



the
Children's School
— MONTESSORI SINCE 1972 —

Parent-Student Handbook

Revised June 2023

— MONTESSORI CHILDREN'S SCHOOL OF KEY WEST —

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DISCLAIMER

In furtherance of the protection, safety and well-being of the children at Montessori Children's School of Key West, all parents/guardians shall receive a copy of these policies. The Executive Director shall maintain policies and all adopted revisions. Upon receipt of such copy, all children and parents/guardians are responsible for full compliance with all provisions of these policies. Compliance with these policies is a condition of continued enrollment.

It is the intent of Montessori Children's School of Key West to administer these policies in a fair, consistent and equitable manner with due consideration of the legal rights and privacy interests of all parties. When investigating an alleged violation of these policies or contemplating an appropriate sanction, Montessori Children's School of Key West will engage in the careful consideration of the facts and circumstances as they existed at the time of the conduct in question, the willfulness and seriousness of the conduct, any extenuating circumstances and/or mitigating factors and the parties' record of compliance with Montessori Children's School of Key West policies.

Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to change the policies at any time. Policy changes, corrections or clarifications coming through official email, newsletter or other correspondence from Montessori Children's School of Key West shall have the same weight as this handbook and in some cases, such as changes to policy or procedure, will be considered a replacement or update to the information in this handbook.

OVERVIEW AND PHILOSOPHY

MISSION STATEMENT

Montessori Children's School of Key West is a child-centered community-oriented Montessori school, serving ages 18-months through 6th grade. Our purpose is to nurture and guide children to become self-directed, cooperative and responsible individuals of their community by instilling solid foundations in humanitarianism, intellectual growth and peace.

CORE VALUES

Life-long Learning:

We provide engaging, purposeful educational opportunities that promote a love of life-long learning.

Respect:

We value self-respect, respect for others and respect for our environment. By showing compassion and integrity, we provide a safe and nurturing environment that encourages the appreciation of joy and the wonderment of childhood.

Independence:

We value the child's ability to learn independence in a carefully guided and prepared environment. We believe in an atmosphere of order and beauty which allows each individual to achieve his or her fullest potential.

Global Citizenship:

We embrace the idea that knowledge of our world and our position in it is the vehicle for creating a path to awareness, understanding, compassion and true peace.

Responsibility:

We understand that we are responsible for our individual actions and how these actions affect others' abilities to act. We are responsible for ensuring that our core values are part of our everyday life.

Community:

We strive to create a peaceful, supportive, compassionate and welcoming community, where understanding and respect for differences lead to appreciation, self-reflection, confidence and personal growth.

METHODOLOGY

Montessori Children's School of Key West offers a sensible, structured system which allows children to develop at their own pace, using their own abilities, with the guidance of a formally-trained Montessori guide (teacher) and the use of specially-designed Montessori materials. The Montessori classroom is a child's world, tailored to the size, pace and interests of the children. It is designed to put the child at ease by providing him/her with choices in an environment prepared with attractive materials within easy reach.

EQUAL OPPORTUNITY

Montessori Children's School of Key West is an equal opportunity, private, non-profit educational institution that seeks and values ethnic, racial, and religious diversity in its student body and employees. Accordingly, Montessori Children's School of Key West does not discriminate against any prospective student, enrolled student, or employee on the basis of gender, race, creed or political affiliation.

Educational decisions regarding a child who may have additional physical, behavioral or cognitive needs will be made on an individual basis. These decisions will be based on current medical information, the child's cognitive ability, and Montessori Children's School of Key West's capability to accommodate.

INCLUSION POLICIES

Montessori Children's School of Key West believes in providing appropriate education in the least restrictive environment for children with special needs by allowing them the opportunity to interact and learn together with non-disabled children. We provide an "inclusive" educational environment in which all children can succeed and enable children with disabilities to develop autonomy, independence, competency, and confidence.

Our program ensures that we:

- provide all children with accurate developmentally appropriate information about their own and others' disabilities and to foster understanding that a person with disabilities is different in one respect but similar in many others.
- enable all children to develop the ability to interact knowledgeably, comfortably, and fairly.
- provide support and information related to developmentally appropriate practices to families of children with special needs.

DISABILITY NON-DISCRIMINATION STATEMENT

Reasonable accommodations will be provided for qualified children with disabilities upon request, as specified under the Americans with Disabilities Act. Americans with Disabilities Act discrimination issues should be referred to: OFFICE ON THE ADA CIVIL RIGHTS DIVISION, US DEPT OF JUSTICE, PO BOX 66738, WASHINGTON DC 20035- 9998, (202) 514-0301.

INDIVIDUALIZED EDUCATION PLANS

Montessori Children's School of Key West is committed to working in partnership with families whose children have Individualized Family Service Plans (IFSP) or Individualized Education Plans (IEP). We will attend IFSP or IEP meetings when requested by parents. A copy of your child's IFSP or IEP is kept on file at the center. Teachers refer to the child's plan to support the goals and objectives within the classroom. Additionally, we will collaborate with all professionals providing services for children with IFSPs or IEPs. We will support parents in the services they request for their child and will make reasonable accommodations to support their services within the center. All fees charged by any consultants or professionals are the responsibility of the family.

LEGAL STATUS

For governance and administrative purposes, Montessori Children's School of Key West operates as a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation.

CORPORATION

Each parent or legal guardian of any child currently enrolled in Montessori Children's School of Key West, is a corporation member entitled to all rights and privileges of membership. Community Board members are Corporation Members who are to be admitted upon application to and accepted by the Board of Directors. Corporation members will be admitted without regard to race, creed, gender or political affiliation.

BYLAWS

Definitions and terminology used herein are to be interpreted as consistent with the Bylaws. If any conflicts in terminology between the Bylaws and the policies are identified, the Board of Directors shall be responsible for resolving them.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS – PURPOSE AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Our volunteer Board of Directors is responsible for the interest and advancement of the corporation. Specific responsibilities include:

- Approval of an annual budget;
- Approving certain expenditures;
- Establishment of committees;
- Making decisions in the best interest of the corporation.

BOARD PROCEDURES

The following procedures have been designed to keep discussion orderly and to provide an opportunity for you to participate in Montessori Children's School of Key West Board of Directors' meeting(s).

Montessori Children's School of Key West encourages family participation in our school community. For complaints about school-related issues, the board asks families to talk first to the employee closest to the problem - usually a classroom guide or the Executive Director. Should a satisfactory solution still not be achieved, please submit your concern to the Board.

HOW TO GET ON THE AGENDA

If you want the Board to formally discuss or act on an item, your item must be placed on the official meeting agenda.

To do so, follow these steps:

1. Notify the Board Secretary a minimum of five work days before the board meeting when the item is to be considered.
2. Identify yourself and/or all individuals who will speak on the agenda item.
3. Provide summary information so that the Board can be prepared to address the item. Written documentation is preferred because it reduces the chance of error or misinterpretation. The board packet, which will contain the agenda, narratives, recommendations, and supporting documentation is usually prepared three days prior to regular meetings. Packets are sent to Board members at least two days before the meeting.

When you submit items for the agenda, you and other speakers will be invited to sit at the board table and address the Board members. Discussion limit is 10 minutes, unless the Board agrees to extend the time.

The Board generally deals with an agenda item as a discussion item at one meeting and as an action item at a subsequent meeting. This allows time for reflection and further staff and community input. If agenda items, questions or problems relate to legal issues, state law permits the Board to go into closed session to receive such presentations.

HOW TO COMMENT ON AGENDA ITEMS

You may also present information, ask questions, or comment on topics already on the agenda. With agenda items, usually the Board hears recommendations and data by the administrative staff and then discusses the topic before taking action. Your time to speak will be after the Board members' discussion and before their action on that item.

The Board Secretary will invite speakers to the board table. In the interest of time and to avoid duplication, it is suggested that groups wishing to speak should select a representative to speak for all.

ADMISSIONS AND ENROLLMENT

RESERVATION OF RIGHTS

As a private institution dedicated to the pursuit of excellence in the education of all of its enrolled children, Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to discipline, suspend, dismiss or expel any enrolled child who does not adhere to the standards of the school. Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to withdraw a child if it is determined that such action is in the best interest of the operations of the school, or for the safety and well-being of its employees or children.

ENROLLMENT FOR NEW STUDENTS

Families wishing to enroll new students at Montessori Children's School of Key West must complete the following steps:

1. Complete an application and submit a non-refundable application fee;
2. Observe a potential classroom;
3. Meet with the Executive Director/Admissions;
4. Complete a student interview process;
5. Submit required forms and fees within the specified time period to confirm enrollment;
6. Submit the security deposit;
7. Submit all health related forms including:
 - a. Florida Certificate of Immunization (DH680) or Exemption from Immunizations (DH681);
 - b. Current State Certified Health Exam; and
 - c. Influenza Form signed annually at the start of the school year.
8. Review and sign a parental agreement to support all school policies and procedures;
9. Participate in a program orientation at the beginning of each school year;
10. Each student who is accepted will operate under a 45 day probationary period.

Openings in our programs which are not filled by re-enrolling students will be filled based on interviews with prospective students. The interviews will be prioritized in the following order: 1) siblings of presently enrolled children; 2) children of staff members; and 3) date of application.

Children must be between the ages of 18 and 35 months upon entering the Toddler program. The ideal age to begin the Primary program is 3 years old, as of September 1st of the application school year, however, children who are 2.5 will be considered based on space available and the interview process. To be enrolled in the Elementary program children must have turned 6 on or before September 1.

Tuition and registration fees are non-refundable unless otherwise stipulated by Montessori Children's School of Key West policies. See withdrawal policy below. No credits can be

allowed for absences due to illness or vacation without prior approval from the Board of Directors.

ENROLLMENT FOR RETURNING STUDENTS

Enrollment documents should be signed and returned by the date specified. Tuition payments must be on time, and health records must be up to date in order to be properly enrolled. Enrollment in Montessori Children's School of Key West for one year does not guarantee placement the following year. Families with accounts or fees outstanding will not be permitted to re-enroll until their account is paid in full. Re-enrollment is on a first-come-first-serve basis. Montessori Children's School of Key West cannot ensure placement once the enrollment period has closed.

PLACEMENT POLICY

Enrollment and placement are at the discretion of Montessori Children's School of Key West. Montessori Children's School of Key West carefully considers each child's placement and trusts that it will be in the best interest of the child and school community. Although parents/guardians can communicate personal requests, Montessori Children's School of Key West administration will make the final decision on the child's placement.

WITHDRAWAL/DISMISSAL

The student may withdraw from the school and terminate enrollment under the following conditions:

1. A written letter of intent to withdraw is submitted to Montessori Children's School of Key West accompanied by a \$50.00 non-refundable withdrawal fee. This letter shall be effective on the first day of the calendar month following the date of submission (the "Effective Date").
2. Thirty (30) days from the Effective Date, the student shall be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from the school (the "Withdrawal Date").
3. Any payments due after the Withdrawal Date shall be canceled, except any outstanding balances accrued up to the Withdrawal Date.
4. After the Withdrawal Date, the security deposit and/or any prepayments shall be refunded less any fees outstanding.
5. All fees other than tuition, including the initial enrollment fee, are nonrefundable.
6. Any withdrawal after March 31st, the parent is responsible for paying the remainder of the yearly tuition.

SCHOOL OPERATIONS

SCHOOL CALENDAR

The school calendar closely follows that of the Monroe County School District. Calendars will be sent to parents/guardians at the beginning of each school year, or at the time of enrollment for students beginning after August. Special note should be taken of school closings and professional days.

Camps during the summer, Thanksgiving, winter, and spring breaks may be available depending on the need and logistical capacity of Montessori Children's School of Key West to organize events. Parents/guardians will be notified in advance of the availability and terms of the camps.

CELEBRATING HOLIDAYS IN THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

Halloween and other holidays often mean a change in your child's routine and sleep schedule, extra excitement, and of course lots of treats. The Montessori classroom becomes a place of peace, where the young child's internal sense of order may be preserved. The routine of the classroom work cycle is important to protect. Young children work best and learn more when they feel safe. An environment that includes routine and peace builds that sense of safety.

School communities include families with diverse beliefs, traditions, and celebrations. We do not assume that everyone in our community shares the same holidays or traditions. So when holidays are discussed in classrooms, we do it from the perspective of families and their culture. We talk about what children do at home during holidays: making and eating special foods; visiting with extended family; adding special decorations to the home; attending services at a place of worship; enjoying special music or games. If you are interested in sharing your traditions, culture or knowledge, we welcome you to volunteer your time.

"A sense of order, both in the physical environment and in the schedule is very, very important... It provides an important sense of security to know that the schedule will remain the same during the holidays, and there will be very little change in the environment. However, subtly and carefully adapting the environment to reflect holidays and nature in the changing seasons, rather than changing the schedule, is what we do... There will be plenty of emphasis on holidays OUTSIDE the classroom as each approaches. The Montessori classroom, and the unchanged daily schedule, is an oasis of security and peace during these times of the year." Susan Mayclin Stephenson from [Holiday Celebrations Montessori Style](#).

In the Montessori classroom we celebrate seasons and learn about some of the many holidays that might accompany each season in our own cultures and throughout the world. We also bring the seasons into our studies of science, geography, history and art. And of course we sing songs, read stories, learn poems and create art, using colors and images associated with each season.

SCHOOL TRADITIONS AND EVENTS

Montessori Children's School of Key West has several long-standing traditions and events for the children, families, and the community that both honor our need to celebrate and honor the foundational elements of our philosophy. These events create a sense of community amongst families. The dates and the events vary from one year to the next, and Montessori Children's School of Key West introduces new events annually. In past years, events have included, but were not limited to the following:

- o Toddler Garden Party
- o Welcome Back Potluck
- o Fall Harvest Share
- o Fall Potluck
- o 5K and Kids' Fun Run
- o Community Food and Clothing Drive
- o School Gala
- o Friendship Appreciation Day
- o Love & Play
- o Earth Day
- o Book Exchange
- o Art Show
- o Cultural Curriculum
- o Kindergarten Parent Breakfast and Graduation
- o End of Year Party
- o Toddler Prom

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATION GUIDELINES

When children have birthdays in the Toddler community, the class bakes together during work cycle in celebration of the birthday child. Children also work to create a birthday card in the art area from the class. During circle, the class wraps one loaf of birthday bread to be sent home for the child's family to enjoy and the other loaves are eaten during snack after the class sings 'Happy Birthday.' This is a special way for our toddlers to honor each other as they turn a year older.

In the Primary and Elementary Programs, 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 guide 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 guide 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 choose 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.

In regards to off-campus celebrations, please refrain from distributing party invitations on campus. It is better done through regular mail, as it can cause hurt feelings if a child is left out. If a family wishes to invite an entire class the office can facilitate via email. Additionally, gifts from one child to another should not be delivered through the school.

HOURS OF OPERATION

PROGRAM	DROP OFF	PICK UP
Toddler Half Day	8:00 – 8:30	11:30
Toddler Full Day	8:00 – 8:30	2:30
Primary Half Day	8:00 – 8:30	11:30
Primary Full Day	8:00 – 8:30	2:30
Elementary	8:00 – 8:10	2:30
After School Care	2:30 – 5:30	

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL PROCEDURES

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

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

Montessori Children's School of Key West 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.

LATE ARRIVALS AND PICK UPS

Montessori Children's School of Key West strongly encourages on-time arrivals in order to avoid disruptions during the work cycle. If a child is dropped off after the aforementioned start times, the parent/guardian must drop off their child in the front office. Office staff will escort the child to the classroom. If a late arrival is known in advance, the front office should be contacted with an estimated arrival time.

If a child is not picked at the aforementioned pick up time, she/he will automatically be escorted to Aftercare (full-day students only). The parent/guardian will be notified and will be responsible for fees incurred. For half-day students a late charge of \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$2.00 for every additional minute will be charged for each child that is picked up after scheduled pick up time. If a child is going to be absent, parents/guardians are expected to email or call the front office prior to 9am.

AFTERCARE

Montessori Children's School of Key West offers an Aftercare program to all currently enrolled full-day students. The hours of the program are from 2:30 – 5:30 p.m. Pre-registration for this program is strongly encouraged. Space for students who are not pre-registered is not guaranteed.

Drop-ins are available when class size permits. Drop-ins must be scheduled through the front office.

LATE PICK UP FROM AFTERCARE

A late charge of \$5.00 for the first 5 minutes and \$2.00 for every additional minute will be charged for each child that is picked up after scheduled pick up time.

INCLEMENT WEATHER PROCEDURE

While the goal of Montessori Children's School of Key West is to have school every day, it sometimes becomes necessary to close the school due to hurricanes or similar types of inclement weather. Montessori Children's School of Key West follows the protocol of the Monroe County School System. In trying to distribute information regarding school closings in a timely manner, Montessori Children's School of Key West will strive to text or email every parent/guardian and employee. Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to schedule make-up days as needed.

FINANCIAL POLICIES

TUITION PAYMENT

There is a non-refundable, non-tuition reducing enrollment fee due at the time of enrollment.

Tuition may be paid in full or in 10 monthly installments. The first installment is due on August 1st and thereafter on or before the first day of each month through May. Tuition is non-refundable for any month during which a child attends any part with the exception of the 45 day probationary period.

Tuition payments can be made through our online payment processing service or in the front office with a check, cash or credit card. If a child is moved to a new program within Montessori Children's School of Key West (Toddler to Primary, half day to full day Primary, etc), tuition will be adjusted accordingly, and fees will be prorated for the remainder of the month in which the change took place.

No alterations or adjustments shall be made to Montessori Children's School of Key West tuition policy or any signed tuition agreement without the approval of the Board of Directors. This includes any offered exchange of goods or services for tuition, changes in employment within or without Montessori Children's School of Key West, any family relocation due to employment changes, and all other requested changes in tuition.

LATE PAYMENTS AND RETURNED CHECKS

All monthly tuition payments are due on or before the first day of the applicable month. In the event any payment shall be more than five (5) days late, Montessori Children's School of Key West shall have the right to withhold any and all services for the student and/or parent/guardian. After the first day of the month a 5% flat rate late fee will be incurred. The parent/guardian understands and acknowledges that unless the parent/guardian contacts the school on or before the 5th day to request an extension of time to pay tuition and/or fees, said late fees are appropriate and cannot be contested. The parent/guardian also understands that if a check submitted to Montessori Children's School of Key West for payment of any kind is returned unpaid or rejected by the bank, a \$40.00 NSF fee will be applied.

PAST DUE ACCOUNTS

For currently enrolled families with past due accounts, Montessori Children's School of Key West Executive Director and the Board of Directors will consider each case and make a decision regarding the continuation of educational services. Families may not be permitted to re-enroll for the upcoming academic year if any accounts or fees are in arrears. Montessori Children's School of Key West cannot hold spots or guarantee placement for children whose accounts are past due.

DISCOUNTS

Siblings:

Families with multiple children enrolled at Montessori Children's School of Key West receive a 10% discount on the youngest sibling's tuition. The discount applies only to children currently enrolled in the program. Once there is only one child left at Montessori Children's School of Key West, there will no longer be a discount.

Montessori Children's School of Key West Employees:

Full-time employees receive a 40% discount in tuition for each child in the school. Discounts for non-full time employees will be determined by the Executive Director and the Board of Directors. All other details regarding employee benefits/discounts may be found in Montessori Children's School of Key West Employee Handbook.

SCHOLARSHIPS AND FINANCIAL AID

Montessori Children's School of Key West has information helpful to your family regarding financial aid and/or scholarships. Please contact the front office for details.

WORK/PAY & FUNDRAISING

The Work/Pay program is an integral part of the school. It allows parents to contribute time rather than money, keeping tuition and extended care rates as low as possible. The family obligation is 10 hours plus 2 fundraising hours for the school year. Donation of materials to the classroom, school maintenance and Board membership are a few examples. Parents/guardians are welcome to join a committee and work with other parents. Committees include:

- Fundraising: Implementing large and small events and activities to raise funds for Montessori Children's School of Key West
- House and Grounds: Keeping the campus and classrooms updated, safe and beautiful
- Public Relations: Working with the Executive Director to generate press for Montessori Children's School of Key West
- Planning and Development: Working on future planning for the school

Other opportunities such as grant writing, hospitality, and classroom events or serving as a classroom parent are available. Parents/guardians who do not complete their Work/Pay hours will be billed \$25 for each unfulfilled hour before June 1st of the school year. Contributions to the classroom or school of \$25 earns 1 Work/Pay hour. Each snack obligation counts as 1 hour of Work/Pay. All hours should be logged into the Work/Pay binder, by the parent/guardian, located in the Front Office.

Fundraising is essential at Montessori Children's School of Key West. All families are required to contribute 2 hours of fundraising per academic year. Parents/guardians who do not complete their fundraising hours will be billed \$25 for each unfulfilled hour before June 1st of the school year.

EDUCATIONAL APPROACH AND DISCIPLINE

DEVELOPMENTAL CYCLES

The Montessori Method follows the Planes of Development as identified by Dr. Maria Montessori, rather than the predetermined, yearly curriculum benchmarks common to traditional school programs. By providing a multi-age community within a **three-year cycle**, Montessori environments offer lessons and opportunities that support each child's current Plane of Development. Montessori Children's School of Key West strongly recommends that children complete each **three-year cycle** they begin. The success of the child's experience is based on the completion of this cycle and will reap lifelong rewards. Montessori Children's School of Key West asks parents/guardians to make decisions based on the **three-year cycle**, rather than from year to year. Additionally, Montessori Children's School of Key West encourages the reading of Montessori literature and attendance at Parent-Education events to provide a better understanding of the Montessori approach to learning.

CODE OF CONDUCT

Montessori Children's School of Key West expects children to adhere to a high level of proper conduct on campus and at all school functions. Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to discipline any child who does not adhere to this standard of conduct. The Montessori philosophy holds that students will learn respectful and responsible behavior for oneself, towards others, and for the environment. Montessori Children's School of Key West focuses on the use of natural and logical consequences with words of encouragement and detailed and specific recognition for a job well done. Faculty and staff shall be supported in their efforts to discipline students. All personnel are expected to use Montessori Children's School of Key West policies in disciplining students.

DISCIPLINE

Montessori Children's School of Key West uses a positive approach to discipline using natural and logical consequences and is never punitive. Students enjoy freedom of movement and choice with carefully defined limits. Cooperation and collaboration are encouraged. Adults model kindness and respect. When there is a problem, the staff assures the child that the behavior, not the individual, is inappropriate. Threats and punishments are never permitted and consequences are always explained. Interventions in relation to discipline are expected to be formulated on: 1) respect for the child; 2) knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of the child, as well as the needs of the community; and 3) the understanding that appropriate behavior must be carefully taught and modeled. The goal of each intervention is to assist the child in developing self-control and self-discipline. All actions shall be fair, dignified and invoked to benefit the child and his/her schoolmates. Parents/guardians shall be consulted and notified by the Guide and/or Executive Director of the disciplinary needs of a child. The

following are the three levels of disciplinary action taken at Montessori Children's School of Key West:

Level 1: Redirection and/or counseling with a child. Time to sit alone within the classroom and "collect oneself."

Level 2: Removal from the classroom or playground under staff supervision.

Level 3: Short term or permanent removal from the school. Parents/guardians will be called immediately to pick up their child. Short-term removal from Montessori Children's School of Key West may be for the remainder of the day or up to three days at Montessori Children's School of Key West's discretion. Expelling a child from Montessori Children's School of Key West would occur only under the most severe circumstances in which the administration determined that a child was a safety risk for him/herself, other students or staff.

HARASSMENT/BULLYING

Montessori Children's School of Key West is dedicated to fostering an environment that promotes kindness and acceptance and embraces differences among individuals. Therefore, Montessori Children's School of Key West will not tolerate any type of harassment or bullying. Any child found to have violated this policy will be subject to disciplinary action. Children that continuously do harm to themselves or others will be asked to leave the program if it is deemed their behavior will not change.

BITING POLICY

When a child is bitten:

1. The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as "biting is not okay - it hurts". We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or call attention to the biter. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.
2. The biter will not be allowed to return to work/play and will be talked to on a level which he/she can understand. "I can see that you want that lesson, but I can't let you hurt him. We don't put our teeth on people."
3. The child will be redirected to other work/play.
4. Staff will complete a behavior report and notify the family of the biter when the child is picked up for the day.

For the victim:

1. Staff will separate the child who was bitten from the biter.
2. Special attention will be given to comfort the child.
3. Staff will administer appropriate first aid as follows:

- Assess the wound and if it is bleeding, apply pressure directly to the wound, using a clean, dry cloth, until the bleeding stops.
- Clean the bite wound with a mild soap and warm running water for approximately 3 - 5 minutes.
- Rinse thoroughly, and pat dry with a clean, dry cloth.
- Cover the wound with a clean, dry dressing.

4. Staff will complete an injury report to notify the family of the victim that the child has been bitten.

5. Classroom staff will confer with the Executive Director to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. If changes in supervision and/or environment are warranted, then those changes will be implemented.

When biting continues:

1. Classroom staff will meet with the Executive Director on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning.

2. Staff will chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.

3. Staff will "shadow" children who indicate a tendency to bite, in order to:

Head off biting situations before they occur.

Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.

Adapt the program to better fit the individual child's needs.

Teach responses to potential biting situations: "Stop" or "That hurts!"

4. Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.

5. Teachers will hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Follow-up meetings or telephone conversations will be scheduled as needed.

6. Teachers will consider early transition of a child "stuck" in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.

7. Staff will prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from Montessori Children's School of Key West.

8. If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, school, and other children, the child will be dismissed from Montessori Children's School of Key West for the duration of the biting stage. Written warning will be given to the families before this action will be taken.

PARENT EDUCATION, PARTICIPATION AND INFORMATION

PARENT/GUARDIAN LEARNING

A child's most important and most effective guide is the parent/guardian. To assist the child in having a fulfilling Montessori experience, Montessori Children's School of Key West offers a multitude of opportunities for parent education:

Parent Orientation - This mandatory meeting with program staff and parents is held before the first day of school each year.

- Parent education nights - Informational sessions offered three to four times during the school year. Teachers provide a presentation, reading materials and do a question and answer session (See dates in annual school calendar).
- A multitude of books, articles, materials and DVDs available in the office.
- Handouts and newsletters from our Executive Director.

PARENT/GUARDIAN CONFERENCES

Parent conferences are a requirement for all parents/guardians. They are scheduled twice per year, in the autumn and spring. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardians to sign up for a time as offered by the classroom guides. Additional conferences can be scheduled at the request of either the parent or Montessori Children's School of Key West. Prior to the conference, parents/guardians will receive an emailed or written report of the child's progress. The report should be brought to the meeting, and parents/guardians will be asked to sign a form stating they have completed the conference at the conclusion of the meeting.

COMMUNITY MEETINGS

On the first Thursday of each month parents, staff and students are invited to attend our Community Meeting. These meetings can be led by anyone in the school community - even students. These meetings provide a forum for new ideas, problem-solving, community-building, and future school development. They give community members an opportunity to have a voice in school affairs.

CORPORATION MEETINGS

All parents/guardians are strongly encouraged to attend the three Corporation meetings. (See annual calendar for dates). These meetings are considered one (1) hour of Work/Pay. The meetings provide families with updates on finances, educational programs, and

operational progress of Montessori Children's School of Key West, and are run by the Board of Directors and the Executive Director.

COMMUNICATION PROTOCOL

Montessori Children's School of Key West has a responsibility to communicate with parents/guardians. It is the responsibility of the parent/guardian to review information sent and plan accordingly. Communication is given via a variety of methods including emails, text messages, our school website at montessorikeywest.com, and postings on school property. Questions about communication should be directed to the person who sent it. If, for example, an email is sent from the guide about a classroom need, parents/guardians should direct communication directly back to her. If the information comes from the Executive Director, or in a newsletter, parents/guardians contact the Front Office and/or the Executive Director.

RESOLUTION OF QUESTIONS, NEEDS, COMPLAINTS OR CONCERNS

It is the goal of Montessori Children's School of Key West to address all parent/guardian concerns in a timely and efficient manner. Exceptions to Montessori Children's School of Key West policy are extremely rare, and must be approved by the Board of Directors. All matters should follow a protocol, involving three steps:

Step 1: The parent/guardian should send an email to the guide, copied to the Executive Director

Step 2: The guide or Executive Director will respond with either a phone call or an email within 24 hours to attempt to resolve the issue, and to determine if a meeting is required.

Step 3: If a meeting is required, one will be held with the appropriate parties. The goal will be to devise an action plan/resolution. This will be documented and filed by the administration. A need for follow up will be determined during the meeting, and will be included in the resolution/plan of action.

Montessori Children's School of Key West requests that parents/guardians refrain from engaging in lengthy discussions with teaching staff during school hours, as it prevents them from giving their full attention to the students.

PRIVACY POLICY

Every reasonable measure shall be taken to protect the privacy of students, members, administration, faculty and staff. Personal information provided to the school is not provided to other entities or persons except as required by applicable law. Personal information or the likeness of single individuals shall be used in the school newsletters or other publications and on the website only with permission of the parent/guardian.

If a person objects by phone, letter or email to having his/her personal information published, it shall be removed as soon as possible. The school will make member, administration and staff privacy a high priority.

PHOTO/VIDEO CONSENT

On Montessori Children's School of Key West enrollment forms, parents/guardians acknowledge their approval or denial to use their child's picture and/or name to appear in Montessori Children's School of Key West marketing materials, including but not limited to the website, brochures, advertisements, school yearbooks, and local media outlets. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to update any changes to this form.

HEALTH POLICIES

All children are required to have the Montessori Children's School of Key West Emergency Contact/ Medical Data Form on file at the school. If a child has any health changes during the school year, the Executive Director must be notified.

IMMUNIZATION GUIDELINES/SCHOOL ENTRY HEALTH EXAM

Students are required to meet all immunization requirements in accordance with Florida State Law and shall be denied attendance if they fail to do so. A returning child's form should already be on file at the school, however, if any boosters have been given to a child, the form must be updated at the beginning of the school year.

Any child that is not immunized due to religious exemption must provide the school with a 'Religious Exemption from Immunization' form signed by Monroe County Health Department staff or your child's physician.

Your child must have an up to date 'Student Entry Health Exam' form (DH3040) on file. Health examinations must be completed every two years by your child's physician.

ILLNESS AND INJURY GUIDELINES

Parents/guardians give his/her express consent to Montessori Children's School of Key West, or any agency acting on its behalf, to secure and provide any medical and dental attention deemed necessary in the discretion of Montessori Children's School of Key West for his/her child during a period when he/she cannot be contacted by telephone. Parents/guardians further agree to assume complete financial responsibility for any and all medical expenses incurred on behalf of his/her child under the above conditions. He/she agrees to release, indemnify and hold harmless Montessori Children's School of Key West and its agents for any and all damages arising from medical conditions, both known and unknown, not directly caused by the school's gross negligence.

Parents/guardians agree that Montessori Children's School of Key West reserves the right to send home a child who shows definite or continued signs of ill health that may jeopardize the general welfare of the class. The following are examples of an ill child:

- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Strep throat
- Vomiting
- Excessive runny nose
- Fever of over 100 degrees
- Diarrhea
- Unusual skin rash or irritation
- Head lice (no nits, no eggs)
- Coughing (chronic, deep hacking)

Parents/guardians understand that if he/she is called to pick his/her child up from school, the parent/guardian will make every effort to do so in a timely manner. Parents/guardians understand that he/she may not bring the child back to school for at **least 24 hours** after he/she has been sent home due to illness. Having a sick or contagious child attend school jeopardizes the health of others and will be avoided at all times. In the case of contagious disease, virus or skin condition, parent/guardian may be required to get a doctor's note stating that the child is no longer contagious and can return to school at the Executive Director's discretion.

Additionally Montessori Children's School of Key West subscribes to a NO NIT, NO LICE policy. If the child/family experiences a break out of head lice, parent/guardian understands that he/she must keep the child home until all live lice and nits are eradicated and notify the school so the school may ensure other children are lice free.

Parents/guardians understand that Montessori Children's School of Key West will not distribute medication to any child without a Medication form completed by a parent/guardian.

In the event of an illness or non-emergency injury at school, Montessori Children's School of Key West will seek immediate care for the child and contact the parent/guardian. In the event that the parents or authorized agents cannot be reached, a staff member will secure medical attention for the child. An Incident/Illness Report will be completed, signed by staff, and presented to the parent by the Executive Director. A copy of the report will go in the child's file.

We appreciate your cooperation with the following policies:

NUT POLICY

In order to accommodate allergic students and their families, Montessori Children's School of Key West has initiated a policy regarding both tree nuts and peanuts on our campus. Students should not bring nuts to campus for lunch or snack. Montessori Children's School of Key West asks that any item containing nuts or nut products, including peanut and nut butters, oils, extracts and flours be consumed at home and not be brought on campus.

While we hope this policy helps to minimize the risk for children with allergies, we understand that no policy will completely ameliorate it. **Montessori Children's School of Key West depends on participation from all of our families to keep nuts and nut products away from our students with allergies.**

CLASSROOMS, COMMUNAL/SHARED SNACKS, CELEBRATIONS

For classroom snacks or food preparation, potlucks, on-campus bake sales and or other celebrations shared by and with students, parents should not supply any items that contain nuts. Any item prepared with or around nuts will pose a risk of cross-contamination and could trigger an allergic reaction. Any food(s) with labels that say “may contain nuts,” or “processed in a factory with nuts” are prohibited. Foods sent in for communal snack must be carefully checked to make sure they are peanut/tree-nut free.

There may be students in your child’s classroom who have severe allergies to foods other than nuts. Each classroom guide will communicate with parents about other foods that may not be brought into her classroom.

Montessori Children's School of Key West encourages the families of our nut allergic students to provide educational materials and information to all of our families. For resources and information on nut allergies, please visit the Food Allergy and Anaphylaxis Network (FAAN) at www.foodallergy.org

ADMINISTRATION OF MEDICATION GUIDELINES

Montessori Children's School of Key West cannot administer medicine to a student without written parental consent. All medications will be stored and administered through the front office. If a child needs medication while at school, the following guidelines must be followed:

- Complete the form for medication (available in the front office)
- All medication sent to the school must be in the original prescribing container with a current date and the child’s name
- Do not leave medication with the child or in the child’s lunch box

EMERGENCY GUIDELINES

In the event that a child requires immediate emergency medical care, Montessori Children's School of Key West will make every effort to contact the child’s parent/guardian prior to rendering treatment to the child, but that treatment will not be withheld if the authorized adults cannot be reached. Montessori Children's School of Key West does not provide insurance for students, thus all costs related to medical treatment are the responsibility of the parent/guardian.

If an accident involving a child results in a child becoming unconscious or seriously injured, telephone calls will be made in the following order:

1. Emergency 911, if required
2. The child’s parent/guardian
3. The child’s family doctor

STUDENT CARE

CLOTHING

Montessori Children's School of Key West aims to help students increase their self-reliance. Parents/guardians are therefore encouraged to send children to school in clothes they can manage alone in the bathroom. Montessori Children's School of Key West recommends casual play clothes that can be easily laundered. 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.

Jewelry often becomes a distraction or gets lost, and is generally best left at home. Each child should bring at least one change of clothing in a clearly marked zipper-lock bag. Contents should include shirt, pants or shorts, underwear and socks. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to ensure the school has at least one change of clean clothes on site at all times. When soiled clothing comes home, parents/guardians should send a fresh supply the following morning.

LUNCH GUIDELINES

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing lunch for their child. Choices should be offered to children to ensure that they consume their lunch. Montessori Children's School of Key West provides the following guidelines:

- Lunch should include: dairy, protein, fruit and/or vegetables and a drink. The child with a high protein lunch will have a more successful afternoon.
- Drinks that are made of high fructose corn syrup/sugar, food coloring or chocolate (including chocolate milk) are discouraged.
- Sodas and candy are not allowed.
- Nuts of any kind are not permitted (refer to the Nut Policy under the Health Policy section of this handbook).
- Prepackaged kids meals contain an abundance of sodium and preservatives and are not advisable.
- If a child has food that needs to be warmed, parents/guardians are asked to put it in a glass container to ensure that it is microwaved safely. Thermoses for stews and soups will keep food warm until lunch time. Microwaves are used for reheating food only, not for cooking items (such as frozen meals).

- Lunchboxes are stored in cubbies either outside of or inside the classroom, depending on the room. Freezer packs should be used.

Should a child bring a lunch or forget his/her lunch, Montessori Children's School of Key West staff will provide a fruit and protein based meal from the classroom snack supplies.

Montessori Children's School of Key West offers a catered lunch each week from a local restaurant, and serves a vegetable or fruit. This is a paid, additional service for which parents/guardians are billed annually.

SNACK GUIDELINES

Parents/guardians are responsible for providing a healthy snack for their child. For children in Aftercare, parents/guardians should provide an additional afternoon snack.

HANDWASHING

All students are expected to wash their hands with soap upon entering the classroom in the morning and before lunch. This helps to prevent the spread of germs, and to ensure that no traces of nut oils remain on the hands of children who consumed nut or nut based products before coming to school.

LOST AND FOUND

When the ownership of any personal item cannot be determined, the item is brought to the lost and found, located in the Front Office. Unclaimed items are taken to local charities at the end of the academic year.

TOYS

Toys may **not** be brought to school or stored in cubbies. Should your child bring a toy to school we will keep it in the office until you pick your child up. Toys distract your child and other children from classroom lessons and can cause conflict and jealousy.

OUTDOOR PLAY GUIDELINES

The outdoors is an important part of the prepared environment of the Montessori community and the children will spend time outside daily. Administration has the right to cancel outdoor activities based on weather and health advisories (e.g., heat index, mosquito spraying, inclement weather, etc.)

When using the Montessori Children's School of Key West playground, staff members will and parents/guardians must:

- Always escort children to the playground.
- Check the playground for unsafe materials and remove them.

- Maintain awareness of all children and all the activity by walking around and watching the children in all areas of the playground.
- Supervise and intervene when necessary regarding behavior on the playground.
- Handle an emergency by one adult staying with the group while another addresses the situation.

Students must:

- Not throw rocks or sticks.
- Not pretend to play violently.
- Not lean on, kick, or hang on fencing.
- Stay inside the fence.

DIAPERING AND TOILET TRAINING GUIDELINES

Diapers in the Toddler program are checked and changed every 1.5 to 2 hours, and/or more frequently if required. Hand washing of the staff and the child is performed after each change, and staff members wear a new pair of disposable protective gloves for each change. Parents/guardians are responsible for supplying diapers and wipes (labeled with the child’s name) and any other necessary items (powder, ointment). Notification will be given when running low. Once parents/guardians are ready to begin toilet training, Montessori Children's School of Key West will help along the way. Montessori Children's School of Key West will work with the child at his/her pace, and offer the opportunity throughout the day to use the toilet and wash hands. Parents should provide multiple changes of clothing.

CAMPUS ACCESSIBILITY

Campus facilities are designed and arranged to accommodate the Montessori method of the prepared environment and the development of independent children. Therefore, freedom of movement of the child from the indoor community to the outdoor community is necessary. The child is free to move about the school to accommodate personal needs such as visits to the restroom, student cubbies, outside gardens, etc. With this in mind, the campus is designed to provide safety for the child. The outdoor community gardens and playgrounds are enclosed with fencing. Gate codes are required to enter and exit exterior campus gates. Please help us maintain a safe and secure campus by ensuring that all gates close behind you. Do not share gate codes with friends or children.

FIELD TRIP GUIDELINES

Children will be afforded opportunities to learn beyond the campus. Teachers will notify parents/guardians of field trips via email, printed communication and distribution of permission forms. Notification shall include the date, destination, start and end times, and emergency information. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to decline a planned field trip and make arrangements for the care of their child on the day of the planned field trip.

LEGAL PROTECTION POLICY

CONFIDENTIALITY OF RECORDS

Personal information about Montessori Children's School of Key West students, families and employees and the internal affairs of Montessori Children's School of Key West are confidential and should not be discussed with those persons not having a right to said knowledge. School workplace affairs are confidential and should not be discussed or publicized beyond staff meetings and conferences.

All records, files and reports of conversations and conferences concerning children are strictly confidential and shall not be released without the written consent of the parents/guardian.

CHILDREN LEAVING CAMPUS

To ensure their safety, children will not be allowed to leave the campus unless escorted by a person previously identified by the child's parents/guardians as being authorized to do so. Such authorizations must be submitted by parents/guardians in writing on the Montessori Children's School of Key West enrollment form and shall be maintained on file at the school. Persons not authorized to escort a child off campus, and who request to do so will be directed to Montessori Children's School of Key West Administration.

VISITORS TO CAMPUS

Visitors are welcome at Montessori Children's School of Key West on a limited basis. Any person visiting Montessori Children's School of Key West (including parents/guardians) must announce their presence at the front office.

If the purpose of the visit is to enter a classroom for observation or requested assistance, the front office staff will determine if the guide is ready for the visitor, and then, the visitor can proceed to the classroom.

Parents/guardians will not be permitted to enter classrooms at random. This disrupts the work cycle of the communities and breaches Montessori Children's School of Key West's security system.

Montessori Children's School of Key West welcomes and encourages members of the community to tour the school. Requests for tours may be scheduled through the front office.

Any unauthorized person seen on campus shall be reported to the administration immediately. Appropriate measures will be taken to have these individuals removed from the property.

CHILD ABUSE

Employees of Montessori Children's School of Key West are required to complete a criminal background check at the expense of the school. Employees of Montessori Children's School of Key West who are acting in their official or professional capacity and become aware, or suspect that a child has suffered or faces a threat of suffering any physical or mental wound, injury, disability or condition of a nature that reasonably indicates abuse or neglect of the child shall immediately notify the Executive Director, who will contact the Department of Children and Families and appropriate law enforcement authorities.

CLEANING AND CHEMICALS

All chemicals used on campus shall be stored in locked areas. Only Montessori Children's School of Key West employees shall have access to chemical storage. The classrooms are cleaned daily by the staff and several times weekly by a contracted cleaning service. Cleaners use chemicals such as bleach periodically.

SMOKE-FREE AND DRUG-FREE CAMPUS

Montessori Children's School of Key West is a smoke-free and tobacco-free campus. Montessori Children's School of Key West employees and parents/guardians shall refrain from tobacco use during school sponsored field trips and while on school property.

WEAPON POLICY

It is unlawful for any person (excluding law enforcement) to carry, possess, or have under control any weapon or explosive compound on school property.

SEXUAL HARASSMENT

It is the policy of Montessori Children's School of Key West to maintain a learning environment that is free from sexual harassment. It shall be a violation of this policy for any member of Montessori Children's School of Key West community (eg., staff, children, parents, etc.) to harass another individual through conduct or communications of a sexual nature.

Sexual harassment, as defined above, may include, but is not limited to:

- Verbal harassment or abuse
- Pressure for sexual activity
- Repeated remarks to a person with sexual or demeaning implications
- Unwelcome touching
- Suggesting or demanding sexual involvement accompanied by implied or explicit threats

The right to confidentiality, both of the complainant and of the accused, will be respected consistent with Montessori Children's School of Key West's legal obligations and with the necessity to investigate allegations of misconduct and take corrective action when this conduct has occurred.

All allegations of sexual harassment shall be fully investigated and immediate and appropriate corrective or disciplinary action shall be initiated.

I have received the Montessori Children's School of Key West, Inc. Parent-Student Handbook and agree to abide by all of the policies and procedures.

Printed Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

___/___/___
Date

Printed Name

Signature of Parent/Guardian

___/___/___
Date

SIGN AND RETURN TO OFFICE WITH ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK