



WILLIAMSBURG
MONTESSORI
SCHOOL

Where Students Learn by Doing™

Williamsburg Montessori School

Handbook for Parents

2024 - 2025

WELCOME

Revised July 30, 2024

WELCOME

Welcome to Williamsburg Montessori School. This *Handbook* explains how the school operates and outlines our official policies. It also presents guidelines, suggestions, and answers to questions that may arise throughout the year. At WMS parents are essential partners in our mission to “nurture the child’s spirit.” We rely on your wisdom and commitment in helping us create the unique community that is WMS. We deeply value your participation in every facet of your child’s development, and we invite you to join us on this exciting educational journey.

Please regard the policies and procedures outlined in the following pages as a starting point on that journey. The real work takes place between teachers and students, parents and teachers, and between parents and children. We, in turn, welcome your input. If you are a returning parent, we are pleased to welcome you back. If you are new to the school, we look forward to getting to know you.

Best wishes for a peaceful year of joyful learning.

Sandy

Sandy Andrews
Head of School

August 1, 2024

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A MONTESSORI EDUCATION

For more than a century the educational philosophy of Maria Montessori has flourished as a holistic and child-centered approach to human development, teaching practice, and social progress. Trained as a physician, Dr. Montessori became committed to the education of young children, and envisioned school as a carefully designed, developmentally appropriate “home” for children. She named her school the *Casa dei Bambini*, or “Children’s House,” and she described the character of the school in terms of the activities and attitudes an observer might see were he or she to spend a morning in the *Casa*:

There are forty little beings—from three to seven years old, each one intent on his own work. One is going through the exercises for the senses; one is doing an arithmetical exercise; one is handling the letters, one is drawing, one is fastening and unfastening the pieces of cloth on the little wooden frames, still another is dusting.... There are muffled sounds of objects lightly moving about, of children tiptoeing. Occasionally comes a cry of joy only partly repressed, “Teacher! Teacher!” an eager call, “Look! See what I’ve done.” But as a rule, there is entire absorption in the work at hand.

Remarkably, observers who spend a morning in any one of our programs (Toddler, Children’s House, and Elementary) will witness a similar scene. The sight of children happily engrossed in “work” freely chosen, with minimal adult intervention is what draws thousands to the Montessori approach, making it the largest and most enduring educational movement throughout the world.

The Method

The Montessori Method follows a “whole child” approach, fostering not only cognitive skills but also social and emotional growth. Montessori classes span three age levels, and children stay with the same teacher, encouraging a sense of community and allowing teachers to develop those relationships and a deep understanding of the child’s learning style.

The Montessori teacher prepares the environment with aesthetically pleasing and developmentally appropriate multisensory materials to engage the children’s interest and guide them from concrete to abstract learning.

Long, uninterrupted work periods are provided during which the children choose from a wide range of activities and are able to learn at their own pace, both alone and in cooperative groups. The teacher is trained in careful observation, so she is prepared to “follow the child” in his or her development.

To summarize, the method is a response to a universal plea among children: “I want to learn but help me to do it myself.” Through carefully orchestrated experiences guided by physical and mental order, children acquire the inner discipline necessary to persist at their chosen tasks, to interact with the world respectfully, and to participate confidently in an increasingly complex world.

American Montessori Society

Enrolling your child at WMS means joining the American Montessori Society (AMS). Your membership in this organization helps guarantee AMS’s high standards are maintained at WMS. All our teachers have been trained at AMS/AMI accredited institutions, and we maintain an institutional affiliation, which requires 100 percent parent membership. The cost of this membership is approximately \$60.00 per family annually and will be added to your first tuition payment.

Further Reading

The WMS library contains a wide array of resources for parents interested in learning more about Montessori education. From professional journals to the works of Montessori herself to more generalized treatments of childhood, parenting, and learning, we invite you to visit our collection as one way of becoming more acquainted with the type of education your child is experiencing at WMS. Some recommendations include:

Books by Maria Montessori:

The Absorbent Mind

The Discovery of the Child

The Secret of Childhood

Education for a New World

Books Related to the Montessori Experience:

Children of the Universe, Michael Duffy

Maria Montessori, Rita Kramer

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius, Angeline Stoll Lillard

Montessori: A Modern Approach, Paula Polk Lillard

The Hidden Hinge, Rosa Packard

WMS Mission Statement

Guided by the Montessori philosophy, our mission is to provide a daily living and learning environment that nurtures every child's natural curiosity and promotes intellectual, social, physical, and emotional growth.

GENERAL INFORMATION

Williamsburg Montessori School (WMS) was incorporated in August of 1982. It remains a non-profit corporation, open to children ages 18 months to 14 years of age without regard to race, creed, or national origin. WMS holds a certificate of affiliation from the American Montessori Society and is licensed to provide child-care by the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Governance and Leadership

WMS is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors composed of current parents, alumni parents, grandparents, and members of the wider community. Its goal is to ensure effective, strategic and committed leadership enabling WMS to fulfill its mission. The Board hires, supervises and supports the Head of School. It establishes general policy, oversees long-range financial goals, and provides continuity and direction for the school.

The WMS Board elects new directors and officers at the board's annual meeting each summer. Please contact the Chair of the Board for information related to the nominating process. A copy of the WMS bylaws and meeting minutes may be obtained in the main office. Issues to be presented for review by the Board must be submitted to the Chair prior to a meeting, with sufficient time for consideration. Board Meetings are held at 7:00 pm on the third Thursday of each month.

The Board encourages parent participation in the work of committees such as the Board Development Committee, Facilities Committee, and Finance Committee.

The Head of School is the chief administrative officer of the school and leads the school in the areas of curriculum, personnel, financial management, internal relations, admissions and enrollment, program planning and development, external relations, and capital development. The Head is the sole employee of the Board of Directors and implements its general and financial policies. The Head leads the Administrative Team in carrying out WMS' Mission and in advancing the Strategic Plan. The Head of School is supported by the Director of Education, the Registrar, the Director of Operations, and the Bursar.

Calendar

WMS is in session from August to early June. We observe a two-week winter vacation in December, the second full week in April for Spring Break, and two weeks in early August. We also close for the following holidays: Labor Day, three days at Thanksgiving, New Year's Day, President's Day, Martin Luther King Day, Memorial Day, Juneteenth, Independence Day, and several teacher professional days during the year. School calendars are provided at the beginning of the school year, and the most recent calendar updates are posted on our web site at www.williamsburgmontessori.org.

Severe Weather

In the event of severe weather WMS will close school when James City County School system is closed. On subsequent days of such weather WMS will make its own determination of the advisability of opening school. If schools open two hours late WMS will open at 9:30 a.m. for ALL programs. WMS will send an automated message to parents by phone in the case of delays or closings, as well as posting information on the following:

- www.williamsburgmontessori.org
- WMS phone line recorded message
- SchoolReach phone announcement

ADMISSION AND ENROLLMENT

Applying to WMS

The WMS admissions season begins in October, when we schedule tours of the school. This exploratory session includes an introduction to our philosophy and expectations and a classroom observation. When openings are determined in February, new families will be contacted to arrange a visit for their child with the classroom directress. For toddlers and children aged 3-6, this meeting will last about half an hour. Elementary children will be invited to spend the morning in the classroom during school hours.

After the visit, the Admissions Committee will review all materials received and, in consultation with the classroom Directress, decide about the appropriateness of the WMS program for the applicant. Once accepted, each family will have two weeks to enroll by signing and returning an Enrollment Agreement and paying a deposit which is applied toward tuition. After seven days WMS will offer the opening to another candidate.

The Three-Year Cycle

The three-year cycle is critical to the design of a Montessori environment. The children in the final year of each level are a vital component to the classroom. Whether in the Children's House, Lower Elementary, or Upper Elementary, the third year offers the child the opportunity to take his/her well-earned and much anticipated place in the community as a leader and a mentor. In this role the students give back to the community what was provided for them for two years. These early experiences of stewardship and service are key elements of an interdependent community and of our mission to educate each child for life.

For this reason, we ask families to consider carefully their long-term plans prior to enrolling their child at WMS. Once a family has made the decision to have one child leave the school before the end of a three-year cycle, we will continue to offer enrollment/re-enrollment to younger siblings until the sibling has completed the final year of his or her cycle.

Transitions and Rising Up

Students who are in their final year in their current program (Kindergarten, third, and sixth grade students) will begin to visit the next level in the early spring so that they become more comfortable in their new environments and teachers may get to know them. When Children's House students transition into the Lower Elementary, the child's current teacher, both Lower Elementary

teachers, and the Director of Education meet to discuss the best placement for each student. The team considers the learning and teaching styles of students and teachers, gender, ages, and classroom dynamics in making these decisions. Parents are welcome to share information they feel is helpful to the team, but final decisions are made by the team. Class lists are mailed out with the August 1st mailing.

WMS values diversity in both the student body and the faculty. We enroll students and hire teachers without regard to race, religion, sex, or national origin.

THE EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM

Overview

WMS prepares children ages 18 months through fourteen years for life-long learning and meaningful participation in a rapidly changing society. The activities and environments provided by the school are designed to stimulate a thirst for learning, an abiding curiosity about one's surroundings, and the desire and ability to work independently.

We aim to develop in each child the ability to solve problems, to use freedom wisely, to respect him/herself and others, and above all, to take joy in learning.

At WMS, we view education as an aid to life, which includes, but is not limited to mastering intellectual skills. We ascribe to Montessori's belief that

"The young child has one intuitive aim – his self-development. He wants to do and see for himself, through his own senses and not through the eyes of an adult. He becomes a full person. He is educated."

Your Child's Day at School

Because we are a developmental program focused on helping each child reach his/her full potential, the structure of your child's day and the manner of interacting with adults and peers is of paramount importance. While each program level (Toddler, Children's House, Elementary, and Middle School) responds to the unique needs of children at these developmental stages, all of our programs share these core characteristics:

- **Large blocks of uninterrupted time for self-directed work.** The morning work period, from 8:30am to between 10:00 and 11:30am (depending on the child's age) is especially important. For older children, an afternoon work period is

also a feature of his/her day. It is critical that your child arrive at school in time to begin this period with the rest of his/her peers.

- **The teachers' intense focus on the children.** Successful Montessori teaching is based on detailed and ongoing observation of the children, both individually and as a group. Once the school day begins, teachers are immersed in the work of the classroom, which means they are not able to give parents or other visitors attention. We support this element of the program by limiting interruption during the school day. Teachers are available after school for conferences or telephone conversations.
- **Consistency in Routines and Order in the Physical Environment.** Children, especially those between two and five years, are sensitive to routines and order, and they respond positively to consistency in their daily lives. An orderly classroom environment (everything has its place and everything is in its place) fosters independence as children are given lessons in caring for their environment and share responsibility for its maintenance. Daily jobs, such as helping younger friends put on their coats, feeding classroom animals, or setting the table, reinforce a predictable pattern of expectations. Because of the presence of routines and order, there is very little adult "correcting" of students' behavior.
- **Meticulous attention to Grace and Courtesy.** At all times we aspire to model good manners and sociable interactions. You should expect to be greeted with a cheerful "good morning" or "good afternoon" during arrivals and departures. Mealtimes are opportunities to practice table manners, and lessons in making an introduction, offering refreshments, and solving problems peacefully are a regular part of the curriculum.

The Toddler Room

Entry into the toddler environment begins gradually, with parent and child coming together for short periods of time until both child and parent establish trust in the educators and the new environment. This "phasing in" also supports the child's process of separating from the parents, which is the primary challenge of the toddler period.

Adults demonstrate respect for toddlers by:

- ◆ Preparing a safe environment which allows for maximum freedom of movement.
- ◆ Protecting their concentration and movement except for reasons of safety.
- ◆ Using a gentle tone of voice for speaking.

- ◆ Telling children what is going to happen in the room ahead of time (diaper changes, serving lunch) and encouraging their participation in this process.
- ◆ Adapting adult actions to the child's pace rather than expecting the child to adapt to the adults.
- ◆ Using positive methods of limit setting. We do not use physical punishment at WMS.
- ◆ Carefully observing each child and following their lead in preparing a responsive, nurturing environment.

We expect that parents who enroll their children in the Toddler Room will commit themselves to providing a home environment that is consistent with this philosophy of child development.

The Children's House

Serving children aged 3 to 6 years old, each of our Children's Houses is designed to meet the emerging developmental needs of pre-school age children. While each house has a unique character, all are governed by the core goals of concentration, coordination, independence, and order. Each house, as the name implies, is a home for the children. Here a child will find a peaceful, orderly environment, rich in hands-on materials, where he or she can come and feel free to grow among his or her peers.

All classes have an appropriate balance of ages, males, and females. Bright, well-equipped Montessori environments provide settings for a wide variety of activities to promote self-help skills, refinement of the senses, development of gross and fine motor skills, social amenities, and language and cognitive development. Mornings are devoted to an extended (approximately three hours) "work period." Following a nutritious lunch served "family style," younger children nap or enjoy quiet activities while 5- and 6-year-olds are involved in more abstract studies of math, reading, writing, the natural and physical sciences, geography, and cultures.

Outside time is shared among the children of all three Children's Houses. A sand playground provides safe, sturdy equipment for swinging, climbing, and balancing. A digging area often becomes the stage for cooperative and imaginative play opportunities. A shady arboretum invites restful conversation. Running and ball games are played in a separate fenced area.

Classes are in session from 8:30am to 3:00pm, Monday through Friday. 3 and 4-year-olds have the option of attending for half-days (8:30am to 11:45am) or for full days. Before school care is available from 7:30am, and after school care is available from 3:00 pm to 5:30 pm.

The Elementary Program

The WMS Elementary program is designed to meet the unique needs of children between the ages of 6 and 12. The Lower Elementary is designed for children ages 6-9, or first through third grade. The Upper Elementary program is designed for children ages 9-12, or fourth through sixth grade. Since 2001, the Lower Elementary program has been located in the renovated Cundari House on the Longhill Campus. In 2015, WMS acquired the use of a beautiful building close to Colonial Williamsburg, which has served as the home for our Upper Elementary and Middle School communities. As of 2024, our Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary will be sharing the Cundari House as a full Elementary building.

Our beautiful environments are places where the values of independence, cooperation, and self-discipline are emphasized and where education is seen as the ability to concentrate fully, to think critically, to explore joyfully, and to work purposefully, both individually and as part of a peaceful, cohesive community.

Elementary children have a three-hour flexible work period both morning and afternoon to do self-directed work as well as be invited to lessons by the guide. Subjects include science (zoology, chemistry, physics, and botany), history, geography, language arts, and mathematics. The program also provides instruction in music, visual arts and drama, physical education, Spanish, field trips, and “going out.”

We value your child’s participation in family life, which is why homework is minimal in the Montessori program. However, students do participate in projects that require research and attention beyond the classroom. Likewise, we expect reading to be a regular part of all students’ daily at-home routines.

The Lower Elementary Program runs weekdays from 8:30am to 3:00pm, and 8:15am to 3:15pm for Upper Elementary. Before school care is available from 7:30am, and after school care is available from 3:00pm to 5:30pm.

The Middle School Program

The WMS Middle School is a community dedicated to building upon the foundation set in elementary years and serves students from 12 to 14 years of age. The Middle School is housed on Richmond Road and takes advantage of the tremendous resources that both the Watermen's Museum and York River State Park have to offer in supporting our aquaculture program.

As children journey into the wonderful era of adolescence, they have an increased need to explore the world around them and feel they are a vital part of the community. They are on a new cusp of developing skills for lifelong learning, social responsibility, and effective habits of thought and action.

The ideal learning environment for adolescents fosters intellectual, physical, and emotional development (the whole person) and allows them to pursue their interests while achieving academic and leadership excellence. The Montessori process encourages lifelong learning and an approach to every experience as an opportunity to acquire knowledge, continue personal growth, and positively impact the environment.

Middle School course offerings include language arts, mathematics, science, history, geography, civics, physical education and health, fine arts, technology, life skills, and a year-long micro-economy project. Other distinctive features of the program include access to science labs and research-based facilities; partnership with community resources; aquaculture service projects; oyster bed cultivation; and boat building. All courses of study are hands-on opportunities to engage in meaningful work. The curriculum is designed to equip students with skills, concepts, and habits of mind needed to succeed in high school advanced placement courses and college. School hours are from 8:15am-3:30pm.

Field Trips

Field trips and experiences are a vital part of the Montessori curriculum that supplement and enhance the work of the classroom and build a greater sense of community among the students. Children's House students get their first introduction to field trips with short visits to local places in small groups. Lower/Upper Elementary students participate in longer small-group and whole-class experiences, and the Upper Elementary and Middle School take a couple of overnight trips each year.

We hope that each child has the opportunity to participate in these wonderful events. If parents decide not to have their child participate, it is the responsibility of the parent to find care for their child for the duration of the trip.

Before and After School Care

Before/After School care is available for Children’s House and Elementary. Before School Care begins at 7:30am. After School Care begins directly after classes and ends at 5:30pm. Children’s House care meets in the Welcome Room, located in front of Children’s House 1 (CH1). Elementary care meets in the Cundari House.

Discipline

WMS believes that each child should strive to achieve self-discipline in both social and academic situations. Montessori distinguished between the “spontaneous discipline” typical of happily engaged children and adult-centered strategies for maintaining “control.” The ability to master one’s self is a foundational skill for all subsequent learning and it is a central goal of all our programs, especially the Children’s House, where developing the capacity to attain and sustain deep concentration is a primary focus. That focus is extended in the elementary, where self-paced, independent work shapes the experience. At the middle school level, students understand what discipline and responsibility means within group and social settings.

What Montessorians refer to as “grace and courtesy” is central to our entire program as it sets the stage for peaceful social interaction and compassionate living. The Montessori principle of teaching and modeling respect for self, for others and for the environment gives children opportunities to make appropriate choices in behavior. Teachers set limits and offer guidance through example. We try always to direct with positive rather than negative guidance. At all times patience, restraint, and respect for the child’s needs for sensitive intervention govern adult interaction with children.

Normal Peer Conflict

Normal peer conflict is a part of every child’s life experience. As children learn the give-and-take of social interaction and cooperation, conflict naturally occurs. Young children are still learning self-control and developing a sense of personal space.

Pushing and other unwanted physical acts, getting upset about not being first in line, taking an item from another child, disagreeing or saying, “I’m not going to be your friend anymore” are all examples of normal peer conflict. They do not mean that a bully/victim problem exists.

Bullying

Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Bullying is usually a series of repeated, intentionally cruel incidents, or threat of harm, that involve the same children, in the same bully/victim roles. It involves an imbalance of power, either real or perceived. It can be physical or verbal and can include intimidation, inappropriate gestures or touching, and social exclusion. Due to the willful and conscious nature, younger children are not typically developmentally capable of carrying out bullying and more often involved in normal peer conflict.

Each instance of peer conflict at WMS is assessed on a case-by-case basis, by professional and experienced teachers/staff who are building a deep understanding of each student. WMS staff will respond with appropriate intervention as needed and keep parents informed of any major conflicts/incidents.

Unacceptable Behaviors

Experimental behavior is a predictable feature of all developmental levels, and we strive to regard such behaviors as indicative of a child's needs. We work with children to help them learn to make good choices and communicate their needs, develop problem-solving skills, and value respect, honesty, and trust. However, because the community lies at the center of our approach to learning, any individual action that negatively affects the welfare of the community is considered unacceptable. As a result, WMS cannot allow the following:

- Language that expresses disrespect for another person, including profanity.
- Violent behavior, e.g., hitting, kicking, biting, shoving, throwing objects at a person, vandalism.
- Bringing a weapon to school
- Violent role-playing, including pretend gunplay.
- Repeated failure to follow instructions from an adult, either in the classroom or on the playground.
- Failure to follow community expectations as set forth in the classroom rules, including working without disturbing others, walking in the classroom, following verbal and written directions and being respectful to all the teachers who come into the classroom.
- Actions which are likely to cause physical or psychological harm to self, other persons, or school property.
- Inappropriate use of technology as defined by our [Acceptable Use Policy](#).

Resolution Process for Nonviolent Unacceptable Behavior

Step one: The first instance of unacceptable behavior will be addressed by the adult who witnessed it. The staff member will redirect the behavior and then, depending on the child's age, discuss with the child privately why the behavior is inappropriate and strategies for preventing its recurrence. Parents may be notified by telephone or in writing by means of an incident report.

Step two: If this behavior continues, a member of the faculty or the Education Director will be asked to make careful, written observations and suggestions.

Step three: In the event that a behavioral issue cannot be resolved by the faculty, or continues to occur, the parents will be called to a meeting with the Directress, Director of Education, and/or the Head of School. A plan of action for addressing the behavior will be developed. Each remediation plan will take into consideration the best interest of the individual child and the classroom community, and state clearly what the goal will be in order to improve the behavior.

Step four: If steps to correct the behavior fail, permanent dismissal is possible.

Resolution Process for Violent Unacceptable Behavior

Serious misbehavior is defined as actions which are likely to cause physical or psychological harm or damage to self (including drugs and alcohol), other persons, or school property. Parents will be notified in this case and a consequence will be determined. Consequences will be determined by the Head of School in consultation with faculty, and may include the following:

- Restrictions placed on activities
- Community service
- Behavioral contract
- A period of probation
- Detention
- Off-site suspension
- Dismissal from school

Individualization, Child Study, and Special Needs

Central to the Montessori approach is the assumption that children develop at their own pace and that the role of the adult is to assist in that development through sensitive observation and guidance. All learning is individualized, and ongoing child study is a cornerstone of our approach to learning and teaching. From time to time observations of a student's behavior or learning process may call for further examination. Whenever we suspect a child may benefit from this, we initiate a formal Child Study. The purpose of the Child Study is to:

1. Develop a team tasked to provide objective observation and feedback
2. Provide detailed information and support for teachers and parents
3. Create an intervention plan that enhances student learning

Our policy for conducting a child study consists of the following steps:

1. The child study may be initiated by a parent or a teacher. If a teacher initiates the process, the parent will be informed. The child study team will consist of the child's classroom teacher, the Director of Education, the child's parents, and the Head of School.
2. We will conduct at least two observations by Montessori-trained faculty.
3. Observations will lead to recommendations for possible interventions and/or classroom modifications aimed at meeting the child's needs. Children are never diagnosed with any kind of special needs by a WMS employee, and families are guided where to find the appropriate professional help for their child.
4. All recommendations will be documented and shared with parents.
5. Additional services, such as speech and language therapy, occupational therapy, and/or counseling, are not provided at WMS and parents are responsible for procuring these services. If the recommendation involves referral to a specialist, parents must initiate contact with a specialist within 10 days of the school meeting.
6. All reports and documentation from outside specialists must be shared with the school.
7. If the recommendation does not involve referral, but does involve specific suggestions for supporting the child, the plan will be documented, placed in the child's file and a follow-up meeting will be scheduled for no later than 90 days following the initial child study.
8. If the initial recommendations fail to produce successful results, the child will be referred to his/her home school district for further assessment relative to eligibility for Special Services.

9. Some students may need greater accessibility or more support services than we can provide, and in this case, we will discuss with the team and the parents whether Montessori is the best fit for the child.

HEALTH AND SAFETY

Nutritious Food Choices

Good nutrition is an essential component of every child's growth. We strongly encourage you to offer your child healthy, nutritious foods both at home and we will do so here at school in lunch and snacks.

WMS is a peanut and tree nut free school due to allergies in various classrooms.

Lunch and Snacks

A hot lunch is served to Toddler and Children's House classrooms. We make every effort to avoid sugars, trans fats, high fructose corn syrup, food preservatives and colorings. If you have specific dietary needs or allergies, please alert the front office and your child's teacher. Parents are welcome to send in a home-packed lunch if a child has extreme allergies that we cannot accommodate.

Elementary and Middle School students bring their own lunch to school and should be encouraged to pack their own as a valuable exercise in practical life and independence.

If you are packing lunch for your child, please make sure to include the child's name and date it was packed.

Snacks are provided by the school for all levels, although some classes incorporate a snack program to complement the Practical Life curriculum.

Sleep Recommendations

The brain needs enough sleep to function effectively. How much sleep is enough? As of May 15, 2024, the CDC website recommends...

For three to five-year-olds, 10 to 13 hours of sleep daily (including naps). For six to twelve-year-olds, closer to 9 to 12 hours of sleep daily. For older children, 13 to 17-years-old, around 8 to 10 hours daily for optimum health.

Illnesses

Regular attendance is important for all children. However, there is no advantage to sending a sick child to school. Please keep your child home if the following conditions exist:

WMS Illness Policy¹

When to keep your child at home from school

There are three main reasons to keep sick children at home or for which children may be excluded from school or care:

1. The child doesn't feel well enough to take part in normal activities (such as being overly tired, fussy, or won't stop crying, unable to focus or participate in class lessons or activities).
2. The child needs more care than teachers and staff can give and that compromises the health and safety of other children.
3. The illness is on this list and staying home is required or recommended. Your child may be excluded from school and need to be picked up early if they show signs of any of these listed illnesses.

A child who is ill will not be able to learn, may infect other children, and will not be happy. **Once a parent has been called for early pick-up due to the reasons above, you or one of your local emergency contacts must pick your child up within ONE HOUR.** Your child must be fever-free (without the use of fever-reducing medications) for **24 hours** before returning to school.

<u>Symptoms</u>	<u>Child Must Stay Home or Be Excluded from School?</u>	<u>Doctor's Note Required for Reentry?</u>
Diarrhea Frequent, loose or watery stools compared to child's normal ones that are not caused by food or medicine.	Yes- if child looks or acts sick or has had <u>two diarrhea episodes within 24 hours</u> ; if child has diarrhea with fever and isn't acting normally; if child has diarrhea with vomiting; if child has diarrhea that overflows the diaper or the toilet.	Yes , if diarrhea persists for 48 hours or is accompanied by fever.
Fever with behavior change or other illness.	Yes- when child also has a rash, sore throat, vomiting, diarrhea, yellow or green mucus discharge, severe or mild cough, behavior changes, stiff neck, difficulty breathing, etc. for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone, without the use of medicine that reduces fever.	Yes

¹ Adapted from The School Health Program of Children's Hospital Colorado information sheet.

https://www.colorado.gov/pacific/sites/default/files/DEHS_ChildCare_HowSickIstooSickIllnessPolicy_English.pdf

<p>“Flu-Like” Symptoms Fever over 101 degrees Fahrenheit with a cough or sore throat. Other flu symptoms can include tiredness, body aches, vomiting, and diarrhea.</p>	<p>Yes- for at least 24 hours after the fever is gone, without the use of medicine that reduces fever.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Coughing</p>	<p>Yes- if severe, persistent, uncontrolled coughing or wheezing, rapid or difficulty breathing, and medical attention is necessary.</p>	<p>Yes, when accompanied by fever or other symptoms on this list.</p>
<p>Mild Respiratory or Cold Symptoms Stuffy nose with clear drainage, sneezing, mild cough</p>	<p>No- may attend if able to take part in school activities and child does not need more care than teachers can provide without compromising the learning environment for other children.</p> <p><i>Keep home if symptoms are severe. This includes fever or child is not acting normally and/or has trouble breathing.</i></p>	<p>Yes, when accompanied by two other symptoms of COVID-19 such as fever or cough.</p>
<p>Rash with Fever Note- Body rash without fever or behavior changes usually does not need to stay home from school, call the doctor.</p>	<p>Yes- call the doctor. Any rash that spreads quickly, has open, weeping wounds and/or is not healing should be evaluated.</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Vomiting Throwing up two or more times in the past 24 hours.</p>	<p>Yes- until vomiting stops or a doctor says it is not contagious. If the child has a recent head injury watch for other signs of illness and for dehydration.</p>	<p>Yes, if accompanied by fever or frequency of vomiting and length of sickness exceeds 24 hours.</p>
<p>Ringworm</p>	<p>Yes- from end of school day until start of treatment. Keep area covered for the first two days.</p>	<p>Yes</p>

Head Lice or Scabies	Yes- from end of school day until after the first treatment.	No
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye) Pink color of eye <i>and</i> thick yellow/green discharge	Yes- For 24 hours <u>after starting antibiotics</u> and the child is able to take part in usual activities.	Yes
Strep Throat, Impetigo	Yes- For 24 hours <u>after starting antibiotics</u> and the child is able to take part in usual activities.	Yes
Chicken Pox	Yes- Until blisters have dried and crusted (usually 6 days)	Yes
Vaccine Preventable Diseases	Yes- until the doctor says the child is no longer contagious.	Yes

When does my student need a doctor’s excuse?

A doctor’s note dated one to two days prior to return is required, regardless of the number of days absent, for all communicable diseases such as measles; mumps; whooping cough; hand, foot and mouth; COVID; respiratory streptococcal infections; scarlet fever; impetigo; conjunctivitis (pink eye); ringworm; and infectious mononucleosis. While a standard note vaguely worded, “(Student name) is fit to return to school on (date of return),” is acceptable for most communicable diseases, WMS will need to be alerted to any positive COVID tests in our school community for the purposes of contact tracing.

If a student is absent for three or more consecutive days, they are required to bring a doctor’s note dated one to two days prior for reentry.

Students who experience injuries or undergo surgeries such as a broken arm or myringotomy tubes should also present a doctor’s note upon return to school. This will help teachers and staff know if there are any restrictions in activities or possible complications to watch for.

Please notify WMS promptly if your child will be absent for any length of time.

We also need to know when your child contracts a contagious disease so that parents of the other children may be advised of possible exposure. The School Entrance Health Form signed by a physician is required upon enrollment at WMS. An updated form is required yearly for the Children’s House children and every six months for any child under 2 years of age. Elementary students need an update on immunizations at 5th grade.

Full WMS Pandemic Plan can be found here:
<https://www.williamsburgmontessori.org/resources/>

Medications

Program staff (teachers, assistants, and administrators) MAY NOT administer any kind of medication (prescription or over-the-counter), EXCEPT nonprescription sunscreen, diaper ointment, and insect repellent. When trained to do so, they may administer emergency EpiPens, liquid benadryl, and inhalers for students with extreme allergies included in ADA regulations. If your child requires medication outside of those listed above, please contact the office. Each medication requires a Written Medication Consent Form to be filled out and depending on the medication and duration, may need to be signed by the child's pediatrician/physician. Please contact the office for a Written Medication Consent Form.

Expired Medication Policy

Williamsburg Montessori School Expired Medication Policy:

Expiration dates should be checked periodically by the AMAT or MAT-trained personnel, especially on auto-inject epinephrine and inhalers.

If a medication is found to be expired, it is recommended that:

1. All discontinued or outdated medications be returned to the parent, guardian, or the adult designee and documented on the student's medication log. The log should also contain the medication name and return date and the signatures of the school personnel returning the medication and of the parent, guardian, or designee receiving the medication.
2. At the end of the school year, all the remaining medication MUST be returned directly to the parent, guardian, or adult designee and so documented on the student's medication log. The log should also contain the medication name and return date and the signatures of the school personnel returning the medication and of the parent, guardian, or designee receiving the medication.
3. If the parent or guardian does not arrange to pick up medication within 30 days of a documented notice, the medication will be disposed of by the site administrator, school nurse, or other duly qualified supervisor of health in accordance with the applicable state law and local ordinances.
4. Medications should not be flushed down the toilet, and medications disposed of in the school trash should follow this protocol: Take medications out of containers and mix with coffee grounds or kitty litter. Place in sealable bag to prevent leaking or breaking out of garbage bag. Scratch out all identifying information on prescription bottles to make it unreadable. Medication disposal must be witnessed by another school staff member and documented on the student's medication log.

General Safety Precautions

Our approach to providing a safe school combines reasonable precautions with common sense. All classrooms are locked following the morning drop-off procedure. Families arriving after 8:45am should check in at the office to sign in and receive a key, as well as families should sign out at the the office when picking up a child before dismissal. **All visitors must report to the office before proceeding to a classroom. For the upper campus, please utilize the doorbell at the front door of the middle school and wait for a teacher or assistant to let your child in.**

We conduct regular fire and safety drills throughout the year, and we comply with Virginia state licensing regulations by providing training in CPR, childhood health and medications, and playground safety to our staff.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children enrolled at WMS may leave the premises only with parents or individuals authorized by the parent/guardians. Anyone requesting to pick up a child will be asked to confirm his or her identity through the use of a picture ID. If prior permission has not been obtained, or authorization cannot be validated; the child will not be permitted to leave the center with that individual.

Parents are responsible for making sure that an accurate list of authorized individuals is kept on file in the office. Should there be a need for a person not listed to pick up the child, we must have written notice from the parent stating the name of the individual picking up the child, the date, and approximate time. This information will be kept on file for future reference.

Please keep in mind that when a child or teacher/substitute is new to the center or a class, the office staff and teachers may ID you until they become familiar with your face. Please understand that this is for your child's safety and is a requirement of Virginia Minimum Standards for licensed child day centers.

Those individuals who are the legal guardian(s), or who have legal custody of a child enrolled in the center must provide the center with a copy of the official documents so stating the arrangement. This information will be kept in your child's file so that should a question arise about custody, your child will not be released to an unauthorized individual. **Please be advised that unless proper documentation is provided to the center stating a parental custody arrangement, we are legally required to release a child to a biological parent.**

Emergencies

We ask all parents to complete an emergency form for their children. This form includes a medical release form, which parents should sign. If your child should become lost, seriously ill, or have an accident, the school will attempt to notify the parents. However, if neither parent can be reached, the release authorizes the school to seek emergency medical treatment for your child.

Communication, Evacuation, Shelter in Place Procedures

In case of an event that requires evacuation from the school, children will be relocated by bus or automobile to Lafayette High School.

The “Shelter-in-Place” plan is one that will be implemented in the event of a chemical, biological, and/or radiological incident. WMS will follow the directions of James City County Government and Public Safety Officials during any hazardous materials emergency.

- Immediately upon notification of a chemical, biological, and/or radiological incident, all exterior doors will remain locked. No one will be permitted to enter or exit the school building during a “Shelter-in-Place.” Students will remain in their assigned classrooms. The “Shelter-in-Place” will continue until authorities announce the end of the emergency.
- Parents need to monitor public notices on radio, television, and the internet for information about the nature and duration of the emergency. Please avoid calling the school for updates. In case of an event that requires evacuation or shelter in place, parents will be notified by (a) web site announcement, (b) email broadcast, (c) SchoolMessenger telephone broadcast.
- WMS maintains appropriate supplies for an incident involving “Shelter-in-Place” (water, blankets, flashlights, battery-operated radio). If an incident occurs at the Surry Nuclear Power Plan, the Longhill Road campus is within the “safe zone” and we will “Shelter-in Place.” Students at Richmond Road will be transported to Longhill Road to “Shelter-in-Place.”
- When county officials determine it is safe to do so, parents may pick up their children from school. Our parent/student reunification process is as follows:
 - Parent/authorized person will park car in compliance with directions of parking monitors.

- Parent/authorized person will enter the school through front office entrance.
- Parent/authorized person will be required to show proper ID for any child being picked up from school.
- Student will be called out of the classroom, reunited with the parent/authorized person at the front door of individual classrooms.

Reports to Authorities

We are required by Virginia State Law to report any suspected cases of child abuse or neglect to the Department of Social Services or to the Child Abuse and Neglect Hotline.

WMS Video Surveillance Policy

Video surveillance provides a tool for monitoring activity on WMS property to protect students, staff, and visitors' health, welfare, and safety. Video surveillance is a valuable deterrent to inappropriate behavior and is a significant factor in protecting WMS. This system shall not replace the need for the ongoing vigilance of school supervision/security staff. School administrators shall ensure that due diligence is observed in maintaining general campus security.

A. Signage and Notification:

1. Signs will be posted in public entryways to the buildings and at other conspicuous locations informing persons that the building and grounds may be under video surveillance. The posted signs will read *Surveillance Cameras in Use*.
2. WMS shall also notify students, staff, and parents/guardians that video surveillance will occur on school property by including a notice in the parent and staff handbook.

B. Camera Location, Operation, and Control

1. The surveillance system is a video system located in the interior of classrooms on the lower campus facilities. It will be in operation virtually 365 days a year and 24 hours per day.
2. The placement of cameras is restricted to public areas and cameras will be visible.
3. Areas chosen for surveillance shall be where surveillance is a necessary and viable deterrent.
4. Cameras will not monitor areas where people have a reasonable expectation of privacy (e.g. change rooms and restrooms).
5. Surveillance cameras are to be used to deter violence, inappropriate or damaging student or staff behaviors, theft, or other security breaches.
6. The cameras record video only.

C. Protection of Information and Disclosure

1. Security and retention of recordings
 - a. Only those persons authorized by the Head of School or WMS Board Chair shall access or monitor the recordings (“Authorized Persons”).
 - b. Video recordings shall be retained for thirty (30) calendar days and then deleted except that copies of recordings of incidents subject to known investigations, court cases, or due process hearings will be retained until resolved.
 - c. The system is a remote, secured, closed system without access to the internet.
 - d. WMS will provide reasonable safeguards to security including, but not limited to password protection, well-managed firewalls, and controlled physical access to protect video surveillance system from hackers, unauthorized users and unauthorized use.
2. Video Monitors
 - a. The video monitor shall be in a controlled access area, or a privacy screen will be utilized as needed to block the public view of the video monitor.
 - b. Only Authorized Persons or law enforcement officials shall have access to the video monitors while they are in operation.
 - c. The Head of School or another Authorized Person will be responsible for the day-to-day operation of the video monitors

D. Use of Information Collected

1. Video surveillance may be used for inquiries and proceedings related to law enforcement or investigations designated by the Head of School.
2. A copy of a video recording can be released to appropriate government authorities, including law enforcement. Prior to the release of a recording, a Video Surveillance Release Form shall be completed to document who took the recording, when this occurred, and whether the recording will be returned or destroyed by the authorities after use.
3. Requests for review of video recordings shall comply with the following procedures:
 - a. A video can only be shown to unauthorized persons if the school receives consent from the parents/guardians of any other minor students visible in the videotape. All viewing requests must be submitted in writing.
 - b. Requests for viewing will be limited to those parents/guardians, staff and/or administration with a direct interest in the recording as authorized by the Head of School. Only the portion of the recording concerning the specific incident at issue will be made available for viewing.
 - c. Requests for viewing may be made to the Head of School within 25 calendar days of the date of recording.

- d. Approval or denial for viewing will be made within 2 school days of receipt of request and so communicated to the requesting individual.
- e. Recordings will be made available for viewing within 3 school days of the approval of the request.
- f. Actual viewing by 3rd parties such as parents and staff will be permitted only at the administrative office.
- g. All viewing will include an Authorized Person.
- h. A written log will be maintained of those viewing video recordings including the date and location of viewing, reasons for viewing, date the recording was made and viewer's signature.
- i. Recordings will remain the property of WMS and may be reproduced only in accordance with applicable law and WMS Board policy.

Legal Reference

Code of Virginia § 18.2-386.1. Unlawful filming, videotaping or photographing of another.

Code of Virginia § 22.1-289. Scholastic Records.

8VAC20-671-670. Videotaping

Toddler Biting Policy

Biting Confidentiality: In compliance with VA Licensing confidentiality guidelines, staff will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been bitten or bit another child.

Biting is a very common behavior among children birth to three years of age. At Williamsburg Montessori School, we believe that by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can prevent many biting behaviors by adapting the environment (this could mean adding or replacing toys and materials, rearranging furniture, adjusting the schedule or routine, adjusting the teacher's approach, providing new and different opportunities, etc.). We do not assign punishments or shame children exhibiting biting behavior. We also know that even with all our knowledge of child development, that many things can contribute to this behavior and that we may not be able to prevent all occurrences.

We understand that children biting other children is one of the most common and most difficult behaviors to deal with in group child care settings because of its effect on everyone involved, which is magnified due to the severity of the injury that can occur. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and, understandably so, provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the caregivers involved. For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing phase. Toddlers may try it out as a form of communication. They are in the process of learning appropriate social behavior. For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. This and other challenging behaviors may occur for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, developing language skills, stress or change in the environment, a need for emotional release, feeling threatened, or to feel a sense of power. To alleviate some of the triggers for biting, our staff maintains the following practices that research has shown to help prevent incidences of biting.

- Quality relationships: Staff develops nurturing relationships with the children and gets to know each child individually. Staff is given many opportunities for professional development to help him/her learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- Environmental influences on child's behaviors: Children are given opportunities to work individually and in both small and large groups; there is a variety of engaging work available, appropriate behaviors are modeled by the teachers, who maintain an environment that is quiet and productive which can be very calming to a struggling child; and staff are trained to be very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.

- Targeted social-emotional supports: Children have a daily routine that they follow which allows for freedom and the opportunity to meet their individual needs. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Adults discuss emotions/feelings through books and other work and teach strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves.

At Williamsburg Montessori School, we use the following steps to prevent biting and other aggressive behavior and to keep all the children in the classroom safe and ensure that everyone's needs are met consistently.

1. Action Plan before biting occurs:

- * Create an environment which meets the developmental needs of the children. Monitor and supervise all children while working and/or playing. Observe and take thoughtful notes regarding the behavior and development of all children in our care.

- * Redirect in situations where any physically aggressive incident may occur. Closely observe the children in question and determine possible causes, make changes in response.

- * Maintain an environment that elicits calm, thoughtful behavior.

2. If a child is bitten:

- * The biter is calmly removed from the area, using simple words such as "biting hurts," and taken under direct supervision by a staff member for the remainder of the day.

- * A second staff member immediately attends to the child who was bitten comforting him/her and applying first aid as needed. The parents of both children are contacted immediately and an incident report is filled out for the child who was bitten, a behavior report for the child who bit, and each parent should sign off on these reports at pickup that day.

- * We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.

*The biter will then be shadowed by a staff member and any other attempts at biting or any other harmful behavior will be stopped as they occur. The child will be talked to on a level which he/she can understand. "I can see that you want that truck, but I can't let you hurt him. Biting hurts." The child will be redirected to other work/play and staff will closely monitor, supervise and observe this child to determine possible causes of the behavior. Notes will be taken and filed in the behavior log.

* Classroom staff will report all incidents to the Head of School on the day of the incident to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. Classroom staff will meet with administration to determine the cause and discuss preventative measures to be implemented immediately.

3. If biting continues:

* Classroom staff will meet with administrators on a routine basis for advice, support, and strategy planning.

* A teacher conference will be held with the parent(s) of the child who is biting and with the parents on the child(ren) being bitten in order to discuss the situation in detail. The outcomes of these conferences will be discussed, and any changes will be made at home and in the classroom. A written plan of action on the Behavior Intervention Plan form should be produced and carried out, signed by all adults providing care for the children involved (this may include babysitters, nannies, substitute teachers, etc.). This will ensure that all adults are on the same page and that the children are receiving consistent responses to their behaviors.

*Staff will note and chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, other children involved and their behaviors, staff present, and circumstances in the behavior log.

*Staff will shadow children who indicate a tendency to bite to head off biting situations before they occur, teach non-biting responses to situations, and reinforce appropriate behavior.

* Administrators and teachers will work together to adapt the program to better fit the needs of all the children in the classroom.

* If teachers, parents, and administrators are working cooperatively together and providing consistent attention to the matter, and they still agree that the children need more support, Williamsburg Montessori School will hire an extra staff member (a substitute teacher) for the classroom for maximum period of 1 month to provide shadowing support for a child who struggles with consistent biting. If the child is still showing biting behavior after that time period, we may implement the following steps if appropriate to the situation:

- the parent joins the child to become the child's shadow support
- a classroom placement change is made for either the child who is exhibiting the biting behavior or the child(ren) who are being bitten (an early transition and change in environment for children stuck in a behavior pattern can be helpful if the child(ren) are showing other signs of readiness including mastering toilet learning, completing classroom works, showing independence in self-care and communication skills.)
- other classroom parents of children not involved are notified of the challenges and the school's efforts and reminded of our policy to continue to work with the children involved.

* Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both biting child(ren) and child(ren) who have been bitten to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.

*In cases where staff or parents feel any child has a special need or is exhibiting behavior beyond normal development, the child will be recommended for a developmental evaluation by a trained therapist. James City County Schools offer free evaluations for speech or other developmental concerns, or the parent may choose to speak with their pediatrician and obtain a referral for a private evaluation. Parents should provide documentation of the evaluation to the school and follow up with recommendations from the therapist as needed. However, biting behavior is very typical and common in all children under the age of 3.

*Expulsion/withdrawal of a child from our program will only take place if it is deemed in the best interest of the child exhibiting the biting behavior, the integrity of the school, and the other children enrolled. If the teachers have exhausted all efforts and a parent is uncooperative with the action plan or shows a lack of support or effort for their child or the school's efforts, Williamsburg Montessori School maintains the

right to withdrawal the child from the program. If the behavior is consistent and all parties are unable to come up with the needed support and solution for the problem, the child may be withdrawn from the program.

II. Helpful Resources for Common Toddler Behavior Questions

All About Biting <http://www.ccie.com/library/5018461.pdf> *Aggressive Behavior in Toddlers* <https://www.zerotothree.org/resources/16-aggressivebehavior-in-toddlers> *Biting, Hitting, Kicking and other Challenging Toddler Behavior*

<http://www.janetlansbury.com/2012/09/biting-hitting-kicking-and-other-challenging-toddlerbehavior/> *What to Do When Toddlers Bite*
<http://www.handinhandparenting.org/article/what-to-do-when-toddlers-bite/> *Toddler Bites*

<http://www.regardingbaby.org/2012/04/10/toddler-bites/>
Understanding and Responding to Children Who Bite

<https://families.naeyc.org/learning-anddevelopment/child-development/understanding-andresponding-children-who-bite>

BEING A PARENT AT WMS

Being a parent at WMS assumes both a major investment and a major commitment. A WMS education extends well beyond the basics of literacy and numeracy into the social and spiritual aspects of life. This applies to parents as well as children. Children thrive when home and schoolwork in harmony, with both environments sharing the same educational values and expectations.

We build our most productive relationships with parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education as part of the admission process—so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children—and continue to provide more opportunities throughout a family’s years at the school. Once children are enrolled, the school expects parents to attend regularly scheduled parent-teacher conferences and parent education events, and to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in this *Handbook* and other school publications.

Parents often ask for help in creating consistency between home and school, and much of our communication with you is aimed toward supporting this goal. This begins with the general principle, “Never do something for your child that he can do for himself.” Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of practical life that a child can do for himself at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style different from the way in which we were parented. In general, Montessori teaching relies on “showing” rather than “correcting.”

We understand that the school/home partnership is vital to success. Montessori education begins with honest, open inquiry and deepens into trust. We invite you to let us know your thoughts, questions, and concerns, as we are committed to working together to serve the child.

Parent Commitment

Each WMS family is required to contribute service to the school each year the child is enrolled. We rely on the involvement of parents in order to be able to provide certain services to our children, raise funds, and organize special events. Without the help of parents many of these things would not be possible. WMS is grateful for the time, thought, and energy parents put into the school and for the positive impact that volunteering has on our community.

The volunteer responsibilities of the parents at WMS are divided into two categories: the WMS Parent Commitment and the Classroom Jobs. The WMS parent commitment involves being on a committee that performs a specific job for the school community (WMS Gala, School Photos, etc.).

Classroom Jobs involves tasks that need to be completed throughout the year and those are divided among the families of each classroom. These jobs are divided up at the Parent Orientation at the beginning of the year.

Communication

At WMS we strive to foster clear communication between home and school. The following chart offers guidance regarding the proper channels to use for gaining information and solving problems.

Matter Related to:	First Contact
Child's progress Classroom activities Specialists Class procedures Behavior and discipline	Directress
Facilities Legal matters Fundraising Public relations	Head of School <i>Sandy Andrews</i>
Pedagogical issues Academic policy Parent education	Director of Education <i>Kristin Reynolds</i>
After School Issues After School Assistants After School Schedule	Full Day Coordinator Children's House Elementary
Daily scheduling Student records Observations Registration Admissions	Registrar <i>Donna Feller</i>
Facility needs Bus scheduling Substitute Licensing AMAT medications/questions	Director of Operations <i>Kris Finsterwalder</i>
Billing/accounts Changes in tuition	Bursar <i>Anita Kohli</i>

In addition to the aforementioned guidelines for channeling the flow of communication, we call your attention to the following elements of our program designed to enhance the school-home relationship.

The Parent/Teacher Connection

For communication regarding your child's needs or experience at home or school, your first point of contact should be his/her teacher. After all, parents and teachers are working with and caring for the children on a daily basis and know them best. Teachers are not available during the school day as they are providing instruction and care for the children. Car line drop off and pick-up are also not ideal times to discuss matters due to our need to maintain a safe and efficient process. Teachers will share their preferred method of communication at Parent Orientation. Generally speaking, a note or email works well for basic information. Phone conversations or a face to face meeting are best for discussions that require a two-way exchange of information or for problem solving. Please allow teachers 48 hours to respond to an email since they do not have ready access to a computer throughout the day. The Head of School and Director of Education are available for discussions and situations that cannot be resolved between teacher and parent.

Babysitting and Outside Care Conflict of Interest

It is inappropriate for parents to employ WMS faculty and staff for in-home childcare. This policy is furnished in order to maintain the professional integrity of our school program.

Classroom Observation

There is no better way to gain an understanding of your child's experience here at school than by observing in the classroom. Knowing what is going on in the classroom provides a common point-of-reference for you and your child to talk about his or her "work" at school. It also enhances communication with teachers. Beginning in October, our programs are open to anyone interested in observing the Montessori environment. In order to preserve the quiet atmosphere of the classroom, we limit visitors to one per day. Parents must schedule your observation time with the office. **On your observation day, report to the office to be escorted to the classroom.**

Conferences

Formal conferences for all programs are scheduled two times a year, in the late fall and early spring. School is closed to accommodate these events and all

parents are expected to attend. Parents arrange individual appointments through the office. These bi-yearly conferences are for **parents-only**, so please plan accordingly. You may schedule a conference with your child's teachers at any time by contacting them through the school office, either by note, email, or phone call.

Progress Reports

All students receive formal progress reports twice a year. Normally, progress reports are distributed prior to scheduled conferences, and we hope you will use these reports to prepare for any subsequent meetings you may have with your child's teacher. Like classroom observation, they provide a concrete point-of-reference for discussing the nature of your child's work at school.

Parent Seminars

All our programs offer parent seminars regularly. These gatherings are usually organized around a Montessori-related topic. They are opportunities to share information about making the most of a Montessori education. These events will be advertised as we develop them; we encourage you to join us.

Notes, Reminders, and Updates

We electronically distribute a weekly bulletin of *Tuesday Tidings* featuring general information related to school and classroom events.

Website

The WMS website contains the most up-to-date information about the WMS experience, including calendar updates. Our web address is www.williamsburgmontessori.org

Telephone/Fax/Email:

The office is open for calls 8:00 am to 4:00 pm each day. Please call the school's general number, 757-565-0977, during these hours.

Teachers are not available for calls during school hours, but they will return calls as soon as possible at the end of the day. The school fax number is 757-220-6655. The school email address is wms@williamsburgmontessori.org.

WMS relies regularly on email as a tool for sharing important information about goings on at school. We publish an email address in our school directory and

broadcast information using a distribution list. We ask that all WMS families respect the privacy of individual members of the community and only use email information for school-related purposes.

Liaisons and Mentoring

All new families are assigned a mentor family to assist with the transition into our community. Additionally, each classroom is supported by the leadership of a designated Parent Liaison. Liaisons coordinate information sharing, mentoring for new families, and other special events.

A Note on Lateness

Following Dr. Montessori's belief that all work has a beginning, a middle, and an end, we expect all students to arrive at school and be picked up on time. The late arriving child misses the peaceful transition into the classroom that sets the tone for the day. He enters a working classroom where friends have already chosen work and work partners, and the teacher is absorbed in giving lessons.

Similarly, parents late in picking up their children put an unnecessary strain on the child anxiously waiting to go home. Lateness in pick-up also places strain on our faculty: since we do not budget to pay teachers after dismissal time, we must pass this cost along to parents. **Latecomers will be charged \$1.00 per minute. Following the third incident of lateness, families will be charged \$5.00 per minute.** As a demonstration of our good faith, we will overlook the first incident. Similarly, if you are detained, please call to alert us of your expected arrival.

Code of Conduct

1. POLICY STATEMENT

Williamsburg Montessori School is a place which promotes values that are in keeping with the School's Mission. All students, parents, teachers, and staff have the right to be safe, and feel safe, in their school community. With this right comes the responsibility to be law-abiding citizens and to be accountable for actions that intimidate or put at risk the safety of others or oneself.

For the purpose of this Code of Conduct, "School Community" comprises the administration, teachers, assistants, staff, students, parents, guardians, step-parents, relatives, friends, supporters, caregivers, and invitees of the School, who attend the School, or elsewhere, for the purpose of visiting, viewing, participating, supporting, or being present for any official activity, whether learning or social, held by or for the benefit of the School and its students.

The School Community Code of Conduct sets clear standards of behavior which are expected as members of the School community. It specifies the consequences for any member of the school community who does not comply with those standards of behavior, whether those persons are on the School's campus, in transit to, or at another location for the purpose of any school-authorized events or activities.

2. BACKGROUND

Dr. Maria Montessori integrated a code of conduct into her curriculum emphasizing grace and courtesy. Behavior in a Montessori classroom is no different in our homes or the social community; respect and care for each other, our environment, and ourselves.

The following are the principles which provide the framework for the Williamsburg Montessori Code of Conduct:

HONESTY: Honesty in all matters is the basic expectation at Williamsburg Montessori School. Truth, an outgrowth of honesty, is essential to relationships that hold our community together.

KINDNESS: We expect that all Williamsburg Montessori students will treat others with consideration both inside and outside the classroom. Students' treatment of each other must be respectful at all times, whether or not an adult is present.

DISCIPLINE: The Montessori approach to conduct is based in self-discipline. We understand that students test lines as they grow and that they will have challenges. We strive to support all students in learning self-awareness and honesty in order to accept responsibility for inappropriate behavior or mistakes.

Every student at Williamsburg Montessori School has a right to learn and thrive in a school environment that is conducive to academic achievement and social growth. Any behavior by a student that threatens to disrupt the learning process or poses a danger to others is unacceptable. Please see the “Unacceptable Behaviors” section for more information on what is not tolerated and the resolution process.

With this in mind:

- All members of the School community are to be treated with respect and dignity.
- Members of the School community are expected to use non-violent means to resolve any conflict.
- Insults, disrespect and other hurtful acts disrupt learning and teaching in the School community and are a direct contradiction to the School’s Mission and Values. Members of the School Community have a responsibility to maintain an environment where conflict and difference can be addressed in a manner characterized by respect and civility to all others.

Parents play an important role in the education of their children and have a responsibility to support the efforts of school staff in maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for all students. Parents fulfill this responsibility when they:

- Show an active interest in their child’s school work and progress
- Communicate regularly with the school
- Help their child be appropriately dressed and prepared for school
- Ensure their child attends school regularly and on time
- Promptly report to the school their child’s absence, late arrival, or early departure
- Become familiar with the Parent Handbook

- Encourage and assist their child to learn and practice healthy social skills
- Work with school staff in dealing with disciplinary issues.

3. STANDARDS OF LEARNING

At a minimum, all members of the school community are expected to behave with respect, civility, and in the manner of a responsible citizen. This means all school community members must:

- Respect all federal and state laws
- Demonstrate honesty and integrity
- Respect differences in people, their ideas and opinions
- Treat one another with dignity and respect at all times, especially when there is a disagreement
- Respect and treat others fairly, regardless of their disability, gender, nationality, race or ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, etc.
- Respect the legal and moral rights of others
- Show proper care and regard for school property and the property of others
- Take appropriate measures to help those in need
- Respect persons who are in a position of authority
- Respect the need of others to work in an environment of learning and teaching.

4. GENERAL CONDUCT

School Community members are expected to:

- Support the Administration, Teachers, and School staff in the development of a learning community based on the Montessori pedagogy
- Abide by the school's policies
- Acknowledge that the Administration has the ultimate responsibility to implement these policies
- Work with the school teaching staff to deal promptly with areas of concern
- Treat all members of the school community with respect and courtesy
- Acknowledge and affirm success in individual and school achievement.

5. PHYSICAL SAFETY

All school community members must not:

- Use any object to threaten or intimidate any other person
- Be in possession of, or under the influence of, or provide others with, alcohol or illegal drugs. The exception is when, in the normal course of festivities, alcohol is made available to members or guests of the school community.
- Cause, inflict, or encourage others to verbally abuse, threaten or inflict bodily harm on another person by any physical aggression

6. RESPONSIBILITY FOR OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS

Any parent or school community member who invites a relative, friend, support, caregiver, or other persons to be present at any official learning or social activity held by or for the benefit of the school and its students, must at all times be responsible for that person and ensure they act at all times in a manner consistent with this code of conduct.

7. BREACH OF THIS CODE OF CONDUCT

The consequences to a member of the school community for breaching this code of conduct will be determined at the head of school's discretion. These consequences include any of the following:

- The school may ban any member of the school community from attending any school sponsored extra-curricular activity or social/fundraising event.
- The school may ban any member of the school community from being on the school grounds.
- In the case of extreme or prolonged breach of this code of conduct by a parent, the school may terminate the enrollment of the child of that parent.
- The school may take such other steps as it may in its reasonable discretion determine appropriate according to the nature of the breach

TRANSPORTATION

Arrival

Arriving at school is an important transition time for all children. It is also a hectic time of day. Please observe the following procedures to help make the transition as smooth as possible.

Toddlers

Toddler parents accompany their children to the Toddler door, are greeted by the directress, and the student goes inside.

The greeting teacher is required by licensing to do a quick medical check to make certain that sick children do not enter the environment. Please inform us of any unusual symptoms your child may have. We do not administer any medication other than emergency EpiPens, inhaler, Benadryl, or medications included in ADA regulations.

Car Line

Upper Elementary's drop-off time is between 8:15 and 8:30am, and Children's Houses and Lower Elementary's drop-off time is between 8:30 and 8:45am. During these periods, children will be greeted at the car by a teacher and escorted to the appropriate classroom. This is the most hectic time of day, and for safety reasons, we ask your help in keeping the car line moving. **It is critical that all drivers pull all the way up to the front of the line and allow teachers to assist the children in exiting the car (please do not get out of your car to help with car seats or seat belts, as this brings the operation to a halt).** If your child arrives after 8:45am, it will be necessary for the driver to park, go to the office to sign in and obtain the key, and then accompany your child to the appropriate classroom. **We ask that during pick-up and drop-off that you please do not idle your car.**

Arrival at Richmond Road

There is no car line at the Richmond Road campus. Students may elect to use the shuttle service between the Longhill Road campus and Richmond Road. In this case, the bus departs the Longhill Road parking lot at 8:00 am. All other students must be escorted to the doors of the Richmond Road campus by a parent.

Before-School arrivals

Children who are enrolled in before-school care may arrive anytime between 7:30 and 8:30am. If your child arrives before 8:30, please accompany him/her to the front door of the CH1 Welcome Room (for 3-6 year olds) or to the Cundari House for the Elementary Before/After School Program. **No child shall be left to enter the building by himself.**

Departure

Toddlers

At departure time, toddler parents come into the building, check their child's basket or cubby for soiled clothes or other notices, sign out, and assist their child in the transition from WMS to home. Please check the bulletin boards near/above the sign-in sheets daily for special messages.

Car Line

School dismisses at 3:00pm for all Children's House Extended Day and Lower Elementary children. Between 3:00 and 3:15pm, all Extended Day Children's House children will be dismissed from the front of the car line (they will be seated on benches outside the Office). Lower Elementary children will be dismissed in front of the Cundari House. Upper Elementary will also be dismissed in front of the Cundari House; however, to ease traffic congestion, the dismissal time will be between 3:15 and 3:30pm. If you have children in multiple programs, coming closer to the end of Children's House and Lower Elementary time and the beginning of Upper Elementary time may be ideal. The same guidelines for morning car line apply in the afternoon; we ask that the line be kept moving.

At Richmond Road

Students who use the shuttle will be picked up at 3:30 pm for transport back to Longhill Road, where they may either join after-school activities or meet their parents in the parking lot. Students who are to be picked-up at Richmond Road may meet their parents at the front of the building.

After School Pick-up

Between 3:30 and 5:30pm, parents of children participating in after school activities should park, enter the building, and greet your children. Depending on when you arrive, your child will be either in the Welcome Room, in the Elementary Before/After school area in the Cundari House or on the playground.

Pick-Up and Arrival During School Hours

If parents are picking up or returning a student to school between 8:45am and dismissal, **they must first sign in or out of the office at Longhill Road, or the classroom at Richmond Road.** Parents must make contact with the classroom teacher or assistant upon leaving or returning a student to school.

Pick-Up Authorization

We are required by law to have written authorization from parents which states the name of person(s) authorized and not authorized to pick up your child. We will not release any children to people not authorized to pick up. Please send a note if they are to be picked up by someone other than the parents.

Volunteer Drivers

We appreciate and depend on parents who are willing to support the school as volunteer drivers. To comply with insurance standards of Virginia state licensing requirements, it is necessary for each parent driver to fill out and sign the *Parent Volunteer Driver Agreement* form prior to transporting children. This form is available in the office.

Car Seats and Seatbelts

The law in Virginia is that all children under 8 years of age must be in a car seat or a booster seat. We also require that all children 6 years and older leaving the building be buckled up. All children should be seated in the rear seat of the car to prevent air bag injuries.

Carpools

Many of our children come to school in carpools. We issue a directory in September which may assist parents in finding families for carpooling arrangements.

Parking

If you are escorting your child into the building or attending any school business, you may park in any available parking space on the school lot. Please do not park in the drop-off or pick-up line as this will interfere with arrival and dismissal procedures as well as violating the fire code.

Cell Phones

We ask that parents refrain from using cell phones while on campus. To ensure the safety of the children and staff during drop-off and pick-up, cell phones may not be used while in the carpool line.

FINANCIAL MATTERS

Tuition

Once a child has been accepted to WMS, there will be a non-refundable deposit which applies to tuition and fees. An annual facilities fee of \$710 for maintenance and improvements is billed to each new family. Returning families contribute \$500 annually to the school's long-term development.

Tuition payments may be made annually, due August 1st; bi-annually, due August 1st and January 1st; or monthly on the first of each month, August 1st through May 1st (Toddler: August 1st through July 1st). A discount applies for tuition fees paid in one installment. WMS uses FACTS Tuition Management for processing payments.

WMS utilizes the services of a tuition insurance plan through A.W.G. Dewar, Inc. to protect your obligation under your Enrollment Contract. This plan ensures your tuition in the event of your child ceasing to attend WMS and allows you to recover a portion of the tuition paid/owed. The child must attend the school for 14 days to utilize the tuition insurance option. The school collects any claim payment from the insurance company to which you are entitled and credits it to your account. You will be invoiced by WMS for any remaining due amounts. The insurance premium is optional for those who pay tuition and fees in one or two payments; it is mandatory for all others.

Regardless of what method of payment you choose, the first tuition payment is due on or before August 1st. For those on the bi-annual plan, the second payment will be due in January. For those on the monthly plan, the August payment will be one month's tuition in advance, which will be credited and used as the last tuition payment of the year.

A late fee of ten percent of the outstanding balance will be charged if payments are not received within five (5) days of the scheduled billing date. Tuition or fees remaining unpaid for more than two months can result in suspension of the student at the end of the semester (until such time as the account is made current) and/or referral to a collection agency. By enrolling a student at the school, you accept the obligation to reimburse the school for any attorney's fees and costs incurred in the collection of any unpaid balance. Transcripts will not be released without full payment of all financial obligations.

Financial Aid

WMS can extend tuition assistance to current families based on demonstrated financial need and the availability of funds. Our financial aid program is limited and depends on successful fund raising and the gifts of alumni and friends. At this time grants will be made to students who are already enrolled in the school and will be for a one-year period. Parents must be employed; maximum allotment is 30% of tuition. Funds are not available for before or after school care. Grants will be awarded by June 1 for the following school year.

Withdrawal, Dismissal, and Non-Enrollment

WMS recognizes that some families may face situations where they will be unable to remain at the school for the entire year or enroll their child as planned. Please contact the Head of School should your child need to withdraw from the school or be unable to enroll. In addition, the school may suspend or dismiss a student in disciplinary cases, following procedures outlined under "Discipline" in this *Handbook*. In all cases, the obligation of the parent(s) to pay the fees for the full academic year remains unconditional after receipt of the enrollment agreement by the school.

In situations where withdrawal occurs before the beginning of the academic year, the school must balance the needs of the withdrawing family with its responsibilities to the rest of the student population and the school community. Accordingly, if a family signs an enrollment contract for the upcoming school year but then provides written notification of withdrawal (either by hand or postmarked) to the school by **April 30th** prior to the start of that school year, the school shall retain the contracted tuition deposit and all applicable fees but forgive the remainder of the contractual obligation for tuition.

A Montessori Glossary

Montessori educators have been specially trained to work with your children. Sometimes Montessorians use a special language to describe how they interact with children and the educational environments they work in. Some of these key words and phrases will also become part of your child's vocabulary. To help with translation we provide the following definitions of commonly used Montessori terms and expressions.

AMI: Association Montessori Internationale – the professional organization founded by Maria Montessori in 1929 to preserve and protect the integrity of the Method.

AMS: American Montessori Society – the professional organization founded in 1960 to disseminate and promote Montessori in the United States.

Children's House: Also known as the primary classroom, Casa dei Bambini, 3-6 environment.

Control of Error: A key design feature of Montessori materials, allowing students to correct themselves if exercises are done incorrectly.

Directress: Montessori educator, sometimes known as **Guide**.

Follow the Child: What your child's teachers do. Based on careful observation, each child is allowed to pursue the monumental task of developing him or herself. By following the child, we can recognize the child's "sensitive periods" (see below).

Grace and Courtesy: An important part of the curriculum at all levels and a key tool we use in cultivating a healthy community, resolving conflicts peacefully, and developing habits of care and respect.

Lower Elementary: 1st-3rd grades, usually children between the ages of 6-9 who made the transition into the second plane of development (see below).

Middle School: Ages 12-14. 7th and 8th grades.

Planes of Development: Maria Montessori based her concept of the four planes of development on observations of children throughout childhood and adolescence. These planes are in six-year groupings: 0-6, 6-12, 12-18, 18-24. The first three years of each grouping are characterized by the greatest change in that plane (physical, mental, spiritual), with the last three years being

characterized by a crystallization and extension of previous growth. For your child, that means the first three years of any developmental plane he or she will experience rapid and dramatic growth, followed by a time of stabilization and refinement. The balance between growth and stability is also visible among the four planes themselves. 0-6 and 12-18 are periods of great physical and emotional transformation, while 6-12 and 18-24 are more stable. The four planes of development also guide our focus on three-year educational cycles.

Prepared Environment: An inviting, carefully organized learning environment (classroom) filled with meticulously chosen “materials” for development. The environment encourages independence and concentration and enables the child to develop in optimal conditions.

Sensitive Periods: Another key concept of Montessori’s developmental theory. Careful observation allows a Montessori educator to recognize the times when a child is ready for a new learning experience. The directress can then “direct” the child toward materials that will satisfy his or her developmental needs. Most sensitive periods occur in the first plane of development, and include movement, order, language, manners, writing, reading and so on.

Upper Elementary: Ages 9-12, 4th, 5th and 6th grades.

Work: What your child does at school. Work, in a Montessori setting, is not the same as a job. It is not tedious or boring. Rather it is the way your child creates him or herself through purposeful activity in which your child is fully and joyfully engaged.