acceptance of enrollment. This deposit will be applied to your child's first two weeks of attendance.

Tuition-Advance payment is required on a weekly or monthly basis. We ask that you pay by check or money order only. Payment is required regardless of any absences. If payment is not received by the Friday of the prior week, a \$10.00 per day late fee will be charged. If payment is more than 3 days late you will need to

speak to the Director before your child can return. A fee of \$35.00 will be applied for any returned check.

### Family Vacations

After 12 consecutive paid months of enrollment, each family is allowed one week of vacation without fee each school year. Each school year begins the Tuesday after Labor Day. The one week vacation must be taken within one calendar week and not split into individual days. Any unused vacation time cannot be carried over from year to year. Parents need to notify the Director at least 2 weeks in advance when they are taking their vacation week.

### Referrals

Parent referrals are the best way of growing our program. To show our appreciation we will give you a one- time credit of \$100.00 for each new family that you refer and enrolls in the program.

### Drug and Alcohol Policy

All employees, subcontractors and volunteers of SMMS are prohibited from abusing prescription medication or being under the influence of a controlled substance or alcohol in any manner that impairs or could impair the person's ability to provide care or services when directly responsible for individuals at SMMS.

## Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

I attest that I have read through the SMMS Parent Policy Book and understand the policies as it pertains to me, my child, and the school. I understand that policies may change from time to time, and that SMMS will communicate those changes to me as they occur.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Child's Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Please print and complete this page. Then submit this page along with the other required enrollment forms.

Thank you.