



Adolescent Program Handbook

1021 White Street
Key West, Florida
305-294-5302
montessorikeyst.com

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*The Adolescent Program Handbook is a SUPPLEMENT to the Parent/Student Handbook for policies specific to Adolescence. Refer to the Parent/Student Handbook for school-wide policies and procedures.

Pay careful attention to the AGGRESSIVE/DISRUPTIVE BEHAVIOR POLICY (with modified language for the third plane of development) and our ILLNESS AND INJURY GUIDELINES, as well as our updated FOOD ALLERGY POLICY.

The Montessori Method

The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time-tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world.

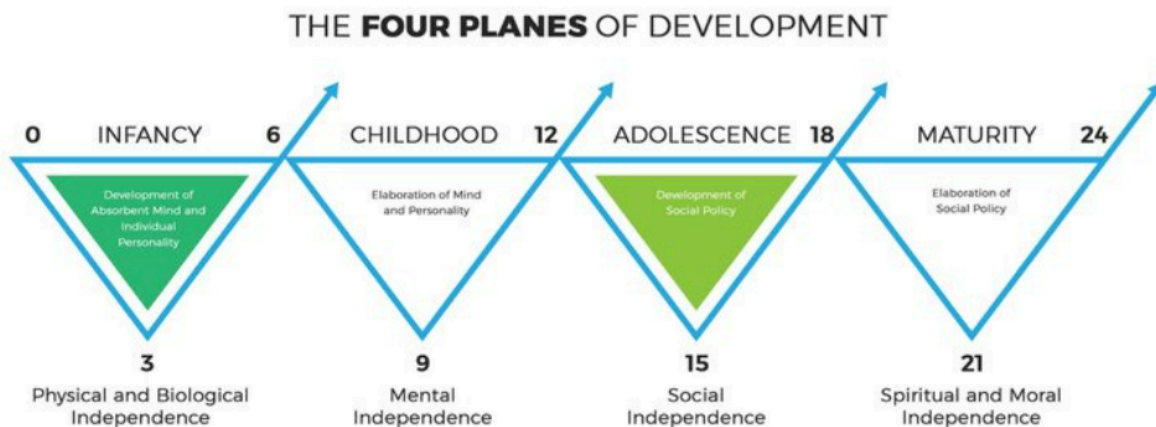
It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initiating learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child—physical, social, emotional, and cognitive.

Components necessary for a program to be considered authentically Montessori include multi-age groupings that foster peer learning, uninterrupted blocks of work time, and guided choice of work activity. In addition, a full complement of specially designed Montessori learning materials is meticulously arranged and available for use in an aesthetically pleasing environment.

The teacher, child, and environment create a learning triangle. The classroom is prepared by the teacher to encourage independence, freedom within limits, and a sense of order. The child, through individual choice, makes use of what the environment offers to develop themselves, interacting with the teacher when support and/or guidance is needed.

Multiage groupings are a hallmark of the Montessori Method: younger children learn from older children; older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered. This arrangement also mirrors the real world, where individuals work and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions.

Dr. Montessori observed that children experience sensitive periods, or windows of opportunity, as they grow. As their students develop, Montessori teachers match appropriate lessons and materials to these sensitive periods when learning is most naturally absorbed and internalized.



In early childhood, Montessori students learn through sensory-motor activities, working with materials that develop their cognitive powers through direct experience: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching, and movement.

In the elementary years, the child continues to organize his thinking through work with the Montessori learning materials and an interdisciplinary curriculum as he passes from the concrete to the abstract. He begins to apply his knowledge to real-world experiences.

In the third plane, this organization of information—facts and figures—prepares the child for the world of adolescence. During this developmental period, thoughts and emotions evolve into the more practical application of abstract ideas and an understanding of universal concepts such as equity, freedom, and justice.

Adolescent Student Characteristics

The Third Plane of Development, ages 12–18, is the age of “the social newborn,” whose hallmarks include:

- ❖ Peer/social interactions are of most importance
- ❖ Economic independence
- ❖ Sensitivity to criticism
- ❖ Values appearance
- ❖ Has a strong desire to fit in
- ❖ May suffer from lack of confidence

The Montessori Adolescent curriculum is intentionally designed to meet the unique developmental needs of students during a period of tremendous physical, emotional, and social growth. During this stage of development, adolescents seek independence, purpose, identity, and meaningful roles within society. The Montessori environment responds to these needs by providing authentic experiences that connect rigorous academics with real-life work, service, and responsibility.

Following Maria Montessori's vision of the Erdkinder ("Children of the Earth"), adolescents learn in a community where intellectual work is balanced with practical work. Students are encouraged to engage in meaningful activities that allow them to contribute to the well-being of their school and the larger community while discovering their strengths, interests, and potential roles as future adults. Rather than separating academics from life, Montessori integrates learning into purposeful experiences that develop both the hands and the mind.

Community is the foundation of the Montessori adolescent program. Students participate in collaborative decision-making, leadership opportunities, and regular community meetings where they learn responsibility, communication, and conflict resolution. Through service learning and community partnerships, students recognize that their work can positively impact others. These experiences cultivate empathy, civic responsibility, and a lifelong commitment to serving their communities.

The Prepared Environment

This environment fosters a sense of safety and belonging, encouraging adolescents to share their ideas, ask questions, and engage in respectful discussions with their peers. Flexible learning spaces with opportunities for both independent and collaborative work. This allows students to develop confidence, responsibility, and problem-solving skills.

Adolescents Daily Rhythm

8:00 Arrival
8:15 Plan Day
8:30 Morning Meeting
9:00 Work Cycle
12:00 Lunch
12:30 Recess
1:00 Enrichments/Electives
2:15 Daily reflection
2:30 Jobs/Music
2:45 Dismissal

Arriving on Time/Drop-Off

Your child's day begins at 8:15, but students may arrive after 7:45, when staff are present.

- They will enter through the back door of 1021 White Street. This door is located off of Virginia Street.
- If your child rides a bike or a scooter, they will need to bring a lock and wear a helmet.
- Students may walk.
- If you would like to drop your child off, you must park in a **legal parking spot, not FAUSTOS or along the yellow curb**. You may allow your child to walk from your parked vehicle to school independently, or you may walk them to the back door area.
- We highly recommend you do a practice run before the first day of school, so you can look for open legal parking spots and help your child visualize this new process.

We can not stress this enough; YOU MUST PARK TO DROP OFF YOUR CHILD OR PICK UP YOUR CHILD ON WHITE STREET. Do not pull up at a stoplight and let them jump out.

*It is imperative to arrive at school on time, between **8:00- 8:15**. This allows children to plan their day, acclimate, and socialize before the start of their workday. Our morning meeting begins promptly at **8:30**, with lessons and work cycle immediately following. Children who arrive late find it difficult to adjust and transition because they have missed key elements of their daily schedule. If you arrive after the doors are locked, you or your student will need to ring the doorbell for entry.

Pick-up

Your child's day ends PROMPTLY at 2:45.

- If you are picking your child up at the White Street Campus, you must park in a legal parking spot, not FAUSTOS or along the yellow curb. You will need to come to the back area of 1021 White Street at the end of the day for pick-up or arrange a meeting location with your child, so they can be dismissed to walk to your vehicle.
- If there are conflicts with pick-up time, communicate with your adolescent's teacher to devise a solution; aftercare is not available to adolescent students.

****A Google Form will go out at the beginning of each school year to inform staff of your plans. Communication is imperative to student safety.**

Late Drop-off/Early Pick-up/ Illness/Appointments

In the event of a late drop-off or early pick-up, reach out directly to your child's teacher. Ring the Ring Doorbell (located at the back entrance) to silently alert the teachers of your arrival.

Food

We do not restrict what your child eats during snack and lunch; we believe that if you and your child packed the food, then you have approved the food, and there is no right order for your child to then consume that food. Please remember this philosophy when you and your child are preparing your child's lunch. Children should be packing their own lunches, with your oversight.

Consider the Montessori philosophy as it applies to packaging. Remember to always reduce waste, reuse items, and send recyclable materials in cases when you cannot do the other two. We also practice composting, so be sure to engage in conversation with your child as to whether they have enough to eat or are generating too much food waste.

Snack

Students at the Adolescent level are responsible for providing their own snacks Monday - Thursday. Friday snack/supplement to pizza lunch is on a rotation. The list is provided for you at the beginning of the year. In the case of an absence, please coordinate a trade with another family. Remember, this counts toward your work hours.

Examples of Food Choices for Snack

Fresh Fruit: Apples, bananas, cantaloupe, honeydew, seedless grapes, watermelon, strawberries, blueberries, raspberries, mango, peaches, plums

Fresh Veggies: Avocados, carrots, cherry tomatoes, broccoli

Grains: Crackers, Goldfish, rice cakes, muffins, tortilla chips, cereal, veggie sticks, pita bread

Dairy: Yogurt, cheese, cottage cheese

Other: Salsa, hummus, guacamole, applesauce, raisins

Sharing Food

While students in the lower grades are asked not to share food or snacks, children at this plane of development are exploring their identity and learning how to be members of the society in which they live. Communal eating and sharing of food correlate to feelings of inclusion and bonding through developing trust and deepening connection. Our students should be clear on food sensitivities and allergies, as well as family preferences, and make their own informed decisions about when to participate in sharing and self-regulating food intake. This is an opportunity to exercise freedom within responsibility.

Lunch

Please include a clean fabric napkin with your child's lunch. Utensils and dishes are provided. In an effort to practice grace and courtesy, students will unpack their lunch onto plates/dishes. Compartmented lunch containers meant to be eaten out of will not be utilized. We do not provide refrigeration for lunch boxes; therefore, include an ice pack inside the lunchbox if needed. A microwave is available for short reheating (~1 minute or less). A toaster, toaster oven, and hot water pot are also available.

Eco-conscious Packaging

Montessori lunches pair perfectly with eco-conscious packaging that emphasizes zero-waste and fosters child independence. The best materials are stainless steel, food-grade silicone, and beeswax wraps, which eliminate single-use plastics and are durable enough to handle daily use.

Appropriate Clothing

While fictional, fantasy, or superhero character clothing is strongly discouraged in the lower grades, Montessori Students in the Adolescent program are exploring their identity and expressing themselves through their clothing choices. So as long as clothing is school-appropriate and not a distraction from learning, their choices should be fine. Infractions will be addressed on a case-by-case basis, with administrative leadership having the final word.

Birthday Celebrations

In a Montessori Classroom, each child is given a celebration of life, which is a wonderful way to celebrate a birthday by honoring a child's life and accomplishments. The class will sing, and the birthday child will walk around the sun. Students will ask the birthday child questions about her/his life so far to honor them. E.g., If you could live anywhere, where would it be? Your favorite thing to do with each member of your family?

We have an ice cream social for the student's birthday. They choose between vanilla and chocolate ice cream, as well as their choice of topping.

Communication

We believe that the exchange of information and open communication are essential to the success of the 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 news will be sent via email weekly 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.

Families will also receive a classroom biweekly email with classroom-specific information and photographs of the children working within the classroom via a Google Drive link. 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, Facebook, and Instagram page to share the school calendar, blog posts, and articles related to Montessori philosophy and Montessori practice.

Since open communication is essential, we cultivate a community in which my students speak up and advocate for themselves. If they bring concerns to you, encourage them to engage in open dialog with us, either in person, in writing, or via email.

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. Refrain from communicating about your child in front of your child or other 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, as that type of information can help us to support your child throughout the day. 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, preferably in writing, including email or text, to be sure we do not forget and can fully attend to our conversation.

We cannot promise to check emails or use our phones during the school day, but we will check them before and after school and while students attend enrichment activities, between the hours of 7:30 am and 4:00 pm.

We will get back to you within 24 hours, even if we cannot immediately answer your concerns or resolve the issue.

If important information must be relayed to your child or your child's teacher during the school day and you cannot reach us, you should call or text the office at 305-294-5302.

Most of the communication with you will be via email or text cues, so be sure to request a hard copy if you'd prefer.

If your family is experiencing difficulties at home, we would like to provide additional support at school. We understand that you are not always able to share details, and that is okay. If your child is coming to school after a difficult night, morning, or weekend, please email me or send a note saying, "Handle with Care." Nothing else will be said or asked. This will let me know that your child may need extra time, patience, or assistance during the day.

Conferences

The Adolescent students conduct two student-led conferences a year. Montessori is a Constructivist Learning Philosophy, which dictates that learners actively build their own knowledge through experiences and interactions, rather than passively receiving information. **This meeting with you is paramount.** The student-led conferences are a great way for your child to reflect on their strengths and hardships in the classroom and share their goals with you. Goals are set with the teacher before and shared during the student-led conference. Parents are welcome to share in the goal-setting process.

We also hold two parent/teacher conferences for teachers, caregivers, and (optionally) students, to get together in a casual, comfortable, face-to-face setting to discuss your child's progress and development. This conference is NOT REQUIRED, but rest assured, we will let you know if we believe we need to meet following student-led conferences, and you should do the same.

Should your family or your child's teacher feel additional meetings are necessary, more meetings may be scheduled that work best for both the teacher and family. Don't wait for conferences; if you have a concern, communicate immediately, and we'll do the same.

Community Outing Opportunities/Adolescent Adventure

Students in the Adolescent Program will be invited to attend Community Outing Opportunities/Adolescent Adventure throughout the year. Adolescents need to explore the world around them. A blanket permission slip covers any walking/biking/trolley trips within Key West and Key West Tropical Forest, planned or unplanned. These permission slips go out at orientation. Trip days are unpredictable and vary in times to accommodate weather or schedule changes. It is the responsibility of the parents/guardians to decline and make arrangements for the care of their child on the day of Community Outing Opportunities/Adolescent Adventure.

Library Trips

Literacy skills and book access are the most significant factors influencing a student's educational success. All adolescent students must have a Monroe County library card to check out books. Photocopies of their scan code will be made and kept at school so that students do not have their cards with them for our visits.

We expect families to help create a community of readers by providing support on making good reading selections, creating and sticking to a regular home reading routine of at least **30 minutes of daily reading**, and modeling healthy habits by having family reading time or reading aloud to your child(ren). Consider the findings:

- Reading fosters early learning and creates brain connections that promote language, cognitive, and social/emotional development.
- Reading with your child helps cultivate a lasting love of reading. Reading for pleasure can help prevent stress, depression, and dementia.
- Decades of early literacy research provide evidence that the interactions young children enjoy at home with their caregivers, especially conversation and hearing stories read aloud, specifically play a significant role in academic success and beyond.
- A data set analysis of nearly 100,000 U.S. school children found that access to printed materials — and not poverty — is the “critical variable affecting reading acquisition.”
- MRI scans show increased brain activity in children whose parents read with them regularly.

Students receive instruction in choosing "just right" books and will select content in the children's and young adult (for adolescents) sections, with library staff guidance. You will be informed via School Cues after library visits so that you can share in your child(ren)'s joy of reading by reviewing selections with them and engaging in comprehension conversations.

Technology

When I use school-owned computers in the classroom, I agree to be responsible, respectful, and safe.

Responsible

- I will only use apps or websites that are school-appropriate. If I am unsure about the usage of an application or website, I will bring it to the attention of a guide(s).
- I will plug in the computer when not in use. If I am required to use the computer but it is dead, I will discuss alternative solutions with a guide(s).
- I will not use Zoom Workplace, Gmail, or any other educational software for personal communication. For example, you should not be creating a Zoom meeting inviting peers to join.

Respectful

- I will not allow the computer to be a distraction to me and/or my peers' learning.
- I will not log into or use another student's account.
- I will not access and/or share other student's work/files without their permission.

Safe

- I will not post personal information about myself or others, such as phone number, address, school address, etc.
- I will promptly disclose any inappropriate/uncomfortable message(s) and/or images received to a guide(s) or another trusted adult.

Damaged or lost technology:

Students will be held responsible for the proper care and security of all school-issued technology. If a device is lost, damaged, or stolen, the student or parent/guardian must notify the school immediately.

The families should understand and agree that they are financially responsible for the **full cost** of repairing or replacing any school-issued technology that is lost, stolen, or damaged due to negligence.

Phones

Cell phones **MUST** be kept in lockers. If their phone is seen outside of the locker, it will be taken, and a parent or guardian will have to pick it up at the end of the day.

Sunscreen, Bug Spray, Medication

Please apply bug spray and sunscreen to your child, if needed, before arriving at school.

The staff is not permitted to apply either unless a medication release form has been filled out and the materials have been provided by the caregivers. To administer all medication, over-the-counter or prescribed, you must submit a signed medical waiver (located in the front office or requested electronically).

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 teachers throughout the year if there is anything that you can build or provide to 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. Please see the Parent/Student handbook for details.

What To Bring For the Adolescent Program

Please make sure everything is labeled with the child's first and last name.

1. Water bottle (labeled)
2. Snack
3. Lunch, including a clean fabric napkin
4. Optional: Hat, sunglasses, or both
5. Optional: Toothbrush/toothpaste/hairbrush can be stored in personal cubby
6. Weather-appropriate clothing and footwear

I have received the Montessori Children's School of Key West, Inc., Adolescent Program 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 THIS LAST PAGE TO THE OFFICE WITH ENROLLMENT PAPERWORK**