



www.montessorischoolofpalmcoast.com

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Parent Handbook

2015/ 2016



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General Information

School Philosophy: The Casa Montessori is pleased to provide your child the opportunity for an outstanding Montessori education. Our philosophy is to present your child the best environment in which to cognitively, physically, and socially develop to the fullest potential. The Casa Montessori emphasizes learning by use of all the senses and specially designed materials for your child's development. We also support your child in building self-confidence, creating intrinsic discipline, and modeling respect for all people. Our intent is to build a solid foundation. The Casa Montessori embraces all cultures and exposes children to the differences amongst them.

“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. For this is the time when man's intelligence itself, his greatest implement, is being formed. At no other age has the child greater need of intelligent help...” – Dr. Maria Montessori

Montessori Philosophy : The Montessori philosophy is founded on the principle of respect: respect for self, respect for others, and respect for our environment. The Montessori classroom, therefore, elicits calmness and peace for the child. The Montessori philosophy also offers the child the best environment for her development by allowing the freedom to move and discover while maintaining respect for others and the materials. The materials and furniture are all sized for the children's learning and exploration. The Montessori teacher acts as a demonstrator of the activities within this environment, as well as a role model of respectful behavior. The Montessori teacher is unobtrusive in the learning process, as she respects the child and her choices. Children are active participants in their learning and are encouraged to work independently or in groups. Children follow what interests them, and the teacher responds with developmentally appropriate and individualized lessons. Both individual and group instruction can vary based on each student's learning style, as the Montessori teacher adapts to individual needs. Each child sets her own learning pace to internalize information gleaned from work of her own choosing and ability level. The teacher relies on her observations of the children to determine which new activities and materials she may introduce to an individual, small or large group.

Within the multiage classroom community, more experienced older children share what they have learned by helping others learn, and thereby reinforcing their own learning. Creativity flourishes in this atmosphere of acceptance and trust. The rich curriculum, under the direction of the Montessori teacher, allows each child to experience the joy of learning. The classroom community encourages self-direction, through non-competitive activities. This aids the child in developing confidence and independence critical to building an attitude of learning and exploration to last a lifetime.

At Casa Montessori of Palm Coast we believe that before age 3, children really shouldn't watch any television. During that time, they should be given constant opportunities to explore the physical world around them and interact with the important people in their lives. There is no benefit for children under three to watch t.v. Above that age, children still are better off not watching t.v. They learn so much more interacting with the world than they do sitting and passively watching it. It is an extremely rare occasion that a t.v. may be utilized at our school.

Enrollment

Enrollment Process

1. Tour of School
2. Application for Enrollment
3. Director Interview
4. Orientation Meeting

Casa Montessori accepts children in the following order:

1. Current Students
2. Family & Friends of students currently enrolled
3. New Enrollees

Age Requirements: Children entering the **Primary Environment** must be at least **two years ten months old by the time of enrollment** and **MUST be toilet trained**. Children entering the **Toddler Environment** must be at least **sixteen months by the time of enrollment** and walking. Families must be willing to toilet train. Casa Montessori does not discriminate between applicants on the basis race, national origin, ethnic background, sex, religious affiliation, or disability.

All students will be accepted on a conditional basis. Parents or guardians may be asked to withdraw the student if Casa Montessori determines, in its sole discretion, that the program is not meeting the student's needs or that the student's presence is having an adverse effect on the program.

Payment Procedures

1. Tuition is based on a single school year commitment amount, paid monthly in 10 (ten) equal installments, or annually in 1 (one) payment.
2. Tuition payments made in full prior to the start of school year are eligible for a 5% discount and family members may be eligible for a 10% discounts
3. Returned or declined payments due to non-sufficient funds, are assessed a \$25.00 bank fee and a \$10.00 late payment fee.
4. Tuition payments made in house, will receive a hand written receipt. Tuition payments made online via paypal will receive an electronic payment receipt. All payments are recording in Child Care Manager to reflect your families current balance.

Late Payments & Past Due Balances

1. If tuition and/or fees remain unpaid and other payment arrangements have not been made, the school reserves the right to:
 - a. remove the student from the activity or program for which the fee was assessed;
 - b. terminate the contract for any private or fee-based program;
 - c. dismiss the student without tuition abatement until the account is brought current;
 - d. employ any and all rights and remedies allowed by law.
2. Families who fall more than one month behind in payment of tuition, without arranging for an alternate payment plan, will not be eligible for continued enrollment in the program. **This will be firmly enforced.**
3. Enrollment contracts for any private or fee-based program will not be offered to students whose accounts are more than 30 days delinquent, unless payment arrangements have been made.

Refunds/Early Withdrawal from the Montessori Program:

1. **Return of Fees and Deposits:** Parents or guardians agree and understand that the Enrollment Fee and the Tuition Deposit are non-refundable and will not be returned for any reason. Parents or Guardians further understand and agree that the Tuition Deposit will be applied to the June tuition payment during the student's last year of enrollment. If a student withdraws or is disenrolled from Casa Montessori's program prior to the end of any school year, the Tuition Deposit will not be returned or applied to monthly tuition.
2. **Tuition Payments:** Parents or Guardians agree and understand:
 - a. Early withdrawal of the student from Casa Montessori's Programs will be effective (a) 30 days following Casa Montessori administration's receipt of written notice of the student's intent to withdraw or (b) the date of withdrawal, whichever occurs later. Payment of the last month's Monthly Tuition Payment will be prorated as of the effective date of withdrawal; and
 - b. Casa Montessori will not refund unused portions of the One-Time Annual Tuition Payment

3. **Termination.** Casa Montessori reserves the right to terminate the Enrollment Contract and disenroll the student from Casa Montessori program with or without notice for any reason. Parents or Guardians agree and understand that termination of the Enrollment.
4. **Illnesses and Vacations:** Casa Montessori does not give refunds for days the student is absent due to illnesses, vacations or other personal reasons.

Attendance

Parents are requested to ensure that their children arrive on time in order to reap the full benefits of the Montessori environment. If children arrive late, they are missing out on valuable class time. If the child arrives after class time has begun please check with the front desk for assistance. Regular attendance and punctual arrival at school are two habits that dramatically impact student achievement. Absences and tardiness are disturbing to students, disrupt their schedules, require readjustment to the class routine, and diminish learning. Parents are urged to make every effort to schedule doctor, dentist, and other appointments for students at times outside the school day.

Absences

In case of an absence these procedures should be followed:

1. A call to the school desk to inform the school of the child's absence should be made as soon as possible. Our telephone number is **386-246-9311**. Please leave a message if necessary.
2. Please inform the Casa Montessori of any planned absences and/or vacation.
3. When a child needs to leave class early, please send a note to the teacher and sign the child out at the front desk.
4. Vacation should be planned for regularly scheduled breaks. The school does not condone taking students out of school during the regular school schedule.
5. Ten consecutive days of unexcused absences will be cause for automatic withdrawal.
6. Casa Montessori agrees to notify the Early Learning Coalition in writing if a child enrolled is absent for five (5) consecutive days with no contact from the parent by the close of the fifth (5th) day.
7. **Frequent patterns of absences may result in a meeting with the teacher and/or Head of School.**

Tardiness

1. School begins at 8:45 a.m. A student is considered late if he is not in the classroom at 9:00a.m.
2. All tardies are recorded and tallied at the end of the month.
3. Frequent tardiness may result in a meeting with the teacher and/or Head of School. Due to the nature of the Montessori method, tardies are very disruptive to a student's school performance and are handled very seriously by administration.

Drop-off and Pick-Up

1. For the safety of all our children and parents, please drive slowly and with caution at all times while parking especially during drop-off and pick-up times when the parking lot is the busiest.
2. You must traverse the parking lot with your child **in hand**.
3. Please, refrain from the use of cell phones while driving on Casa Montessori property.

Sign in/out

Children must be signed in and out each day by parents or designated individual (18 years and older) as required by the State of Florida's Department of Children and Families. If someone other than the parent will be signing a child in and/or out, the school must have written permission on file.

Dismissal

1. Identification is required from any adult who is not known to school personnel and who comes to pick up a child. We reserve the right not to release the child to anyone other than the custodial parent, or an authorized person. If

someone else is going to pick up a child, the parent must call the school. In cases of doubt, we will phone the custodial parent to confirm that someone else has been authorized to pick up the child. A photo ID is required.

2. Children must be picked up promptly by 12:00 for the half day program and by 3:00 p.m. for the full day program.

Early Drop-off/Late Pick-Up Charge

Early Drop-off and or Late Pick-Up are available for a charge of \$1 per minute. Early drop off is without prior notice between 7:30 a.m. and 8:45 a.m. Late Pick-up is without prior notice after 12:00 p.m. for half day program and after 3:00 p.m. for full day program. School is closed at 5:30 p.m. Monthly invoicing for minutes used will be provided with tuition invoicing.

Non-release Policy

In order to provide a safe and healthy environment for your child The Casa Montessori reserves the right to refuse to release a child if the individual picking up is inebriated or impaired. Another person from your release list will be contacted for pick up of the child.

Gifts and giving

The Casa Montessori is funded by preschool tuition and donations. We are dependent on your gifts of time, talent, and treasures to provide an outstanding educational experience for our children. The Casa Montessori asks families for their financial support because together we can build a program comparable to the finest Montessori schools in the world.

The Casa Montessori relies on the generosity of its community to supplement its tuition income. By contributing to our school's financial health, we strengthen our program, implement program enhancements, and cover capital costs. Just as we've decided to make our children's education a priority, it is essential that we all understand the need to make regular giving a priority.

Every year, Casa Montessori families and friends are invited to participate in the Sustaining Fund. As paid, these monies go directly into the operating budget. Participation does not impact enrollment. However, the Casa Montessori must conduct a successful Sustaining Fund campaign to operate its current budget.

There are numerous ways to show your support for the Casa Montessori. Everything, from writing a check to volunteering your time for some gardening to donating materials, is greatly appreciated. Please, contact the school for more information.

Student health

In case of injury or illness during school hours, the student may be brought to the school office. Parents will be notified by phone to pick up a sick or injured child. If a parent cannot be reached, the school will call the alternate pick-up names on the emergency contact list. **Parents are responsible for keeping all emergency information current by making any changes in addresses, telephone numbers, or emergency contact information at the front desk.**

Medical Emergencies

In the event that a student needs emergency medical attention, 911 will be called. The parent or person responsible will be notified. If it is necessary to transport a child to the hospital, a staff member will accompany the child and remain with that student until one of the parents (or someone designated by the parent) arrives at the hospital. Staff members with current CPR/First Aid training are always present on campus and will administer aid whenever necessary.

Medication

The Casa Montessori will not administer medication, drugs, vitamins, or special diets. This excludes the administering of emergency medicine for allergies such as EPI Pens or Benadryl. Please, see the director for proper paperwork and

procedures for such medications. All children with allergies must be on file at the front desk. Please, address any specific needs, should they arise, with the director.

Immunizations

The state immunization law requires all students to have an immunization record on file for school attendance. All needed immunization records must be on file prior to the child attending school. **If your child does not have current immunizations or a signed exemption on file, he will not be allowed to attend classes until the situation has been remedied.** It is the parent's responsibility to bring any updated immunization records to the school.

Emergency Contact List

A child will not be admitted unless an emergency contact list is on file. Parents are asked to call or go to the front desk to make any changes to the emergency contact list. Please, keep in mind that if your child were to have an accident and the information on the emergency contact list were incorrect, the Casa Montessori would have no way of contacting you.

Allergies

Make sure that you note any and all allergies on your child's information form. Also make sure that your child's teacher is aware of all allergies.

Illnesses

1. If a child becomes ill at school, he will be isolated and the parent or authorized person listed on the emergency contact list will be notified for the child to be picked up immediately.
2. You must inform the school if your child has contacted any communicable diseases.
3. As required by State regulations, if a child has had any symptoms of illness, such as nasal discharge, nausea, vomiting, diarrhea, or fever (100 degrees or higher) the child may not return to school until symptom free for **24 hours**.

Child abuse reporting

Per state law, school employees must report suspected cases of abuse, neglect, non-accidental injury, or sexual offenses against children to Child Protective Services (CPS) and/or local law enforcement agencies as well as to the Head of School or Assistant Head of School. Where parents are the alleged abusers, school personnel are not to notify parents; Child Protective Services and law enforcement agencies are responsible for notification. Should the alleged perpetrator be other than a member of the child's family, school personnel shall follow reasonable notification procedures.

Any child who is a suspected abuse victim shall be made available to either CPS or the Police Department for questioning. The investigating agency will determine whether school personnel should be with the child during questioning. The CPS worker and/or the police may interview the child and all other children residing in the home on school grounds outside of the presence of school personnel. They may conduct interviews of the child without permission or notice to the parents where the suspected perpetrator is a family member. CPS has the authority to obtain school records upon written request. State law protects individuals required to report suspected abuse from civil and criminal liability.

Parent Communication & Education

Please inform the child's teacher of any changes at home or in the child's life that may have an effect at school so that we can better provide for the needs of the student. It is **VERY** important that both parents read all communications, which contain important information on upcoming events. Attendance at school events should be a priority. In order to facilitate positive communications the parent should discuss any concerns directly with the classroom teacher. If this first step does not resolve the problem, the parent should contact the director.

The Casa Montessori aspires to help parents achieve an understanding of their children's education. Parents are expected to become informed on Montessori philosophy through study, attendance of school events (including Parent Education Evenings), and parent meetings. Additionally, parents may check out books/theory papers on Montessori at the front desk.

Parent volunteering

Volunteering and parent involvement are an integral part of a successful education. The Casa Montessori welcomes all forms of volunteering: time, services, goods or money. Parent volunteers are required to retain a valid Florida Fingerprint Clearance Card at all times. Prior to contributing time to the class, volunteers must meet with the classroom teacher to find the area in which their talents will be best used.

Snacks

Families are asked to contribute to the school community by taking turns providing snack for their child's class. Your teacher will inform you in advance when your turn is with a grocery list.

Birthdays

Birthday celebrations are special days the class enjoys sharing with your child. **We ask that you first discuss with the teacher whether you would like to celebrate you child's birthday.** Celebration details can be arranged with your child's teacher as well.

Party invitations are not to be distributed at school.

Parent / Teacher conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are held twice a year. If there is a specific topic you wish to cover, please let the teacher know in advance. Parent/teacher conferences are mandatory. At least one parent should attend. Please, discuss scheduling details with your child's teacher.

Visitor regulations

All visitors must check in at the front desk. All parents visiting campus during school hours must check in at the front desk.

Observations

All parents are encouraged to observe their child throughout the year. No appointment is necessary. Observations may or may not be mandatory for parent-teacher conferences. Please, discuss details with your child's teacher. Casa Montessori agrees to afford authorized parents unlimited access to their children in SR programs, during normal hours of provider operation and whenever the children are in the care of the provider. Access may be subject to appropriate safety procedures.

Personal items

Please, have students leave all personal property such as toys, sunglasses, games, etc. at home. The school is not responsible for damage to, loss, or theft of any personal items brought to school. If items are brought to school they will be held in the teacher's possession until the end of the day.

Electronic devices and cell phones

The Casa Montessori asks for parent cooperation in refraining from using cell phones while at school and in the parking lot.

Dress and appearance

1. Children should come to school in clothing that permits full movement and outdoor play and is easy to slip on and off for independent use of bathroom. We do not recommend certain accessories as they are a distraction to the children: jewelry, purses, hats, sunglasses, toys, money, and (unless child may independently use) belts, suspenders or overalls. For more peaceful work, we ask that you do not send your child to school in clothing that encourages aggressive behavior. **No clothing shall display any logos/characters/symbols from any television show or movie.**
2. Soft-soled shoes are strongly recommended. They enable children to effectively participate in activities which will develop coordination. Flip-flops and sandals are not allowed. Shoes must have back and be closed-toed.
3. Accidents happen and you are encouraged to not have your child wear his/her most expensive or favorite clothes. Children are required to have at least one set of clothes at school. A set includes one shirt, one bottom, one underwear, and one pair of socks. **Every item should be labeled with child's name.** If a child has a bathroom accident or gets wet outside and has no extra clothing, the child may be changed into extra clothes that belong to the school. Every item of clothing borrowed is washed and returned to the school.
4. Children are not allowed to wear diapers or pull-ups. If a child is training in independent bathroom use, provide an extra set of underwear and bottoms to stay at school.
5. Children are also required to have a set of indoor shoes (like moccasins or slippers with backs) that remain at school.

Outdoor environment

No child will be allowed to stay indoors during outdoor playtime unless requested, when absolutely necessary, in writing by the child's parent. In this case, the teacher will follow the guidelines for mildly ill children to evaluate the child's overall ability to participate in the classroom.

Lunches

If your child stays past the morning work cycle, you must provide lunch. Please, adhere to the following guidelines:

Not Allowed

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Recommended

Juice, Soda, or any type of beverage (school provides water)	Protein, some ideas: cheese cubes tortilla with grated cheese tuna or egg salad chicken/turkey/beef/pork hard-boiled egg meatloaf slices cottage cheese (spread on celery or cucumber) plain yogurt (not drinkable)
Gum, Candy or sweets	Fruit and vegetable, in season
Individually packed snacks With characters from television or movies.	A Healthy Treat: Raisins kettle corn – yum! Granola bar jello Sunflower seeds pudding (low in sugar) “redeeming valued” cookies such as fig newtons, graham crackers, oatmeal cookies
Spoons or napkins (school provides silverware, plates, bowls, glasses, and napkins)	Leftovers, some ideas spaghetti rice and beans macaroni soup
Lunchables and other “packaged” lunches (not only quite expensive, but extremely high in sodium and fat)	Containers your child can open independently (keep in mind apple sauce, bars, individually wrapped cheese and the like)

Student behavior and discipline

General Conduct (at school and at all school functions)

At all times students are expected and encouraged to be safe, responsible, and respectful towards all visitors and members of the school community. The school’s discipline policy is at all times intended to cultivate a positive atmosphere in which quality education and productive learning can take place.

Good behavior makes our school a safe and pleasant place for everyone, as well as an environment conducive to learning.

Discipline

In accordance with s. 1002.88(1)(i), F.S., Casa Montessori agrees to implement minimum standards for child discipline practices that are age-appropriate and consistent with the requirements in s. 402.305(12), F.S. Such standards must provide that children not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating or frightening. The discipline must not be associated with food, rest or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited. Children may not be denied active play as a consequence of misbehavior

Biting Policy

In order to provide a safe and healthy environment for your child, the school has a biting policy in force. An occasional biting incident may occur. If the child becomes a chronic biter, and if it is determined that the child would be better served in another environment, a parent may be asked to remove their child from school.

Tobacco policy

1. Casa Montessori is a NO SMOKING facility.
2. By state law, no person is allowed to possess any form of tobacco on school grounds
3. Casa Montessori does not allow any clothing or other materials that promote the use of tobacco.

Student records & personal information

1. The Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act of 1974 provides for a parent's right to inspect, review, and seek correction of a child's educational records. Parents may inspect records at any time between 8 a.m. and 4 p.m. on regularly scheduled school days or parents may submit a written request for the inspection of records and Casa Montessori will comply with such request within 45 days of receipt of the request. NOTE: Casa Montessori may charge a reasonable fee for copies of records
2. If a parent believes that information contained in the student's educational record is inaccurate, misleading, or otherwise in violation of the privacy rights of the student, he may submit a written request at the front desk to amend the record. Administration will make a determination of whether the records will be amended within a reasonable time. If the parent is not satisfied with the Casa Montessori's decision, he may submit a written request for a hearing before the Board.
3. Personally identifiable information contained in the student's educational record may be released to others ONLY with a signed, written, and dated request from the person legally responsible for the student, except that certain disclosures may be made without consent as permitted by FERPA §99.31, including, but not limited to:
 - a. School officials with legitimate educational interests, including Casa Montessori employees, teachers, administrators, contracted specialists, or other agent of Casa Montessori who have a legitimate need to obtain access to student records in order to further the educational process at the Casa Montessori or to maintain the health and safety of the student or others.
 - b. A school in which the student seeks or intends to enroll.
 - c. Directory information will be gathered and issued for each student. This information will include, but is not limited to, the student's name, parents' names, address(es), and phone numbers. If for some reason a family does not want this information published, they must submit a written request to the front desk. ***The release of directory information to any agency with a profit motive is prohibited unless specific approval of the Governing Board is granted.***
4. If a parent or student feels that their rights under FERPA have not been maintained, he may file a complaint with the U.S. Department of Education pursuant to FERPA §99.31 and 99.64.

Rilya Wilson Act

In accordance with s. 1002.87(9), F.S., Casa Montessori agrees to abide by the provisions of the "Rilya Wilson Act" (s. 39.604, F.S.) for each at-risk child under the age of school entry who is enrolled in the school readiness program.

School Readiness Record Keeping

Casa Montessori agrees to maintain records, including sign in and sign out documentation, enrollment and attendance certification, documentation to support excused absences and proof of parent co-payments for children funded by the SR program. The records must be maintained for audit purposes for a period of five (5) years from the date of the last reimbursement request for that fiscal year or until the resolution of any audit findings or any litigation related to this Contract, whichever occurs last. Casa Montessori may maintain records in an electronic medium and if the school does so, then the school shall back up records on a regular basis to safeguard against loss.

Records are currently kept on the front office computer, in the child care manager program and are backed up daily.