

PARENT & STUDENT HANDBOOK

2010 - 2011



Parents, please sign and return the
required form on last the page.

Last updated Feb 10, 2011



“... education is a natural process carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words, but by experiences in the environment.”

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952)

St. Joseph Montessori School (SJMS) serves the Columbus metropolitan area, providing comprehensive coeducational Montessori instruction for approximately three hundred diverse students from preschool through eighth grade. In 2009-2010, students from twenty-seven school districts in six counties attended SJMS.

SJMS is affiliated with the American Montessori Society, is accredited by the Catholic Diocese of Columbus, and is chartered by the state of Ohio. SJMS receives no financial support from the Diocese and is fully self-funding.

Our Mission Statement

St. Joseph Montessori School is a Catholic Montessori community committed to a learning environment that respects the uniqueness of each child in reaching his/her full potential.

Our Vision

To be a school of choice sought out by central Ohio families attracted to the power of the Montessori method of educating children applied in a diverse, engaging, and compassionate community.

This Parent & Student Handbook
has been prepared by
the Head of School
and Staff Representatives of
St. Joseph Montessori School

* * *

Original: February 1988
Eighth Review/Revision: October 2010

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Educational Philosophy	6
Educational Goals	7
Board of Trustees	8
Family Association	8
Admissions & Registration	9
Ages of Admission	9
Classroom Placement Requests	9
Documents & Fees.....	9
Annual Documents.....	10
Tuition Assistance.....	10
Records	11
Health	11
Medications.....	12
Common Signs of Illness.....	12
Flu.....	13
Allergies.....	14
Safety	14
Emergency Closings.....	15
Early Dismissal.....	15
Protecting Children.....	15
Code of Conduct	16
Code of Conduct for Parents	16
Code of Conduct for Students	17
Code of Conduct Expectations	17
Montessori Method of Discipline	17
SJMS Disciplinary Methods	18

Harassment & Bullying.....	18
Consequences for Not Complying with Expectations	20
Drugs and Weapons.....	21
Behavior Out of School.....	21
Attendance & Absence.....	21
Carpool (arrival & departure) Time	21
Tardiness.....	22
Absence.....	22
Extended Vacations	22
Academics & The School Day.....	23
Student Progress	23
Extracurricular Activities & Electives	23
Homework.....	23
Lunch & Recess	24
Extended Day	24
Communications.....	25
School Inspection Reports	25
Communicating with Parents.....	25
Friday Notes.....	25
Grievance and Conflict Resolution	25
Topics that are Classroom Specific.....	26
Snacks & Birthday Treats	26
Party Invitations	26
Use of MP3 Players, Portable Game Devices, & Other Toys	27
Miscellaneous Topics	27
Transportation	27
Cell Phones	27
Clothing.....	28
Technology & Acceptable Use.....	28
Combined Permissions.....	29

EDUCATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

The purpose of St. Joseph Montessori School is, in the words of Dr. Maria Montessori, “to educate the human potential” by means of a scientifically prepared environment which provides a wide variety of equipment and materials, employs a multi-sensory approach to learning, and frees the child to choose activities according to individual interests, abilities and talents within certain set limits. The opportunity to participate in one’s own education provides the child a context for growing academically, socially, and emotionally. At St. Joseph Montessori School the child’s ability to direct his/her own learning is guided by the Montessori influence of freedom with discipline.

Our school exists as an educational alternative which values and is committed to serve a widely diverse population with varying needs and aptitudes. We believe our services must extend beyond the classroom. Educational opportunities provided for our families enable parents to reinforce and enrich the child’s learning. Staff members are offered the means and resources for professional growth and are provided an environment which encourages initiative, creativity, and collaborative decision-making. We believe that respect, cooperation, and mutual support among students, parents, staff, and community members are critically important to a child’s success in school and must be actively fostered by all participants.

We at St. Joseph Montessori School believe that, as a result of the program provided in our school, each child will become a confident, competent person – possessing self-knowledge, independence, concentration, inner-discipline and a spirit of joy – exhibiting care and respect for him or herself, for others, and for the world around – exercising initiative and persistence in completing learning tasks – exhibiting sensitivity, curiosity, creativity, and a spirit of discovery in his or her approach to life and learning.

EDUCATIONAL GOALS

The Educational Program at St. Joseph Montessori School is designed to achieve the following goals:

1. To foster a positive attitude toward learning.

Most of our learning activities are individualized. Each child is involved in work that holds particular interest because it is geared to his or her own rate. Children repeat a task as often as desired, thus allowing them to experience a series of successful achievements. In this manner, the child acquires a positive attitude toward learning.

2. To encourage self-confidence and independence.

At St. Joseph Montessori School, work is planned so that each new step is built on what the child has already mastered, thereby removing the negative experience of frequent failure. Success after success builds up an individual's confidence and provides assurance that learning is possible. These confidence building experiences in turn contribute to the sound emotional development of the child.

3. To encourage an abiding curiosity.

In a rapidly changing society such as ours, we must all be students during our entire lifetimes. By providing children with opportunities to discover qualities, dimensions, and relationships amid a rich variety of stimulating learning situations, we nurture the development of their natural desire to learn in such a way that we instill in them a habit of being curious - an essential element of creative learning.

4. To instill respect for the dignity of all humankind.

Each child is involved in activities and opportunities that broaden his or her vision of the world. Through collaborative work, care of the environment, global education, and conflict resolution, the child gains an appreciation of personal and social responsibilities and acceptance of human differences.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

The Board of Trustees is the governing body of St. Joseph Montessori School. In the conduct of its official business, it only acts as a whole and does not intervene in the daily affairs of the school. The Board of Trustees has ultimate fiduciary responsibility for the School and ensures that the School's mission and values are effectively communicated and implemented. According to the school bylaws, the principal roles of the Board of Trustees are:

- Employing the Head of School
- Financial Condition Monitoring
- Policy Setting
- Fundraising
- Perpetuating the School
- Advocacy

Parents who want to stay informed about the work of the Board are invited to talk with the Head of School or attend monthly meetings of The Board of Trustees. Election to the Board of Trustees occurs in April of each year. For more information, please refer to the St. Joseph Montessori School Bylaws.

FAMILY ASSOCIATION

All St. Joseph Montessori School parents, teachers, and staff are members of the Family Association, an organization that provides a network of support for the SJMS community. It initiates social, enrichment, service, and fundraising projects, all of which are either self supporting or revenue producing. The Family Association is not specifically a fundraising organization, but occasionally designates proceeds from some of its revenue-generating initiatives for particular school programs. The Family Association also serves as the organizing body for certain school-funded activities. All parents are welcome to attend monthly meetings, and to become involved in its projects.

ADMISSIONS & REGISTRATION

No child, whose parents desire to enroll him/her in St. Joseph Montessori School, shall be denied admission to the school on the basis of religious affiliation, race, color, gender, or ethnicity.

New applicants are considered based on the following criteria:

1. Available space
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students
3. Children with Montessori experience

Items 2 and 3 are given priority through February 1. After February 1, applications are processed in the order they are received.

Ages of Admission

With few exceptions, a child is eligible to be admitted to Children's House if he/she is potty trained and is three years of age on or before the first day of school. For Kindergarten, a child is eligible, if he/she is five years of age on or before the first day of school. To be eligible for first grade, according to state law, the child has to have successfully completed an approved Kindergarten program.

Classroom Placement Requests

Though parents may submit a written request for a specific classroom, there is no guarantee that a request will be granted. Admission and placement decisions are based on many factors with consideration given to gender, age and a comfortable fit in a Montessori environment as dictated by the balance of the existing multi-age class. Teacher recommendations and assessment of each child's needs and experiences are also considered as part of this process. Payment of the application fee does not guarantee specific class and/or teacher assignments.

Documents & Fees

For returning students, signed contracts and registration fees are due in the office by March 1st. Late contracts are subject to late fees and possible loss of school enrollment. Once a signed contract is received, April 1st is the last day to withdraw without financial penalty.

If you withdraw after April 1st, **you are responsible** for payment of the full tuition. Specific terms and conditions of enrollment are outlined in the enrollment agreement. It is **IMPORTANT** that you read this legal contract

carefully and understand its contents.

A non-refundable registration fee is required to secure each child a place for the following school year. Without it, registration will be considered incomplete.

Failure to pay tuition and fees when due shall be reason for exclusion of a child from attendance at St. Joseph Montessori School. Children will not be admitted to class on the first day of the school year unless the first tuition payment has been received. If a child is enrolled after the completion of the first month of school, tuition will be prorated on a per diem basis.

Annual Documents

Annual registration shall be considered complete only when the following items have been received in the school office:

1. Signed enrollment agreement
2. Registration fee
3. Confirmation of enrolling in FACTS Tuition Management, if applicable

The following forms must be submitted to the school office with the signed contract:

1. Birth Certificate (All New Students)
2. Health Forms (Children's House Students)
3. Emergency Cards (All Students)
4. Special Subjects Enrollment (Elementary Students)
5. Custodial parents must provide a certified copy of any child custody order or decree pertaining to any enrolled or prospective student (Required by Senate Bill 140). This **MUST** be resubmitted each year.
6. Transportation Permission (Elementary Students)
7. Emergency Closing Transportation Form (Elementary Students)
8. Combined Permissions Form (All Students)

Tuition Assistance

St. Joseph Montessori School is committed to providing quality Montessori education at a cost that is as reasonable as possible. In keeping with Dr. Montessori's philosophy that all children could profit from exposure to this environment, we have established a tuition assistance process to provide some aid to families who otherwise could not afford to offer this educational advantage to their children.

The provision of tuition assistance is based solely on need as defined by the school and based on the submission of specific verifiable information. Priority is granted to families who have previously received assistance and/or are re-enrolling in the school. Acknowledging that family circumstances change and that the financial resources of our school vary, no family is guaranteed aid indefinitely and no family receives full tuition for any one child. **Annual application is required.** The applicant's commitment to Montessori education, including participation in SJMS activities, is a vital factor in the determination by the Tuition Assistance Team.

The deadline for submitting a Tuition Assistance Applications is March 1, to be considered for the following school year. Tuition Assistance applications are confidential and reviewed only by members of the Tuition Assistance Team. However, due to the nonprofit status of the school, the grant recipients and the amounts received are listed on the school's tax return.

Records

No data shall be released about students without the written consent of the parent or guardian, except when required by law. Parents or guardians shall have access to all data, have the right to challenge the accuracy of all data, and have the right to insert into the permanent record a written rebuttal of information considered to be inaccurate.

No one but school personnel, parents or guardians, or non-custodial parents or guardians shall have access to student data without a valid court order, subpoena, or written permission of the parent or guardian. School personnel may release information concerning students for research or statistical purposes as long as the individual student's identity is protected.

HEALTH

Students through kindergarten must have physical exams by a physician annually. All immunizations must be up to date to enroll new students. These forms are available in the school office or can be downloaded from the school website.

Acceptance of a student is at the discretion of the Head of School. If a pre-existing illness is concealed by the student, parent, or guardian, the Head of School may suspend or terminate the enrollment of the student. If a medical evaluation by a physician is recommended by the Head of School, such reports will be returned to the Head of School within one week.

The school employs, on a part-time basis, a registered, certified school nurse through the State of Ohio, Department of Education. The nurse utilizes her skills to identify student health problems and to handle emergency situations. The nurse also coordinates school and community health resources. Some of the nurse's general services are:

1. Determines health status
2. Performs screenings on students
3. Maintains constant communication with the Head of School and teachers regarding health problems

Medications

Any student needing to take medication during school hours **MUST** have a signed Medication Authorization Form from the parent or guardian **AND** a properly completed physician's statement. The medication will be held in the nurse's office until such time that it is to be administered. Regardless of their age, students may not keep any medications with them and may not self-administer without supervision. School personnel may not give over-the-counter medications unless prescribed by a doctor.

No injectable medications will be given by school personnel except for EpiPen for severe allergic reaction. No verbal orders can be taken. Any changes in medication must also be in writing from a physician. All medication must be in the container in which it was dispensed by the prescribing physician or licensed pharmacist.

Common Signs of Illness

All staff members receive training in signs and symptoms of illness and in hand washing and disinfection procedures at the beginning of employment. Parents of any child suspected of having a communicable disease will be contacted to take the child home. It is expected that the parents will respond promptly. The child will be isolated and supervised until a parent arrives.

In accordance with state law, a child will be sent home if any of the following signs of illness are evident:

1. Temperature of 100° F (taken by auxiliary method when in combination with other symptoms)
2. Diarrhea and/or vomiting
3. Unusual skin rash
4. Head lice
5. Pink eye
6. Severe, persistent coughing
7. Difficult or rapid breathing
8. Yellowish skin or eyes
9. Untreated infected skin patch(es)
10. Unusually dark urine and/or grey or white stool
11. Stiff neck

PLEASE DO NOT SEND YOUR CHILD TO SCHOOL IF ANY OF THESE SYMPTOMS ARE EVIDENT IN THE MORNING.

A child must be excluded from school until sufficiently recovered from the illness. If your child has a fever (over 100°), diarrhea, and/or vomiting, he/she must be excluded from school for **at least twenty-four hours and is symptom free without the use of fever reducers**. If you are in doubt about the appropriate time of return, contact your physician, the school nurse, or office personnel to discuss the matter.

Flu

All forms of the flu can be easily spread from person to person. Therefore, we take steps to reduce the spread of the flu at SJMS. We want to keep the school open to those students functioning in a normal manner during the flu season. Students will be reminded to use proper hand washing and disinfection procedures to prevent the spread of various communicable diseases such as flu.

If a flu outbreak should occur at SJMS, we may take additional steps to prevent its spread, such as:

- Conduct active fever and flu screening of students and staff as they arrive at school
- Make changes to increase the space between people, move desks, cancel field trips
- Dismiss students from school for at least seven days if they become sick

Allergies

Parents are responsible for notifying the school nurse and teacher of any life threatening food allergy on or before the first day of each school year or as soon as the allergy is diagnosed. Each school year a “food allergy action plan” will be completed by the student’s parent and physician. Parents will provide the school with any medications prescribed and a supply of “safe snacks” for use by their child. Parents of children with life threatening food allergies are responsible for notifying bus transportation providers.

SAFETY

St. Joseph Montessori School subscribes to all safety procedures as outlined by all federal, state, county, city, and concerned authorities, including, but not limited to, OSHA (Occupational Safety & Health Administration) and the Life Safety Code of the National Fire Protection Association. St. Joseph Montessori School requires diligence and care of its employees and students. Negligence or disregard of safety procedures, as outlined below, on the part of a student, may result in disciplinary action, including separation from St. Joseph Montessori School. School Guidelines have been developed and are communicated to students to insure their safety during school hours.

Safety procedures include the following:

1. Fire drills are conducted monthly. Tornado drills are conducted monthly, April through July. Evacuation, lockdown, and other safety drills occur throughout the year as well. Specific emergency plans are posted for evacuation routes and procedures for fire/weather alerts.
2. Incident reports are completed when an accident or injury occurs.
3. If neglect or abuse of a child is suspected, the local Children's Services agency is notified.
4. A child is not released to any adult if there is a question about their identity or reliability to care for the child.
5. A child is directly supervised at all times.
6. A Crisis Management Plan has been formulated to address other potential safety issues. The plan is distributed to all staff members and a copy is filed in the school office. You may ask to review this plan.

Emergency Closings

When road conditions are dangerous for travel or temperatures are dangerous for students to be outside many schools, including SJMS, shall remain closed. Since St. Joseph Montessori School is part of Columbus Catholic Schools, we are closed when announcements on TV and radio indicate that ***Columbus Catholic Schools are closed.***

If public schools cancel due to transportation issues related to weather, they do not provide transportation to non-public schools that remain open. If Columbus Catholic Schools are open, then we are open. If public schools are closed and Columbus Catholic Schools are open, then parents are responsible for providing transportation on that day. However, if the school district in which you reside is closed, we trust your judgment in deciding about your child(ren)'s attendance. In the unlikely event that we must close for a reason other than weather, for example heating problems, we will announce by school name.

Note: *if SJMS is closed, notice of this will be on our website and on our answering machine as early as possible.*

Early Dismissal

If severe weather necessitates that the school close early, the school office will send an email to all who have provided an accurate email address. It will also be posted on the school website. This message will inform parents of closing times and any special plans for the day. In this situation, parents of all Children's House students will be called. For Elementary Students (Grades 1-8), the staff will refer to the Emergency Closing Information Forms on file in the office.

If schools close early, we urge you to pick your child(ren) up as soon as possible so that the students get home safely and our staff can be relieved at the earliest possible time.

Protecting Children

All SJMS staff and volunteers who have care, custody, and control of students must have on file a current Bureau of Criminal Investigation criminal background check and must attend an approved workshop that addresses sexual abuse awareness and prevention.

This policy also applies to any adult volunteer who is entrusted with

supervision of students when a teacher or staff member is not present. If you are planning to volunteer, which includes driving for field trips, please contact the school office at least two weeks in advance to determine your need for these programs.

CODE OF CONDUCT

For Parents

To be successful, every independent school needs and expects the cooperation of its parents, who understand and embrace the school's mission, share its core values, and fully support its curriculum, faculty and staff. When joined by a common set of beliefs and purposes, our school

and our parents form a powerful team with far-reaching effects on our children and our entire community.

Working together, parents and teachers exert a strong influence on children to become better educated; they also help them to mature by modeling adult working relationships based on civility, honesty, and respect. In practice, the greater impediment to effective teamwork between an independent school and its parents grows out of misunderstandings about the school's decision-making processes.

Parents can best support the school through a climate of trust and respect by communicating concerns openly and constructively to the teacher or administrator closest to the problem. Efforts by parents to lobby other parents will be viewed by the school as counterproductive. While parents may not agree with every decision made by the administrator, in most cases the parent and school will find common ground to continue a mutually respectful relationship. In extreme cases, however, an impasse may be so severe that the parent cannot remain a constructive member of the community. In such cases, both the parent and the school should consider whether another school would be a better match for the family.

Parents with concerns about the school or with decisions made by the administration or faculty are encouraged to inquire about and follow the school's grievance process as described on page 25 of this handbook. Because, in schools such as ours, trustees often interact with the school community, the Board has adopted a firm practice of directing parent concerns to the Head of School. The rule of thumb for all parents is to keep open lines of communication with the faculty and administration.

For Students

One of the secrets to success in the Montessori classroom is freedom within the limits of very clear ground rules. Every classroom's ground rules will vary but the essence is the same. 1) Take care of all people and living things in our environment, and 2) Take care of all material things in our environment. If you think about it, every "do" or "don't" one could wish to implore fits in these two rules. In actuality, we have one simple rule, "be respectful of everyone and everything."

So the children have concrete instructions, the following expectations have been established. These expectations are stated in a positive manner so the children know precisely how they should conduct themselves.

Student Code of Conduct Expectations

The school's Code of Conduct Expectations are as follows:

1. Respect other people's bodies, space, and possessions.
2. Respect the environment.
3. Use only polite, kind words.
4. Use a calm, soft voice when speaking.
5. Wait patiently and quietly until it is your turn to speak.
6. Use all materials properly.
7. Walk in the classroom, hallways, and other areas of the building, and to and from special subjects.
8. Use proper manners in the restrooms.
9. Use proper table manners when eating lunch.
10. Follow playground guidelines to ensure safe and respectful play.

Montessori Method of Discipline

Dr. Montessori held that true discipline comes more from within than without and is the result of steadily developing inner growth. Discipline in the Montessori environment is not something that is done to the child; nor is it a technique for controlling behavior. Our concern is with the development of internal control, which enables an individual to choose the right behavior because it is right for him or herself and right for the community.

It is never assumed that a young child understands what it means to be kind or respectful. A great amount of time and energy is focused on lessons that

demonstrate socially acceptable behavior. Children do not automatically know how to be a friend, how to express anger, or how to solve problems. These special skills are taught within lessons. They are presented through demonstration and then practiced through role playing, and modeled by teachers and older students. They are the foundation of the classroom, as they set a tone of respect and kindness.

The goal of the Montessori classroom, no matter how old the student, is the development of skills necessary for a productive and fulfilling life. The best of the academic curriculums are useless if the child does not develop inner discipline, integrity, and respect for others and oneself. The young person who faces the world of tomorrow armed with self-confidence and self-discipline is far more likely to achieve success and happiness. They will be prepared to meet any challenges that the “real world” may present, and will hopefully bring to that world a bit of the peace and joy they experienced in the Montessori environment.

This portion was adapted from an article by Mary Conroy and Kitty Williams Bravo which was first published in Tomorrow's Child magazine

SJMS Disciplinary Methods

State of Ohio requirements mandate that we include some specific information about our disciplinary methods. As described above, all of our discipline procedures are guided by respect for the child and his developmental stage. Logical consequences are implemented when there is non-compliance with expected behavior.

We do not, **at any time**, participate in any of the following:

- Abuse or neglect a child, allow anyone to abuse or neglect a child while at SJMS, nor will we allow any form of corporal punishment
- Place a child in a locked room or confined area
- Subject a child to profanity, threats, or verbal abuse
- Discipline a child for failure to eat or sleep, or for toileting accidents or withhold from a child food, rest, or toilet use
- Subject a child to techniques that result in shame, humiliation, or fright

Harassment & Bullying

Harassment and bullying can take many forms and can occur at any school activity. Harassment is verbal or physical (including sexual) conduct that embarrasses, denigrates, or shows hostility toward a person for any reason,

including race, color, religion, gender, national origin, age, or disability.

Bullying is a pattern of abuse over time and will not be tolerated. Any reported incidents of bullying will be investigated and dealt with according to the SJMS Code of Conduct and Suspension & Expulsion Policy

Students have a right to attend school in a safe environment that is free of harassment, intimidation, or any threat to personal safety. It is the policy of SJMS to maintain an environment that is free of all forms of harassment and intimidation for students, teachers, and other staff members specifically unsolicited and/or unwelcome sexual overtures or conduct.

Conduct that constitutes sexual harassment is prohibited. Sexually harassing conduct includes, but is not limited to, the following:

- Offensive sexual, verbal, or physical flirtations, advances, or propositions
- Display or circulation of sexually explicit or suggestive graffiti, writing, pictures, or objects
- Spreading rumors about or categorizing others regarding sexual activity.

Adults who experiences what they believe is harassing conduct, must bring it to the attention the Head of School. A complaint should be filed in writing, and in the case of harassment involving a student or students, the parents or guardians of the respective students shall be duly notified. In the event that an individual alleges harassment by the Head of School, the individual may file the complaint with the Board of Trustees. All complaints will be promptly investigated, and the person initiating the complaint will be advised of the outcome of the investigation.

A student who believes he or she has been sexually harassed (or a parent who believes that their child has been harassed) should immediately report it to a responsible school official. Where it is determined that harassment or bullying has occurred, the school will take immediate disciplinary action. The response shall take into account and be considered to be appropriate for the ages of the individuals and circumstances. No retaliation against anyone who reports harassment will be tolerated.

Any knowingly false charge of harassment or bullying made for the purpose of harming a person's reputation will have very serious consequences, which may include, depending on the circumstances, termination of participation in programs, suspension, or expulsion.

Consequences for Not Complying with Expectations

The consequences for non-compliance with the Code of Conduct Expectations vary according to the child's state of development as outlined on the following pages.

Children's House Consequences:

1. Verbal redirection is given
2. The child is removed from the group until he/she is comfortable returning to the class community.
3. The child is removed from the classroom with a teacher's help until he/she becomes comfortable returning to the classroom community.
4. A teacher may hold the child until he/she can comfortably resume classroom activity.

Elementary Level Consequences:

1. Positive reminder of the expectations is given.
2. The student is provided a separate space to work until his/her behavior is acceptable.
3. Problem solving is conducted with the child and he/she is reminded of the expectations and why they were formulated.
4. A logical consequence that is related to the broken expectation is issued.
5. Child is removed from the classroom until he/she is able to behave appropriately.
6. If the child's behavior is persistently disruptive to the whole, then the parents are called in for a conference.

If the above consequences, for both Children's House and Elementary, do not produce the desired result, then a parent consultation is requested, and, assuming administrative approval, one or both of the following may be recommended:

1. A counselor is consulted, per Head of School's approval, for further recommendations.
2. If the Montessori program is not beneficial to the child and/or the child is not able to adjust to the program, the child may be asked to withdraw.

Beyond these consequences, serious misconduct is cause for suspension and/or expulsion. Refer to SJMS Policy #5.113.11 regarding these matters.

Drugs & Weapons

Possession and/or use of drugs of abuse, weapons, or instruments of violence are considered serious infractions and are addressed as outlined in SJMS Policy # 5.131.1.

Behavior Out of School

While we do not attempt to regulate the private lives of our students during non-school hours, we do have a concern with conduct that may bring discredit or harm to the name of the school or the reputation of the student body. Consequently, inappropriate behavior, at or away from school, that reflects an absence of moral standards or a violation of the law may result in disciplinary action by the school. A student may be subject to disciplinary action for any conduct that is detrimental to the common good; is threatening, harmful, or offensive to other students and staff; or is of such a nature, as to jeopardize the good name of the school.

ATTENDANCE & ABSENCE

The length of the school day is six and one-half hours, from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. Partial day sessions in Children's House is four hours, from 8:30 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. This includes lunch and recess.

Carpool (arrival & departure) Time

Arrival time for all students is between 8:15-8:30 am. Afternoon carpool time is 3:00-3:15 pm. There is no need for you to get out of your car if you are just dropping off or picking up your child. **If, for any reason, you want or need to come into the school at carpool time, please park on the street.**

Arrival before School:

All children arriving before 8:15 a.m. are expected to go to the Before School Care location. Staff members will pick up your children to go to the classroom at the appropriate time. You will be billed accordingly for this before school service.

Departure after School:

At the 3:00 dismissal time, simply pull up in the line of cars. Staff members will see to it that your child is called and brought to your car.

Any carpool child not picked up by 3:20 p.m. will be taken to the after school care room until transportation arrives. You will be billed accordingly for this after school service.

Tardiness

Students who arrive after 8:40 will be recorded as tardy. Please remember that our school day begins at 8:30 am. In the event that your child is late, either the parent or the child must stop in the office upon arrival so that the attendance can be recorded.

Absence

If your child will be absent, please call the office by 8:45 a.m. with the appropriate information. We ask that you call the office each day of the absence. Please be aware that the school is justified in refusing promotion to any student who is absent twenty-eight days during the year. Parents may be required to provide a doctor's excuse for the dates of absence.

No child will be dismissed from school during class hours without a written request from his/her parents, or, in the case of emergency, without absolute assurance of their approval. The person picking up the child must come to the school office and sign out the child.

Extended Vacations

Attendance at school on all class days is important for each child's development. It is assumed that parents will keep children out of school only for valid reasons. If you are considering a vacation during the school year, you should consult the classroom teacher(s) concerning the anticipated effect on your child. Children who miss school for an extended vacation cannot expect teachers to provide special assignments, examinations, or individual assistance beyond the normal classroom procedures.

There will be no reduction in tuition or extended day charges for children who are out of school for extended periods of time because of illness or vacations.

ACADEMICS & THE SCHOOL DAY

Student Progress

Reporting to the parents on the progress of each child will take place in regularly scheduled conferences conducted by teachers at least twice yearly. These reports will be presented from our standard Montessori reporting forms. Parents will sign and date the report indicating that they have discussed their child's progress. Additional conferences may be arranged when needed at the discretion of the teacher or the parent. Interim reports will also be sent to parents three times yearly for K-6 students and four times yearly for 7th and 8th grade students.

Extracurricular Activities & Electives

A variety of extracurricular programs, clubs, and activities are offered at the Elementary level. These may vary by year and are always optional, some may require additional fees.

Foreign Language: In the Children's House, foreign language is included in the curriculum. At the Elementary level, enrollment in a foreign language class is optional.

Religion: All Elementary students are welcome to elect this course. It is assumed that all students of the Catholic faith will participate. Basic Bible study, seasonal study, morals and values, social attitudes, communal prayer, and community service projects are included along with Christian topics from textbooks and other resources.

Sacrament Preparation: Catholic Sacramental preparation classes are available, by parent request, for First Eucharist, First Reconciliation, and Confirmation. The actual reception of all Sacraments occurs in the child's parish church, however, we celebrate the students and the Sacraments they received at a Commemorative Mass and Reception that takes place near the end of each school year.

Homework

Homework expectations vary at each class level. The purpose of homework is to expand the child's acquisition of knowledge and skills. In keeping with Montessori goals, the children are expected, at times, to develop their own creative learning experiences and to build on the foundation of their classroom presentations. Children's House students do not have homework. Elementary students may have ten to ninety minutes per school

night, depending on the age of the child. Some classes list homework on the school's website. See your child's teacher for more specific details on homework.

Lunch & Recess

A catered lunch is offered to students on a month-to-month basis. A menu for the month is available in the office or on the school website for families to make selections and return forms and payment to the office. Information about vegetarian options, late orders, credits, costs, etc. is also included on the website. Milk is included with each lunch ordered through this program. Children's House provides milk to all students for snack and lunch regardless of whether or not the lunch is catered or brought from home. It is expected that parents who send lunch with their children will provide a well-balanced meal that includes fruits, vegetables, proteins, and grains. Please refrain from sending candy in children's lunches.

Recess is an important activity for all students. Weather permitting; they will play outside every day. We consider this to be vital to the physical and social development of the child. **For this reason, please do not ask us to make an exception for your child.**

Extended Day

Extended Day includes Early Morning Care and the After School Care. Both programs maintain our Montessori philosophy.

Extended Day can be contracted or used on a drop-in basis. Parents will be billed at the end of each month for drop-in service. We encourage you to contract for this service to ensure continual care. However, if you wish to use drop-in care, arrangements must be made through the school office. We must maintain an acceptable student/teacher ratio and drop-in care will be approved each day only up to the maximum number. The earlier you contact us, the greater the possibility of approval.

Early Morning Care is from 7:30 - 8:15 a.m.

After School Care is from 3:00 - 6:00 p.m.

A nutritious snack is provided during After School Care. The school closes at 6 p.m.; therefore, no child may be left beyond 6:00 p.m.

COMMUNICATIONS

School Inspection Reports

In an ongoing effort to maintain transparency and to comply with state law, copies of the school's State of Ohio inspection reports for pre-school and school age childcare programs may be obtained through the school office.

Communicating with Parents

All personnel at SJMS work diligently to communicate with parents throughout the year regarding your child's progress and general school information or events. Please cooperate with us by promptly returning/responding when requests are made.

It is both costly and time consuming to mail everything. Frequently, your child will receive notes/flyers/announcements to bring home. Please arrange a system with your child to ensure that you receive these communications and check regularly with him/her regarding his responsibility for this important task.

Friday Notes

In an effort to be more responsible stewards of the environment, St. Joseph Montessori School will communicate with parents either via email or through postings on the school website. The school attempts to keep emails to a minimum with a weekly update called "Friday Notes." There are times, however when midweek updates will be necessary and you will receive additional email message(s).

Reminders and permission forms, as well as classroom newsletters, and news from the Board of Trustees and the Family Association are available on the school's website.

Grievance or Conflict Resolution

A grievance is defined as a complaint that is raised following an action or decision that is considered unfair or inappropriate. Before airing a grievance, it is imperative that all parties involved familiarize themselves with the Grievance Process in its entirety, especially the principles and special considerations, which is available the SJMS website or in the office of the Head of School.

The grievance process is the framework by which parents/guardians and students can resolve their grievance with teachers and staff.

1. The first step is to discuss the grievance with the teacher or staff most directly involved. This approach, also known as the informal process, is the preferred method.
2. If you and the teacher or staff involved in the grievance do not reach an amicable resolution, bring your grievance to the attention of the Head of School. You will need to document the grievance and come to a meeting prepared to discuss your concern. This approach is known as the formal process. Depending on the nature of the issue, the Head of School will give a final ruling.

If your grievance is with the Head of School then it may be submitted in writing to the SJMS Board of Trustees for their review. Please be aware that the Board of Trustees can only review and decide on certain matters.

TOPICS THAT ARE CLASSROOM SPECIFIC

Rules for items in this section are general guidelines. In some levels or classrooms, the rules for these items may vary slightly. Please read classroom newsletters or discuss these items with your child's teacher.

Snacks and Birthday Treats

Healthy eating and good nutrition are hallmarks of Maria Montessori's philosophy, so it is best to avoid sugar-laden treats and opt for healthier alternatives. When possible, consider allowing your child to assist in preparing the snack or birthday treat.

Be sure to check with your child's teacher regarding the day you want to celebrate your child's birthday. It's possible that 2 or 3 other children will have birthday near or on the same day. Scheduling them ensures that your child's birthday gets the individualized attention it deserves.

Party Invitations

Unless you are inviting an entire class to an event, party invitations should be delivered via the U.S. Postal Service and not sent to school for children to deliver. This protects the feelings of children who are not invited.

Use of MP3 Players, Portable Game Devices, & Other Toys

IPODs and other MP3 players are not allowed in the classrooms unless they are an integral part of the lesson or assignment.

Portable game devices have no real place in the classroom. At lunch and recess times, students should be developing important social and physical skills. For these reasons, portable game devices should remain at home.

Children's House classrooms allow cuddly friends for napping and relaxation time, however, in general, students should not have toys in the classroom. Some levels have specific rules governing share time and what can be used during recess. At no time should violent toys or toys that encourage violent play be brought to school. Check with your child's teacher for guidelines regarding toys in the classroom.

Note: The school accepts NO responsibility for lost/missing MP3 players, portable game devices, or other toys that children voluntarily bring to school. If the rules pertaining to these items are not observed, the item will be confiscated by a staff member and returned to the parent or guardian at the end of the day.

MISCELLANEOUS TOPICS

Transportation

On days when transportation arrangements for your child are different from the routine procedure, parents must notify the teacher with a written note. This is especially necessary if a child is accompanying a friend home or if an adult other than the child's parents is picking him/her up. Please clarify all after school arrangements with your child before he/she leaves for school in the morning.

Cell Phones

When children are at school, the first mode of communication between parents and their children should always be the school office. While student use of cell phones is strongly discouraged, medical issues may require that a student bring a cell phone to school. If this is the case for your family, the following procedures apply:

- Cell phones must be turned off during school hours.

- Cell phones may be used only with staff permission.
- Cell phones should be used only while in the school office so as not to disturb classroom activities.

Note: The school accepts NO responsibility for lost/missing cell phones that children voluntarily bring to school. If the rules pertaining to cell phone use are not observed, phones will be confiscated by a staff member and returned to the parent or guardian at the end of the day.

Clothing

Students should be neat and well-groomed. Children are expected to wear clothing that is clean, in good condition, appropriate for school and weather conditions. In winter, boots, hats, and gloves should be worn for outdoor play. When purchasing outerwear, especially for younger children, keep your child's independence in mind. Other clothing guidelines include:

- Students are not permitted to wear hats in the building.
- T-shirts with logos or writing must be inoffensive (may not depict violence, profanity, illicit behaviors or sexual innuendo).
- For safety reasons, flip-flop sandals are not permitted.
- Immodest and revealing clothing is not permitted.

Each child in K through 8th grade should also always have a pair of rubber soled shoes at school for physical education classes.

All Children's House students should have a change of clothing marked with the child's name and plastic bags for unexpected emergencies. No matter how old your child is, an accidental fall in the mud or a nasty spill at lunch is always a possibility. So, while it is not a requirement, it may be a good idea to send a spare set of clothes for older students as well. These clothes should also be marked with your child's name.

Technology & Acceptable Use

St. Joseph Montessori School has numerous technological resources. Since most of the computers at the school have access to the internet, we also have a filter to protect our students from many inappropriate websites.

Each student and his or her parent is required to read the rules for acceptable use and sign a compliance form before the child is allowed

independent access to the school's computers.

The school's website can be accessed at www.sjms.net. It includes many helpful links for our families and the general public. It also alerts you to school closings, and it informs you about upcoming school events and other school-related news.

Combined Permissions

Parents have the right to refuse to be listed in the school directory and can opt out of it on the Combined Permissions Form they submit with their signed contract. It is important to note that the school does not release directory information to any outside sources. It is furnished only to SJMS Board, staff and families.

The Combined Permissions Form also covers the use of photos of the children. When student pictures are used for advertisements, flyers, the SJMS website, or other publications, the student's identity is always protected. Photos can be taken at various school events or in the classrooms and can be used in these forms unless a parent declines this permission on the Combined Permissions Form.

This form covers other permissions, as well, such as walking field trips, grandparent information, and data from the Emergency Medical Forms. Please be sure to read this form carefully so that the school can properly adhere to your preferences.

CONFIRMATION PAGE

Please sign and return this form to the school office

Print Name

I have read the Parent & Student Handbook. I realize I am responsible for and agree to abide by its contents.

Parent Signature

Parent Signature

Date

Child(ren)'s Name(s): _____
