



# **Primary Program Handbook**

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## Table of Contents

<b>The Montessori Method</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>The Primary Community</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>The Three-Year Cycle and the Importance of the Kindergarten Year</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Primary Student Outcomes</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Work Cycle</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Afternoon Work Cycle</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Arriving on Time</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Drop Off/Pick Up</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Allergies</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Snack in the Primary Program</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Providing Snack</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>Examples of Food Choices for Snack</b>	<b>12</b>
<b>Lunch</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Rest and Nap</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Appropriate Clothing</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Soiled and Wet Clothing</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Birthday Celebrations</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Sick Policy</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Behavior Policy</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Communication</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Conferences</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Field Trips</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Aftercare</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Toys</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Sunscreen and Bug Spray</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>School Work Pay</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>What To Bring For the First Day in the Primary Program</b>	<b>19</b>

“The child, instead of being a burden, shows himself to us as the greatest and most consoling of nature’s wonders! We find ourselves confronted by a being no longer to be thought of as helpless, like a receptive void waiting to be filled with our wisdom; but one whose dignity increases in the measure to which we see in him the builder of our own minds; one guided by his inward teacher, who labors indefatigably in joy and happiness following a precise timetable at the work of constructing the greatest marvel of the universe, the human being.”

-Maria Montessori

## The Montessori Method

Maria Montessori, the creator of the Montessori Method, believed that children from birth through age six were the key to the development of the human potential. Today, she is joined by a chorus of other voices from researchers to educators to strategically minded economists, each encouraging us to invest in the development and education of our very youngest children.

The beautiful environment and carefully chosen Montessori materials are designed to spark each child’s sense of wonder and to encourage a love of learning. Through observation and engagement with the children, the Certified Montessori teacher creates a responsive environment that meets the changing needs of each unique community of children. This prepared environment offers them opportunities for quiet contemplation, joyful play, and the development of focused attention.

Visitors to the Montessori environment often comment on how large their adult bodies feel in the room. This is because the space is designed so that each element is just the right size and shape for the small hands and bodies of very young children. Imagine how wonderful it must feel for a child to finally have sinks and toilets that are easy to reach, tables and chairs at just the right height, and tools that don’t feel cumbersome in tiny hands.

## The Primary Community

The Primary Community is filled with tactile materials that invite the child to explore and discover. The Primary environment is organized into different areas of focus: Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, and Cultural, where children can both receive presentations and make choices based on their personal quest for knowledge. Children are free to move from one area to another during the work cycle portion of the school day, concentrating as long as they may need to complete the work.

Primary students are strengthening their sense of independence and in order to foster this newly developed skill, the environment provides many opportunities for the children practice which may include self-regulated trips to the restroom and independent snack. The slow pace of the day allows time for all the children to these tasks when their own time clock regulates the need to do so. Missed opportunities lead to natural consequences and an opportunity to learn something new about themselves, and each day gives the children another chance to try again.

The freedom to move about the environment and make choices creates an atmosphere that encourages social interaction. In the environment, only one of each material will be found which supports the creation of a community of children who interact and learn to manage their time, manage the materials, practice patience, and resolve conflicts together. The teachers guide and support this community of children as they discover one another, learn to share space, negotiate conflict, and treat one another with kindness while building skills on their journey to acquiring information about themselves and the world around them.

A unique aspect of the Montessori Primary Program is that it is designed to welcome a student around the age of three years old and follow them through the completion of their Kindergarten year. The children grow and learn in the same space with the same teacher moving from an observer, to an explorer, and finally to a leader.

## The Three-Year Cycle and the Importance of the Kindergarten Year

The three-year cycle refers to the period of time that a student grows and develops within the Primary classroom. Children stay in the same classroom with the same teacher and the same classmates; therefore, are able to build a strong cohesive community. The children easily move through the different stages of development, experience different roles, and work with the lessons in a safe, comfortable, and reliable environment. Over time, through repetition, children begin to master the skills and materials offered within the environment and look forward to the opportunity to work with and teach the younger children within the classroom. The kindergarten year grants the children the chance to put into practice all the skills and talents and abilities that have been acquired during the previous two years. The Primary student who completes the entire process within the Primary classroom walks away with not only the acquisition of knowledge about the world but a deep understand of value and self confidence that can only be attained through the opportunity to lead through example.

## Primary Student Outcomes

The Primary Program is a nurturing and stimulating environment for children ages 3 – 6 that promotes developmentally appropriate opportunities for learning and personal growth. Order, coordination, concentration, and independence form the cornerstone goals of this program. Children thrive in an environment that provides the modeling behavior of older children, space for movement, and hands-on learning materials. The outcomes listed below correlate to student progress reports.

### **Social Development**

Grace and courtesy lessons are very important at this stage in a child's development, as they are learning to function in a social environment.

- Respecting rights and property of others
- Social grace and manners
- Resolving conflict appropriately
- Expressing feelings verbally
- Communicating freely with peers
- Relating well with peers and adults
- Initiating interaction with peers

### **Emotional Growth**

These years nurture the growth of children's independence, self-esteem, and self-discipline while introducing children to the basics of academics.

- Accepting new situations
- Exhibiting self control
- Cooperation
- Welcoming changes
- Handling stressful situations
- Inner maturation
- Independence & self-direction
- Positive attitude encouraged
- Developing positive self image, self confidence

### **Work Habits**

- Initiating own work
- Respecting materials
- Expressing joy in discovery
- Welcoming new challenges
- Observing carefully
- Exhibiting good concentration
- Improving memory retention
- Increasing attention span
- Persisting at a task
- Developing decision making skills
- Choosing challenging work

- Completing work cycle
- Learning to work without disturbing others

### **Practical Life**

Children learn real-work skills including care of the environment such as watering plants, care of self such as learning to tie shoelaces, and care of others such as serving snacks.

- Control of movements
- Recognize and respond to orderliness
- Independently care for environment and self
- Improve eye-hand coordination
- Correctly use manipulative materials
- Large and small muscle growth

### **Sensorial**

Children learn to organize their environment, through their senses, for example, sorting sounds into categories of loud or soft.

- Visual discrimination
- Tactile discrimination
- Olfactory discrimination
- Auditory discrimination
- Gustatory discrimination

### **Geography & History**

Children learn about maps, the calendar and clocks, and right and left.

- Globe
- World map – continents
- Recognizes land and water forms
- Oceans
- North America
- United States
- Foreign maps
- Flags: US and foreign
- Direction
- Days of the week
- Months of the year
- Awareness of self and others
- Calendar
- Clock

### **Language**

Children learn the phonetic sounds that go with the letter symbols so they can later group letters together, make words, and read.

- Nomenclature
- Vowels
- Expression of thought
- Group discussion
- Sequencing
- Interest in books and stories
- Correct pronunciation
- Matching
- Rhyming
- Initial and final consonants
- Opposites
- Phonetic alphabet and sounds
- Reading: words, sentences, phonograms, beginning reader books
- Writing: pencil grip, control of pencil, forms letters correctly, writes first and last name, write phonetic words, writes sentences and stories.
- Spelling with movable alphabet
- Metal inset work

### **Math**

Children learn that number symbols have a quantitative meaning. They learn in concrete ways what it means to add on a group of something to another.

- Understands quantity
- Recognizes numerals 0-9
- Counts objects to 9
- Teen work
- Linear counting to 100, 1000
- Skip counting
- Odd and even
- Fractions
- Money
- Exchanging
- Decimal system work – understanding place value
- Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division

### **Science**

- Study of: living & nonliving
- Plants, botany

- Nutrition, food groups
- Solar system
- Magnets
- Experiment
- Rocks and minerals
- Seashells
- Weather, atmosphere
- Earth science
- Animals, zoology
- Three forms of water
- Health
- Classification of vertebrates (5 classes) and invertebrates



## Primary Program Daily Rhythm

**Half Day** (offered only to three year olds)

**Full Day**

8:00-8:30	Arrival	8:00-8:30	Arrival
8:30-11:30	Work Cycle	8:30-11:30	Work Cycle
11:30-11:45	Recess	11:30-12:00	Recess
11:45	Pick Up	12-12:30	Lunch
		12:30	Rest or Nap
		12:50	Afternoon Work Cycle
		2:15	Closing Circle
		2:30	Pick up

### Work Cycle

The work cycle is a period of time devoted to uninterrupted focus and concentration on Montessori materials and lessons in which the children are encouraged to explore the classroom making choices to fulfill a need within themselves. The children can use the materials for as long as they desire and are not required to share and/or take turns using the lessons within the environment. By allowing the children to use the work as long as they desire, the children will begin to develop the skill of concentration. The work cycle in the Primary community lasts for three hours of uninterrupted time. The children in the Primary program are also given presentations of lessons after the teacher carefully observes each and every child and determines what lessons the children are ready to undertake based on their individual skill set and interest. The classroom environment offers work in the areas of practical life, sensorial, language, math, and culture.

#### **Practical Life:**

Practical Life enhances the development of task organization and cognitive order through care of self, care of environment, exercises of grace and courtesy, and coordination of physical movement.

#### **Sensorial:**

The sensorial area enables the child to order, classify, and describe sensory impressions in relation to length, width, mass, color, and pitch.

#### **Math:**

The mathematics area makes use of manipulative materials to enable the child to internalize concepts of number, symbol, sequence, and operations.

#### **Language:**

The language area enables children to acquire pre-reading and pre-writing skills using tactile materials to internalize the correlation between a sound and the symbol that represents the sound.

#### **Cultural:**

The cultural area enables children to learn about the world around them through geographical maps, art, music, and science.

## Afternoon Work Cycle

For children who do not fall asleep and only rest after lunch, they will be invited to participate in a quiet afternoon work cycle while their fellow classmates sleep nearby. This allows the community to stay together, apply respectful grace and courtesy skills, and work in smaller groups on a variety of lessons ranging in difficulty.

## Arriving on Time

It is imperative to arrive at school between the time of 8:00 and 8:30. This allows children to acclimate and socialize before the start of their work day. When children arrive late, it becomes hard for them to adjust and transition because they have missed key elements of their daily schedule. At 8:30, the gates to the school will be locked and any children that arrive afterwards will need to enter the school through the front office. Parents will be asked to say goodbye to their children and staff will escort the children to their classrooms.

## Drop Off & Pick Up

The gates of The Children's School open at 8:00 a.m. The Children's School cannot accept students prior to that time.

Each morning your child will be dropped off between 8:00 and 8:30 at the Varela Street gate. At the moment, all students will be dropped off outside of the school and escorted to the playgrounds/classrooms by a staff member. Pick up will be on campus. Please find a legal parking space, and enter through the Varela Street gate. The gate codes will be provided at the parent orientation. You will sign your child out at the classroom.

Parents/guardians must register all adults who will be picking up or dropping off their child in advance in the front office. The person picking up or dropping off the child must present a photo ID to the staff.

The Children's School is always striving to improve our systems on a relatively small campus. If drop off and pick up procedures change, parents/guardians will be notified by email in advance from the Executive Director.

## Allergies

Due to increasing number of children with allergies to nuts at our school, the entire campus is NUT FREE. Communal snacks must be completely nut and seed free, including packages that say 'May Contain Nuts'. Lunches also need to contain no nut products, but there are many suitable substitutes (ie. SunButter or WowButter instead of Peanut Butter).

At this age in development, a child can understand what they can safely eat or what may harm them if consumed; therefore, the Primary program does not require the entire class to strictly dictate the limitations of food for all based on the allergies within the classroom like within the Toddler Program. If your child is enrolled in the Primary program and has a specific allergy to certain consumable foods, the school requires that you also provide alternative food options for your child to eat at snack during the work cycle. The food will be stored in the classroom for your child specifically, to use as a substitute snack item, when and if a food option provided by the classroom contradicts with that your child can consume.

## Snack in the Primary Program

Please send in an additional food item for your child to enjoy for snack during the work cycle. Label the food sent in as 'snack'. It may be packed in the lunch box or in a separate bag.

Primary aged students have a greater sense of independence and a different level of self-regulation which lends itself nicely to a new way to enjoy snack during the work cycle portion of your child's day. Within the Primary environment, an area is designated for the participation in the independent serving of snack. Each child will take their snack sent in from home, plate it and bring it to the snack area outside. Children are welcomed to use the 'lesson' of snack at any time during the work cycle when it becomes available. Snack is a lesson that accommodates two people at a time and is an opportunity for children to connect to a friend over food and conversation. To complete snack, children clear the table and wash their dishes before returning to other areas of the classroom to work.

## Providing for Food Prep and Pizza Fridays

Families enrolled at The Children's School are required to provide food for their child's class throughout the year according to a schedule provided at the beginning of the year. The classroom will distribute the schedule to all families and will also provide reminders throughout the year as your week approaches. The food requested will be used for food prep materials (e.g. independent washing of grapes to eat, or sunbutter and celery to prepare for themselves) and fruit to accompany pizza on Fridays.

When purchasing anything for the classroom, please always remember that we are a NUT FREE school and cannot serve any food containing nuts, any item that may contain nuts, or any items made in a factory where nuts are processed and/or used.

In order to avoid any cross contamination between foods having to do with school-wide allergies, we will clean the fruit and vegetables at school. Each Primary class will send home a list of requested food items for your scheduled week that will vary according to skills to be presented e.g. washing grapes, cutting celery, spreading sunbutter or cream cheese. You may be pleasantly surprised to discover what your child will eat when he/she prepares it themselves.

Please remember these guidelines when purchasing materials for the classroom during your week:

**Food**

- Your Child's Guide will send home a list of requested foods
- Please bring in all items un-prepared and in original packaging

Bouquet of Flowers

Flushable Wipes

## Examples of Food Choices that May be Requested by Your Child's

### Guide for Food Prep

**Fresh Fruit:**

Apple  
Banana  
Cantaloupe  
Watermelon  
Pineapple  
Seedless grapes  
Strawberries  
Blueberries  
Raspberries  
Peaches

Plums

Mangoes  
Honeydew

**Fresh Vegetables:**

Cherry Tomatoes  
Carrots  
Avocados  
Zucchini  
Celery  
Cucumbers

**Dairy:**

Yogurt  
Cheese  
Cottage Cheese

**Other Items:**

Salsa  
Hummus  
Applesauce  
Raisins

## Lunch

If your child is enrolled in the full day Primary program, he or she will be eating lunch with his/her peers at school. Please provide a healthy lunch that your child enjoys to eat packaged inside containers that your child can open and close with little assistance. Lunch time is another great opportunity to practice independence and fine motor skills. Your child is also in charge of unpacking and packing up his/her own lunch with as little assistance from us as possible.

If your child needs utensils to eat any item within his/her lunch, please include those utensils inside the lunchbox. All utensils must be labeled with your child's first and last names. We do not provide refrigeration for lunch boxes; therefore, if you want your child's lunch to remain cold please include an icepack inside the lunchbox.

We do not restrict what your child eats during lunch; we believe that if you packed the food, you have approved the food and that there is no right order for your child to then consume that food. Please remember this philosophy when you are preparing your child's lunch and ask yourself, "Will I be upset if my child eats this and not that?" If you answer yes, then just do not include that food in your child's lunch. Please do not include dessert-like items such as cookies, brownies, candy, and fruit gummies when packing your child's lunch as per school policy.

Whatever your child does not eat will return home inside his/her lunch box in order for you to get a better picture of what was and was not consumed during the day. When emptying your child's lunch at the end of the day, it might be messy, containers might not have lids entirely attached and items may be missing. Remember that your child is learning how to pack up, seal bags, match lids, use zippers and the learning process can be messy. Messy equals work. We will do our best to make sure containers, lids, cups, and utensils return home at the end of the day.

If your child attends aftercare, please pack enough options for lunch and after school snack, remembering that anything within his/her lunchbox will be available to eat at both lunch and aftercare snack times.

Overview of what to pack inside of lunchbox:

- food
- napkin
- utensils
- icepack

## Rest and Nap

Children who stay full day will all participate in resting after lunchtime. All the children are offered a nap mat to lie down quietly and rest their bodies for a period of 20 minutes. The dimming of the lights and the playing of soothing music helps create a restful atmosphere for the children. Most of the younger children naturally fall asleep and awaken around 2:00pm. Some children will rest and occasionally fall asleep, while other older children will only rest. In order to provide a uniform and welcoming area to rest their bodies, each full day student is required to provide a fitted crib sheet that will be placed on the nap mat. Younger children, who fall asleep daily, can also bring in a blanket or small pillow to add comfort while napping at school. Each Friday, the resting/napping items will be sent home to be laundered and returned the following Monday. Children enrolled in the Primary Program sleep in the school environment without the use of pacifiers or attachment items.

## Appropriate Clothing

Imagine a day in which you planned to repaint your dining room, polish silver, work in the garden a little, and relax with a book after you were finished. Now consider what you would wear. Every day your child is involved in tasks that are purposeful and messy. Have your child wear clothing in which he or she can work comfortably. We encourage self-care, but young children do not have the skills to keep themselves and their clothing perfectly clean.

Closed-toed shoes with rubber soles are the safest for active play outside. Velcro fasteners are also advisable. Flip-flops, platform sandals, dress shoes or any shoe that does not fit securely on the foot are not appropriate for school.

Wearing clothing that has fictional, fantasy, or super hero characters on it is strongly discouraged at school. If your child arrives at school in this type of clothing, they may be asked to change into their spare clothes in their classroom. The Montessori community believes that children are in a sensitive period for absorbing information and we want to provide them with reality-based, factual experiences. Fictional, fantasy dress can often be a distraction and/or lead to distracting behaviors.

## Soiled and Wet Clothing

When the children need to change their clothing, they will have access to their individual clothing bins in order to change independently in the bathrooms located in their classrooms. The wet bags ensure that all wet or soiled clothing to be brought home for laundering will not transfer any germs to the classroom or other children. Children will be supported when needed, but will always be first asked to actively participate in the process of undressing and dressing with little to no adult assistance. If clothing comes home in the wet bag, due to paint, dirt, urine, etc., please launder and return to school the next day with clothes to replenish your child's extra clothing bin.

## Birthday Celebrations

In the Primary Program, the children are given the opportunity to participate in their Celebration of Life. This event is a wonderful way to celebrate their birthday by honoring the amount of years the child has been on planet Earth and all of the milestones that go along with it. The class joins together during circle to light candles and sing as the birthday child symbolically walks around the sun for each year of his/her life. Parents and caregivers are welcomed to join in on the celebration.

The teacher and family will determine the best day to schedule the Celebration of Life event for your child whether it is on your child's exact birth date or as close to it as possible. If your child's birthday falls on a day he or she is not at school, you can work with your teacher to choose a suitable date to celebrate.

The Celebration of Life event requires at least one photograph of your child for every year of his/her life. Some families like to create a poster board to display all the pictures, while other families chose to bring in loose photographs. Please be prepared to share milestones and achievements from each year of your child's life in order for the class to celebrate his/her growth and accomplishments.

## Sick Policy

Your child will get sick this year especially if it is their first experience in school. All classrooms, surfaces, and materials are sanitized daily; however, toddler children are extremely oral and thus germs are more readily shared. Do not be surprised if your child seems to be more sick than usual. They are building up important antibodies.

If your child has:

- green or yellow mucus
- a fever above the normal temperature of 98.6 degrees
- has vomited or had diarrhea during the night or day before
- a rash on the hands, feet, or around the mouth
- lice (no nits/no eggs)

It is school policy that he or she may not attend school for at least 24 hours, until the rash or lice has been treated, or without a note from the doctor. Toddlers touch everything and tend to put lessons in their mouths and sickness can spread easily and quickly. If your child has any symptoms, please keep them home and give them ample time to rest and heal.

If your child is diagnosed with a communicable disease (lice, hand/foot/mouth, scabies, etc.) please inform the school and your classroom's staff so that the classroom, materials, and environment can be sanitized to prevent further transmission and other families can be informed. Your child can return to school after discussion with the Executive Director regarding your child's medical treatment.

## Behavior Policy

When an unsafe or unacceptable behavior occurs, we use our knowledge of the child and observation of the incident to figure out the motivation behind the behavior.

The teachers always communicate with the children throughout the process in order to help them recognize and understand their feelings and behaviors.

We encourage the children to check on their friends and offer help in place of saying, "I'm sorry," in order for the children to develop a sense of empathy as opposed to a programmed response.

If a child is not in control of his or her body and/or feelings, we offer a safe, welcoming area within the classroom for them to learn how to regulate their feelings and regain control. The Peace Area is not a punishment, but a tool for the children to use when they feel out of control. We encourage parents to attend our educational nights to become more informed about our program and to develop more consistency between home and school.



If an incident results in the destruction of materials or the injury of another person, a behavioral report will be filled out and required to be signed by the teacher, the director of the school, and the caregiver. If follow up meetings are required in order to discuss a behavior or how to support the child as a team, arrangements will be made between the school and the family.

## Communication

The Children's School believes that the exchanging of information and open communication is essential to the success of Montessori philosophy. As a school, we will provide various ways in which to share information about the school, the philosophy, and your child.

School-wide and classroom newsletters will be sent via email on a monthly basis to inform your family on upcoming events, opportunities to give back and volunteer, and share insights about Montessori philosophy and how it is used to guide your child's experience at school.

Every two weeks, families will also receive photographs of the children working within the classroom. These photographs are meant to visually share information about the activities and lessons our children experience during the school day and help connect families to their children and to the classroom.

The school also has a website and Facebook page to share the school calendar, blog posts, and articles related to Montessori philosophy and Montessori practice.

Although it is tempting to strike up conversations at arrival and dismissal times, the staff views these times as important transitions for your child and the focus must therefore be on the children. We welcome the sharing of pertinent information such as a sleepless night, not eating breakfast, or a situation that triggered an emotional response in your child. That type of information can help us to support your child throughout the day, yet if you need to speak at length regarding a question, a situation, or a concern, we ask that you request a scheduled meeting to exchange information.

## Conferences

Conferences will be scheduled twice a year, in order for teachers, assistants, and caregivers to get together in a casual and comfortable face to face setting to discuss your child's progress and development, once in the winter and again in spring.

Should your family or your child's teacher feel additional meetings are necessary, more meetings will be scheduled that work best for both the teacher and family.

## Field Trips

Children in the Primary Program will be invited to attend field trips throughout the year. The school will provide all information regarding the field trips and require families to fill out and sign permission slips in order to allow each child to participate in the field trips. The school will also request the attendance of volunteers to accompanying the classrooms on field trips and we welcome parents and caregivers to attend.

## Aftercare

Our school offers Aftercare for an additional fee. The Aftercare program begins at 2:30 and ends promptly at 5:30.

The Aftercare program is designed to follow the Montessori philosophy while offering the children more opportunities to relax and unwind in a comforting environment at the end of the school day. Your children's teachers and assistants do not lead the Aftercare program, although your child will use his/her classroom during the aftercare program with their aftercare teachers. Should you have questions about your child's day during school hours (8-2:30) please direct those questions to your child's teacher via email or face to face.

From 2:30-3:30, weather permitting, the Aftercare staff and children will be located within the outside areas attached to their particular classrooms. At 3:30, they will return to the classroom for planned activities, playing with Aftercare materials, and toileting. After 4:00 pick up, the children in aftercare will play together on the Primary playground. The last pick up time for Aftercare is promptly at 5:30. Make sure to collect all personal items and sign out before leaving campus with your child at the end of the day.

## Toys

Toys may NOT be brought to school or stored in cubbies. The Children's School prides itself in providing authentic Montessori materials to engage and motivate the children to use their hands in purposeful and productive ways while on campus; not requiring any other types of materials, especially toys. Teachers will ask children to return the toys to their caregivers before they leave campus at drop off. We ask that parents help facilitate this policy by encouraging their children to leave all items from home either at home or in the car. If a toy does make it onto campus, which may happen, the teacher will help the child to separate from the toy and the item will be placed in the office. It then becomes the responsibility of the family to retrieve the item keeping in mind that the items collected in the office will be periodically discarded after a period of time.

## Sunscreen and Bug Spray

Please apply bug spray and sunscreen to your child, if needed, before arriving at school. The staff is not permitted to apply these unless a medication and ointment release form has been filled out in the office and the materials have been provided by the caregivers.

## School Work Pay

Throughout the year, we will put items on our classroom wish list that can contribute to your Work Pay. This could include purchasing items for the classroom or doing projects for the classroom. Please feel free to ask your teacher throughout the year if there is anything that you can build or provide the classroom to count towards your work pay requirement. Make sure to record the hours/money spent in the Work Pay Binder located in the front office.

## What To Bring For the First Day in the Primary Program

- TWO sets of clothing - Including shirts, shorts, underwear, and socks
- TWO wet bags to transport wet or soiled clothing back and forth from school
- One long fitted crib sheet to be returned every Friday to be laundered and returned the following Monday