

The Montessori School for Shreveport Parent Handbook

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Mission Statement

We are a parent-owned, non-profit Montessori school that provides a nurturing learning environment using Montessori methods and philosophy. Families, faculty, and administration form a community to facilitate the emotional, social, physical, and academic development of competent, confident, and responsible individuals.

General Ground Rules

- *Respect for Self*
- *Respect for Others*
- *Respect for the Classroom Environment*

Our Beliefs

- *We Believe in Respect for the Child;*
- *We Believe in the Importance of a Stimulating and Nurturing Learning Environment;*
- *We Believe in Fostering the Individuality and Diversity of Each Child;*
- *We Believe in Excellence in Education through Hands-on Learning;*
- *We Believe in Encouraging Personal Responsibility, Self-discipline and Independence;*
- *We Believe that Parents play a Critical Role in Their Child's Education;*
- *We Believe that the Path to World Peace is through the Children.*

Table of Contents

| | |
|---|----|
| Introduction | 3 |
| Chapter 1. School Policy and Rules | 5 |
| Prior to School Year Commencement | 5 |
| Forms..... | 5 |
| Tuition | 5 |
| Preparing Your Child..... | 6 |
| Attire | 6 |
| Special Toddler and Pre-Primary Considerations..... | 6 |
| Attire..... | 6 |
| Naps..... | 7 |
| Phasing-In..... | 7 |
| During the School Year | 7 |
| Student Discipline Policy. | 7 |
| Threats and Sexual Harassment Policy | 8 |
| Communications | 8 |
| Food..... | 9 |
| Items from Home | 10 |
| Field Trips | 10 |
| Birthdays..... | 10 |
| Illness..... | 11 |
| Medical Appointments..... | 12 |
| Injuries | 12 |
| School Schedule..... | 12 |
| Yearly Calendar | 12 |
| School Closings | 12 |
| Daily Schedule..... | 12 |
| Student Transportation | 13 |
| Carpool | 13 |
| Arrivals..... | 14 |
| Pick Ups..... | 14 |
| PickUp Authorization..... | 14 |
| Lateness | 15 |
| Chapter 2. Program Placement and Progress..... | 16 |
| Tracking Student Progress in Programs | 16 |
| Parent-Teacher Conferences..... | 16 |
| Record Confidentiality..... | 16 |
| Parent Observations | 16 |
| Student Placement in Programs | 17 |
| Initial Placement | 17 |
| On-Going Adjustment | 17 |
| Refund Policy and Student Withdrawal..... | 17 |
| Program Transition | 17 |
| Extra-curricular Opportunities | 18 |
| Chapter 3. School Governance..... | 19 |
| The Board of Trustees | 19 |
| School Administration | 20 |
| Grievance Procedure..... | 20 |
| Parent Obligations | 21 |
| Required Parent Service Agreements | 21 |
| Fundraising | 22 |
| Parent Group | 23 |
| Buildings and Grounds | 23 |
| Classroom Participation..... | 23 |
| Lee Martin Rabalais Scholarship Fund..... | 23 |
| Appendix A. Parent Service Hour Contributions | 24 |
| Appendix B. Grievance Form..... | 25 |

Introduction

The Montessori approach is a worldwide method of childhood education developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870 - 1952). Dr. Montessori noted that children naturally have a high capacity for concentration and an inborn love of order. Children prefer to choose their own activities, and treat these activities as serious work, rather than frivolous play. Dr. Montessori's method encourages this natural process by providing children with a rich and carefully prepared learning environment.

Since 1964, The Montessori School for Shreveport has provided children of all races, religions, and academic abilities with an individualized education focused on achieving academic, social, and moral excellence. Teachers act as both resource and support people for over 200 children ranging in age from twenty-one months through the eighth grade, encouraging each child's curiosity, observing each child's development, keeping detailed records of progress, and introducing new lessons as each child is ready. At all grade levels, each child is guided by competent teachers, at least one of whom is a fully certified Montessori teacher with a diploma from the American Montessori Society (AMS) or the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

The Montessori School for Shreveport is recognized as a leader in Montessori education throughout the South. The school is accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS) and approved by the Louisiana Department of Education. Because the Montessori name is not copyrighted, many facilities incorporate various Montessori methods and materials in their programs without Montessori certified teachers and use the "Montessori" name. The Montessori School for Shreveport is one of less than 140 schools in the United States that have earned AMS accreditation status, and is the only AMS accredited school in Louisiana.

The school maintains its accreditation status by strict adherence to stringent AMS staff, curriculum, and facility standards. Yearly consultations and periodic academic audits ensure that all school facets continue to meet these standards of excellence. Consultants visit The Montessori School for Shreveport on a regular basis to observe and evaluate our programs. In addition, the school must periodically apply for AMS reaccreditation. This intensive, multi-year application entails both internal and external scrutiny of all aspects of the school.

Standardized achievement tests are administered each year. The student body consistently tests above average on these standardized tests, an outcome especially notable because students are not pre-screened and admitted to this school on the basis of academic achievement. In addition to serving as a quality check on school programs, the testing experience benefits the children. Test-taking skills are practical life skills, and the results of these standardized tests can help teachers and parents verify areas of strengths and weakness to create an ideal individualized learning plan.

Four core programs are offered:

- Toddler (21 months - 3 years of age)
- Pre-Primary (3 years - 6 years of age)
- Elementary:
 - Lower Elementary (6 years – 9 years of age)
 - Upper Elementary (9 years – 12 years of age)
- Middle School (12 years – 15 years of age)

In addition to the core programs, extended day programs provide continuity for students and convenience for parents. Optional summer programs offer students enrichment opportunities.

Our school facility is located on five acres of land and housed in four modern one-story buildings. The facility is secured by fences with entrances secured with security code panels, video surveillance cameras, and supervised entry. The main building houses seven classrooms, the school administrative offices, and meeting rooms. The Toddler Program utilizes two classrooms and the Pre-Primary Program has four. A large activity room in the main building is used for early

and late care. Many primary and extracurricular activities are conducted in the main building, including Spanish, music, reading resources, and Parent Group activities. Three main playgrounds serve the Toddler, Pre-Primary, and early and late care children. The second building contains three additional classrooms for students in the Lower Elementary Program, as well as an Elementary Art/Music Room. A third building houses the two classrooms in Upper Elementary Program. The fourth building houses the Middle School Program. A fourth playground, complete with a soccer playing field, serves the Elementary and Middle School students. All classrooms are equipped with private bathrooms.

We welcome you and your children to our outstanding facilities and programs. In this handbook, you will learn more about The Montessori School for Shreveport and what is expected from school parents and children. We hope this Handbook will encourage your enthusiastic participation in our programs and activities.

In addition to this handbook, parents should read *Parent Education: The Montessori Approach*. This document is provided to all parents. It describes unique aspects of the Montessori approach, learning objectives, the program curriculum, and key ways parents can support their children and teachers.

Chapter 1. School Policy and Rules

The Montessori School for Shreveport (MSS) adheres to all federal and state laws pertaining to private, non-profit educational institutions. With regard to admissions and employment, The Montessori School for Shreveport is an equal opportunity institution.

School policy and rules are designed to protect the integrity of the Montessori process, support our learning objectives, and ensure the contentment and safety of students and staff. All parents are expected to adhere to school policy and rules and educate their children to do the same.

Prior to School Year Commencement

Forms



Before your child begins school, you must complete and return the following forms:

- **School Application**
- **Parent/Child Questionnaire**
- **Tuition Contract and Parental Authorizations**
- **Health Questionnaire**
- **Birth Certificate**
- **Current immunization record from your child's physician**
- **Copy of your child's Social Security Card.**

Tuition

The school's Board of Trustees is committed to keeping the tuition within the reach of the average Shreveport-Bossier City family. Tuition is kept to the minimum level required to meet all of the school's necessary current operating expenses. Extra optional services, such as school t-shirts and lunch programs are available at additional fees. Growth of the school, such as adding new facilities or new playground equipment, is funded by a variety of fund-raisers and parent donations. For more information, please see Chapter 3, School Governance, "Parent Obligations."

The current tuition schedule and payment options are described in a separate document.

For parents choosing a monthly payment schedule, tuition payments are deducted automatically from your checking account.



Bills are not sent, so please make a note of your payment schedule in your records; late tuition payments make it difficult for the school to meet its expenses.

Payments received after the 10th of the month will be subject to a \$15.00 late fee per child. Failure to pay may result in dismissal; please contact the office if you do not think you will be able to meet your financial commitment. A \$15.00 fee is charged for the first check returned for insufficient funds; subsequent checks returned for insufficient funds result in a \$30.00 fee.


Preparing Your Child

New students will be assigned classrooms and teachers prior to the start of the school year.

Before your child begins school, an interview and visit to the school will be arranged. It is a good idea to discuss school with your child, particularly in the week before it begins. Stress the positive aspects of school and convey to your child that you are proud and happy about the experiences they will soon have. For some young children, their first experience at school can be frightening. They are very sensitive to any anxiety a parent feels - so be happy about the wonderful opportunity your child is about to enjoy!

Attire

Students should wear neat and comfortable clothing that permits freedom of movement. Many program activities, including art and science, may result in soiled or wet clothing. Do not send students in "best clothing." Encourage students to select their own attire, within limits of modesty and utility. In keeping with our Citizens of the World learning objective, clothing depicting violent images or slogans is not allowed. Shoes should be sturdy and have rubber soles.

 All students, including Toddler and Pre-Primary students, enjoy daily recess, even on cold weather days. Students should bring appropriate outerwear (e.g., coats, sweaters, etc.) according to the weather. It is advisable for students to wear layers of clothing on cold days or on days when mornings are cool and afternoons are warm. Names should be written or sewn into all outer garments.

A lost-and-found basket of clothing is maintained in the office. Please check with the office if you suspect your child has lost a garment. All unclaimed clothing is donated to charity at the conclusion of the school year.

Students are not allowed to wear jewelry or make-up to school. Jewelry and make-up tend to distract the children from their work, and jewelry may also be lost or broken. Children who cannot yet tell time on a wall clock are discouraged from wearing a watch.

Special Toddler and Pre-Primary Considerations

Attire

On the first day of school, please send a **complete change of clothes** for all children under the age of four (4) years. Label each item with the child's name. Send the clothing in a clear plastic bag clearly marked with the child's name. This clothing will be stored at school and used in case of "accidents" at school. Please remember to replace immediately any soiled clothing that is sent home so that a change of clothes will always be available for your child.

Please dress your child in simple, neat, comfortable clothing that the child *can manage alone*. Slacks and shorts with **elastic waistbands, pullover shirts and sweaters**, and jackets with large zippers should be worn. While the staff will assist children who are having trouble, children should be able to manage their own clothing with *little or no assistance*. This is in keeping with our Independence learning objective: independence **is essential to the development of high self-esteem**. Shoes should be sturdy and have rubber soles. Girls may wear shorts, slacks, or short dresses as long as the dress does not restrict movement in climbing and playing. Girls are not permitted to wear long dresses. **DO NOT SEND** children in **OVERALLS, BOOTS, SANDALS, "CROCS,"** or in "BEST CLOTHING." Toddler and Pre-Primary activities can be wet and messy, and we do not want children to be upset or restricted because of clothing.

The school does not provide **diapers or wipes**; please send a box of each to school if your child needs them.

Naps

All two, three, and some four-year-old children enrolled for the full-day program will require a **nap or rest**. The school will provide a nap mat and cover for your child. These will be laundered and kept at school.

Phasing-In

According to common Montessori practice, Toddler and Pre-Primary children will be **phased-in** during the first week of school. Beneficial to all children, this process entails starting the first day of classes with only a small segment of students, typically new students. Additional students are added a few at a time on subsequent days until the class is complete. Phasing-in students allows teachers to spend important additional time on a one-to-one basis with each child during the first days at school. This allows important routines to be established and helps the child feel more comfortable with school. Parents will be notified before school begins of their child's start date.



Please do not request that your returning student be phased in early! Plan ahead to make any necessary child-care arrangements during the phase-in week. Remember, when your child was a new student, they were given the benefit of this important additional time.

During the School Year

Student Discipline Policy

MSS believes that discipline comes from within a person. To develop this inner discipline is one of the objectives of our school. It is our belief that inner discipline develops in a child through active involvement in self-chosen tasks. To promote the development of such discipline, the school:

- provides varied interesting activities of differing complexity and challenge for children of various ages.
- establishes ground rules which require common courtesy and respect for the rights of individuals, as well as groups. These ground rules are:
 - Respect for Self
 - Respect for Others
 - Respect for the Classroom Environment
- emphasizes to the staff the desirability and necessity of acting as role models in observance of the ground rules.

MSS takes the position that the use of corporal punishment is inconsistent with Montessori philosophy and practice. Under no circumstances shall any child be subjected to corporal punishment in any manner.

If the ground rules are consistently followed and the observance of them positively reinforced, then the necessity of the imposition of external discipline will be diminished.

When external discipline is deemed necessary, the following will be observed:

- Alternative activities will be suggested to the child in need of discipline.
- Persistent misbehavior in a group setting may be dealt with by temporary removal from the group (time-out), with the child being able to return to the group sooner if willing to abide by the group's requirements.
- The staff will take time to talk to the child who seems constantly in need of discipline; exploring ways of making life more pleasant.

- The staff will be sensitive to developmental needs of a child and thus, his/her actions.

If the above strategies do not work, the teacher may send the child to the Head of School. The school will consult with the parent(s) for help and guidance in understanding the child. It is important that there is consistency between home and school.

If still unable to resolve the problem with the assistance of the parents and imposition of appropriate consequences for the misbehavior, the staff (teacher and Head of School) may recommend parents seek professional help.

Threats and Sexual Harassment Policy

MSS has zero tolerance regarding threats to people or property. A swift, decisive response will be made to any threat, including but not limited to expulsion, to ensure the safety of children teachers, and parents.

Students' behavior should never be physically or emotionally threatening to anyone else. Exclusive behaviors, name calling or other negative behaviors are unacceptable and can result in temporary separation from the class, parental and/or administrative notification, or other consequences as deemed necessary.

Sexual harassment is any activity of a sexual nature that is unwanted or unwelcome, including but not limited to, unwanted touching, pinching, patting, verbal comments of a sexual nature, sexual name calling, pressure to engage in a sexual activity, repeated propositions, and unwanted body contact.

Any student who engages in the sexual harassment of anyone in the school setting is subject to disciplinary action, including suspension or expulsion. Any employee who permits or engages in sexual harassment of students or other employees is subject to disciplinary action up to and including dismissal.

A student should immediately report incidents of sexual harassment to a teacher or the Head of School. Any employee who receives a complaint of sexual harassment from a student is expected to forward the complaint to the Head of School. The Head of School will immediately investigate the complaint and institute appropriate disciplinary action if warranted. The school's normal disciplinary procedures will be followed in determining the appropriate consequence for the sexual harassment. If the student or employee is dissatisfied with the investigation or action taken, he/she may take action under the school's grievance procedures.

Communications

Communication between the school and home is of the utmost importance. We feel that parents should know what we do at school and reinforce what their children learn at home. Many school-sponsored educational programs, such as The Journey Through the Environment, and Parent Group meetings provide a vital link between the school and parents, as well as a means for parents to visit classrooms, talk with staff members, and discuss topics relating to Montessori and other areas that affect students. Notes, phone calls, and visits to the school office are always welcome.

Because the teacher's primary responsibility is to the children, we ask that you do not engage any of the staff in spontaneous conversation during school hours, and obey any postings regarding classroom entry.



In general, parents should only enter a classroom when specifically invited by the teacher. This is particularly important during arrival, when the teachers are working to provide a peaceful and quiet entry for the children. Instead, you may wish to attach notes to your child's lunch box, clearly marking the outside of the note. Or, make teacher appointments by phoning the teacher. Teachers will also contact parents as need arises. Please note that such discussions need not be limited to concerns; if your child is doing well, teachers will also want to touch base with you.

Please keep your child's teacher informed of any changes in your child's routine or behavior that may affect schoolwork. Teachers are very attuned to the children, and knowing why a child's behavior may have changed will help the teachers help your child.

Inform the office immediately of any changes in address, phone numbers, or other emergency information. It is important that our records be kept up-to-date.

The school issues Wednesday notes each week (*Montessori Weekly*) and Newsletters several times a year about school activities. Please contribute news or suggestions by contacting the office.

Food

With the exception of optional Lunch Bunch fund-raisers on specified days throughout the year, the school does not provide student lunches. All full-day students should bring a lunch to school. Use a **lunch box** with the student's name clearly marked on the outside. Send a lunch box every day because lunch boxes are used to send notes home in the afternoons.

The school will provide drinks (milk or juice) at lunch for all students. Students may not bring drinks unless they are **100% fruit juice**.

Daily snacks are provided for Toddler and Pre-Primary students. Parents at the Toddler level will be asked to bring snacks twice a year. Elementary and Middle School students will need to bring their own snacks.

Lunches and snacks are not refrigerated, so send items that are non-perishable or include a cold-pack. We recommend freezing your child's sandwich overnight and packing it in the morning to defrost in time for lunch. Microwaves to heat lunches are provided in Elementary and Middle School; please obtain availability information from your child's teacher. Send servings in plastic containers rather than disposable items in order to support recycling efforts and to lessen our trash output. Use a thermos for soups, casseroles, etc. Please pack foods in containers that your child can open with little or no assistance. Spoons and forks are not provided.

We are concerned about the nutrition of students since it affects their mental and physical health and their ability to learn. The following foods are not allowed and will be taken away: gum, candy, and excessive sweets. Any candy or iced treats brought must be composed of **100% fruit**. Crackers, cheese, and fruit are nutritious items that build your child's health. Please be selective when choosing yogurt for your child. We suggest nutritional yogurt in a cup. All sweets and high sugar foods are considered desserts and we will require children to eat their protein, fruit, and carbohydrates before eating treats.

Items from Home

Students are permitted to bring items from home to share with the class if they have an educational value. We welcome books, tapes, and articles of scientific interest. **Toys are not permitted.** If you are uncertain about any item, please ask the teacher if it would contribute to the class program. Clearly mark all items from home with your child's name.

Field Trips

Kindergarten and older students participate in field trips. It is necessary that each student participating in a field trip have a permission slip, signed by parent or guardian, before the day of the trip. Parents will be notified as events are scheduled via a permission slip containing information about plans for the day. Complete, sign, and return the permission slip in order for the student to participate.

Beginning January 1, 2004, the applicable law (and our policy) relating to child passenger restraint systems is as follows:

- If your child is either 3-years-old or weighs 20 to 40 pounds, he must be in a forward facing car seat with the internal harness. If your child falls within this category, it is the school's policy that we cannot transport him via carpool and that you must make arrangements for his transportation.
- If your child is either 4 to 6-years-old or weighs 40 to 60 pounds, he must ride with a belt positioning booster seat with a lap-shoulder belt. We can transport these children, **but you must provide their booster seats for use in the vehicles that will take them to the field trip activity.** (A child in this category can ride in the middle of the 3rd row back seat of an SUV or minivan using just the lap belt, without a booster, if the other seats are filled.)
- If your child is either 6-years-old or weighs 60 pounds, he can ride in a car with the vehicle's lap-shoulder belt or with a booster seat using the lap/shoulder belt.

Please obtain a copy of our seatbelt guidelines before driving on a field trip. Children may not ride in the front seat of a car with a passenger side air bag.

Parent volunteers to assist with transportation and/or supervision during field trips will be needed. Please be responsive to requests for your help and support.

Birthdays

The **Celebration of Life** is our way to commemorate your child's birthday in the classroom. This celebration allows us all to enjoy some happy moments and memories with the birthday child. We strongly encourage parents to allow each child to have this happy experience. Summer birthdays will be celebrated in the month of May. (Please do not send invitations to your child's private birthday party to the school for distribution, unless you are inviting everyone in your child's class.)

During the Celebration of Life, the birthday child walks around a symbolic circle representing the months of the year. As each circle is made, a statement is read giving the child's history for that year and a photograph from that year is shown. A few sentences about the history of the year are adequate. Mark your child's age on the back of the photographs. Parents prepare these statements and photographs. Each year the child is here, parents are asked to add to the history. All photographs and materials will be returned. For example:

- 1st Year: John was born in Denver, Colorado on December 25, 1998. He was a happy, healthy baby. During the summer, he went to visit his grandmother in Austin, Texas. He took along his favorite toy; a brown bear named Burt.

- 2nd Year: When John was one year old, he stood up and walked to his dad. For his birthday, his cousins came to share his birthday cake. He made friends with the next door neighbor's dog, Angus; so the first word he said was, "Angus."

If you would like your child to have a small birthday celebration with his/her class, inform the teacher in writing about one week in advance. Teachers differ in how they fit birthday parties into class schedules, and what they permit in the way of snacks, so it is best if parents work out arrangements with their child's teacher. Appropriate celebration snacks include muffins, fruit, crackers and cheese. **Teachers request that you do not bring iced cupcakes or frosted birthday cakes to school.** Some children enjoy presenting a book or donating classroom materials in honor of their birthdays. Your child's teacher would be happy to make a recommendation if you would like to make a donation.

Illness

If your child is ill and cannot come to school, please phone the school before 8:30 a.m. The office will inform the teacher.

Children who become ill during the school day will be removed from the classroom, and the parents will be called to immediately pick up the child. If your child must receive medication at school, please come to the office to fill out a medication form, giving the dates and times the medicine should be given, the exact dosage, and authorization for the school to administer the medication. Send only one day's dosage. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) in an appropriate dosage may be administered by school personnel, if the parents have so authorized by signing the Parental Authorization contained in the Tuition Contract and Parental Authorizations Form.

Do not send your child to school if he/she is too ill to go out on the playground. Teachers take lunch breaks and cannot stay in with an ill child.

Parental cooperation with school policy regarding illness is absolutely essential for the well being of the children and proper functioning of the school.



DO NOT send your child to school when any of the following conditions exist:¹

1. **Fever** within the previous 24 hours.
2. **Vomiting and/or diarrhea.** Do not bring your child to school until he/she is free from this for 24 hours.
3. **Any symptom of the usual childhood diseases:** e.g., scarlet fever, measles, mumps, chicken pox, and whooping cough.
4. **Common cold.**
Regarding chronic allergies: If your child is under the care of a physician, a written statement from the doctor must be presented specifically stating the nature of the child's condition and that the condition is not contagious. Guidelines regarding the care of the child should be provided from the physician.
5. **Sore throat.**
6. **Croup.**
7. **Any unexplained rash.**
8. **Thrush.**
9. **Any skin infection** - boils, ringworm, impetigo.
10. **Pink-eye and other eye infection.**
11. **Head lice.**

¹ Recommendations taken from the report of the Committee on Control of Infectious Diseases of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

Medical Appointments

Parents should try to schedule visits to the doctor and dentist so that they do not conflict with school hours. If this is not possible, inform the school in advance so that the staff can be prepared if your child must arrive late or leave early.

Injuries

When a child has a minor injury at school, the staff will clean and bandage the wound. Acetaminophen (Tylenol) or Ibuprofen (Advil or Motrin) in an appropriate dosage may be administered by school personnel, if the parents have so authorized by signing the Parental Authorization contained in the Tuition Contract and Parental Authorizations Form.

In the event of serious injury or illness, parents will be phoned immediately. In a medical emergency, the child will be transported either by staff or emergency personnel to the closest medical facility.

School Schedule

Yearly Calendar

The school is open weekdays from 7:00 A.M. - 5:30 P.M. The current year calendar is presented in an orientation packet provided to parents at the start of the school year. Information regarding special events, such as field trips, will be sent home throughout the year.

School Closings

School closes for standard school holidays and for one week at the beginning and end of summer. Decisions regarding whether or not the school will close for weather-related or other issues will be made independently by our school's administration. This means that we will not follow the Caddo Parish School Board decisions regarding school closures. All possible avenues of communication will be utilized to notify you of school being closed. Please watch the local news stations, check your email, and check the school's website for information.

Daily Schedule

Refer to the following schedule for the exact times when children should be brought and picked up. **PROMPTNESS IS VERY IMPORTANT.** Children who arrive late can miss important activities or information, and arriving before or after your designated time can increase traffic problems in the school driveway.

EARLY CARE

7:00 AM - 8:00 AM Early morning extended care.

ARRIVALS

7:50 AM - 8:05 AM Elementary and Middle School children arrive.

8:00 AM - 8:15 AM All other children arrive.

PICK UPS

11:30 AM - 11:45 AM Half-day Toddler and Pre-Primary children leave.

2:30 PM - 2:40 PM Full-day Toddler and Pre-Primary children leave.

(Toddler and Pre-Primary students with siblings in Elementary or Middle School will be dismissed at 3:00 p.m.)

3:00 PM - 3:10 PM Elementary and Middle School children leave.

EXTENDED CARE

2:40 PM - 5:30 PM Afternoon extended care.

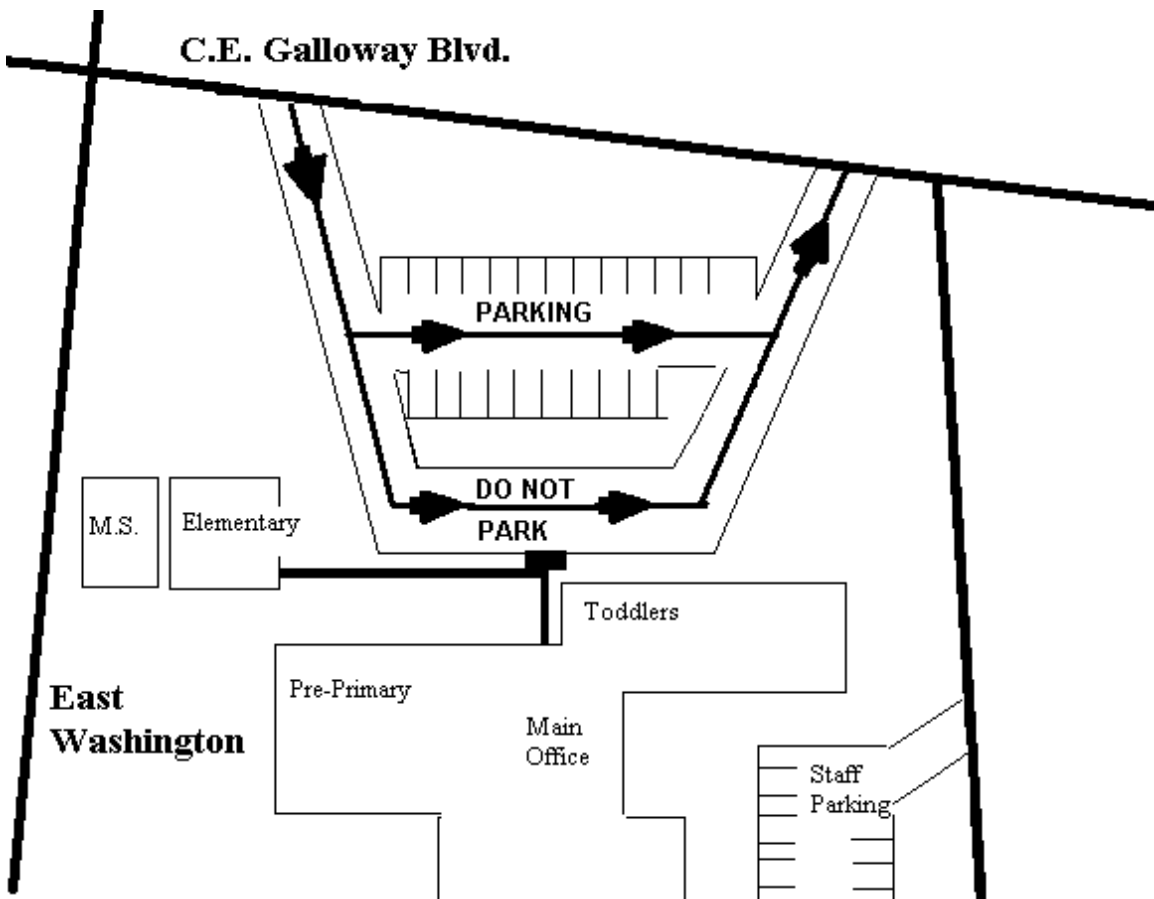
Student Transportation

Transportation for the students to and from school is not provided. Individual carpools for people who live in the same area are routinely and successfully arranged. Parents will receive a list with the names, phone numbers, and addresses of all our parents when school starts. This list will help parents form their own carpools. Please contact the office if you require assistance in arranging a carpool.

Carpool

In this context, the term “carpool” refers to the arrival and pick up process. During the designated arrival and pick up times (see Daily Schedule), school staff members will be at the school driveway to assist children in and out of cars. Please be aware that the staff members concentrate on the children’s safety and rely upon drivers to concentrate on overall traffic safety. Obey all traffic signs, give right-of-way to pedestrians, and accord other drivers respect and courtesy.

Please note the diagram below, showing the school and the surrounding streets. Follow the directional route during arrivals and pick ups. (Note: the diagram is not drawn to scale)



Please note, fire regulations do not allow parking in the driveway at any time. **THIS INCLUDES BEFORE AND AFTER SCHOOL HOURS.** Please observe the red fire lane markings.

Violators may be ticketed or towed. The Shreveport Police Department will enforce this code with \$50.00 citations.



Remember, even if it is only for a few minutes, parking in the school driveway creates serious safety hazards for the children!!! Please, park **ONLY** in designated parking spaces. Overflow parking for parents is available in the staff parking lot.

Arrivals

For arrivals, you may either (a) pull up in the school driveway and drop off your child at the school entrance or (b) park in the parking lot and escort the child inside the building. Parents who drop off their children should wait until the child is greeted and escorted by a staff member. Parents who park should make sure a staff member has received the child. When leaving the buildings, make sure front doors are completely closed. When leaving the school grounds, always latch the gate.

Some Toddler and Pre-Primary children, especially those who are coming to school for the first time, may cry the first few days at drop off. The school staff is trained in the “**quick separation**” method, which works the best to calm your child and relieve your child’s anxiety. Parents should quickly, firmly, and cheerfully say good-bye at drop off. You may remind your child that you will be back, but you should leave quickly. Children who cry on arrival will stop crying shortly after your departure. Linger or trying to convince your child to stop crying will only exacerbate the crying and anxiety. By maintaining a positive, cheerful attitude about the separation and about school in general, and immediately leaving, you will help your child acclimate to school. Parents who are worried about the state of their children are welcome to call the office and ask the office staff to check on the child. Remember that the staff has the best interest of your child in mind. In the rare instance a child continues to cry and display extreme anxiety, a teacher or office staff member will notify the parent.

Pick Ups

For pick ups, each family is assigned an identification number. Large signs with this number will be provided to each family at the start of the school year. Place this number in a visible spot on the dashboard of your vehicle when you enter the school driveway. A school staff member will escort your child to your vehicle. You may also park in the parking lot and go to the office to pick up your child.



If you are picking up children who are not members of your family, you must park in the parking lot and proceed to the office to request the children. Benches are provided immediately outside the front door of the main building for parents waiting for children. Please do not stand near the carpool line, or allow children to interfere with the carpool process. When leaving the buildings, make sure front doors are completely closed. When leaving the school grounds, always latch the gate.

Pick Up Authorization

The appropriate section of the Tuition Contract and Parental Authorizations Form must be completed if someone other than the parents will pick up the child. The school must be notified by a phone call or a signed note to the office or teacher before children will be released to someone other than the individuals listed on the authorization form.

Lateness

Students arriving late should be escorted through the driveway onto school property. Toddler, Pre-Primary, and Elementary students must be escorted to their classrooms as well.

Unless the office has been notified of extenuating circumstances, parents who are late to pick up children will be fined the late fee listed below. Make checks out to The Montessori School for Shreveport.

- **\$1.00 per minute**, with a minimum of \$5.00.



IN SUMMARY, NOTIFY THE OFFICE WHEN:

- Children will be absent.
- Children will be released to someone not listed on the Tuition Contract and Parental Authorizations Form.
- Children will be picked up late.

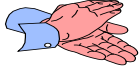
When leaving the buildings, make sure front doors are completely closed. When leaving the school grounds, always latch the gate.

Chapter 2. Program Placement and Progress

This chapter of the Handbook details the practical aspects of placing students and evaluating student progress in school programs.

Tracking Student Progress in Programs

Parent-Teacher Conferences



Parent-teacher conferences are held at least two, if not three, times during the school year. Each teacher is responsible for notifying parents and scheduling a conference for each child. Whenever possible, both parents or guardians should attend all parent-teacher conferences.

In preparation for parent-teacher conferences, teachers evaluate the progress of students on a detailed progress report that lists program lessons.

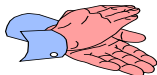
Please recognize that it is the teacher's job at these conferences to inform parents about each student's strengths and weaknesses, as well as to advise parents on how to best support their children. Parents are asked to sign the progress report at the conclusion of each conference.

Additional conferences may be arranged at any other time if the teacher or parents feel this would be beneficial. Please request additional conferences by contacting the school office or sending a note to the teacher.

Record Confidentiality

All student **records are confidential**. Only parents, teachers, the Head of School and Administrative Staff are allowed to review them. Parent's written consent is needed to release records to other parties.

Parent Observations



Parents are encouraged to make appointments to observe their child's class **three times** during the school year. First observations are scheduled after the beginning of October to allow a full six weeks for students to "normalize" and feel comfortable with observers in the classroom. November and February are also good months to observe, just prior to parent-teacher conferences. Of course, you are welcome to come at other times as well.

It is the parent's responsibility to call the office to schedule a date and time for observations. Most observations are scheduled for mornings, preferably Tuesdays, Wednesdays, or Thursdays. Every effort will be made to accommodate parental schedules. Most observers stay between 30 to 45 minutes. Toddler classes are observed through a window in the hallway. All other classroom observers sit in the room on chairs provided by the teacher. Observers should watch the students work, but refrain from active participation. Observers are provided with a form to record the behaviors observed during observation. You may arrange an appointment to discuss your observations with the teacher or the Head of School.

Please follow the instructions on the observation form carefully. Your input is very valuable.

Student Placement in Programs

Initial Placement

The Head of School and the Admissions Coordinator, acting with the advice and consent of the classroom teacher, assign incoming students to a program and class. Ideally, classes are structured to be demographically balanced by age and gender of students, although this is not always achieved.

On-Going Adjustment

It is anticipated that a child will take about six weeks to adjust to a new classroom. If your child is having serious difficulty in class, you will be informed. Depending upon the specific problem, this information may be transmitted via notes, phone calls, or a conference. We make every effort to work with each child and family to solve any situations that may adversely affect the child's growth and happiness. In rare instances, a student may be unable to adjust satisfactorily to school and may be subject to dismissal. However, dismissal is suggested only as a last resort when all other approaches have failed.

Refund Policy and Student Withdrawal

Due to contractual obligations to faculty, staff, and others, the Refund Policy is very limited. Basically, there is no refund for any reason other than as set forth below.

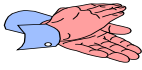
- Tuition fees will be waived if the parent, due to a change in employment, is required to move more than 50 miles from Shreveport before the beginning of classes. Notification in writing must be received by July 1st in order to receive a full refund. Otherwise, after July 1st, 10% of the total tuition will be forfeited.
- Once the school year has begun, prorated tuition will be refunded if the student withdraws from The Montessori School for Shreveport because the parent, due to a change in employment, is required to move more than 50 miles from the school. A 30-day written notice is required and tuition will be assessed for the 30-day period.
- Prorated tuition shall be refunded if the school believes the student is not functioning successfully.
- Tuition may not be transferred from one student to another.

Program Transition

Continuing students are recommended for next program levels based **less** on their birth date and **more** on their academic standing and social development, as well as their capacity for increasingly complex, independent work within a more mature social environment.

The decision to move a student to the next upper level program is carefully weighed by the Head of School, the current classroom teacher, as well as input from teachers at the upper level under consideration. Of primary importance is the child's ability for continued success. In most cases, parents will be informed of transition decisions **toward the latter part of the spring semester**. Teachers are trained to weigh evidence of the child's progress in school with knowledge about developmental growth spurts, and will make the program transition decision only when the teacher is completely certain about the appropriateness of their recommendation.

Students who are recommended to move to the next level will recognize some lessons from their previous program, will be introduced to new lessons of increasing complexity, and will find fitting in within the older, more established social hierarchy of students exciting and challenging. Their new teachers will continue to provide the best individualized work plan and supportive social environment for each student.



At this school, parents should rest assured that the concern for the welfare of the child takes paramount importance in program transition decisions.

Extra-curricular Opportunities

In addition to classroom work, Kindergarten level Pre-Primary students, Elementary, and Middle School students also participate in a variety of local field trips. Middle School students have an additional land component to their curriculum. To maximize the Middle School students' practical life experiences, area business owners and facilities directors allow student internships.

A variety of optional extra-curricular activities are available, such as Kindermusic, art lessons and running club. Montessori students who wish to participate in team sports utilize the local YMCA, the Little League, and CABOSA (soccer) organizations; often our students make up entire teams and our parents serve as coaches with these established organizations. Please contact the school office if you would like more information on extra-curricular activities.

Chapter 3. School Governance

The Montessori School for Shreveport is an independent school, not affiliated with any religious or other outside interest. It is a non-profit, tax-exempt corporation. The corporation's membership is comprised of the parents of the students; hence, the school is known as a "parent-owned" corporation.

The two primary divisions of the corporation are:

- The Board of Trustees, representing all parents, and
- The School Administration and Faculty, managed by the Head of School.

Each of these divisions works cooperatively to govern the school under the umbrella of AMS accreditation and in accordance with the regulations promulgated by the Louisiana Department of Education. In all decision-making, the welfare of the children is the first and foremost consideration.

The purpose of this chapter is to describe in general how school governance is accomplished, and detail each parent's obligation as a member of the corporation.

The Board of Trustees

A Board of Trustees governs the corporation. The Board of Trustees consists of 8 to 14 members who serve overlapping three-year terms. Members include four officers:

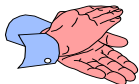
- President
- Vice-President
- Treasurer
- Secretary

Members are parents with active records of school community service and include a variety of professionals with specialized expertise to aide school governance. Members serve without remuneration.

Each year, the parents elect Board members to replace retiring members. This election is held at the annual end of the year program. A list with Board member names, addresses, and phone numbers is provided to all parents and faculty.

The Board of Trustees' primary functions are to set school policy and to oversee the welfare of the school and finances. In addition, the Board of Trustees supervises the Head of School.

The Board of Trustees, with the Head of School in attendance, meets on a monthly basis. Typical agenda items include a Financial Report, Parent Group Report, President's Report, and Head of School Report, covering topics such as short- and long-range planning, reaccreditation status, fundraising, policy setting, etc.



All parents and faculty members are invited to attend Board meetings; your suggestions and ideas are welcome and we look forward to your participation. Board meetings are usually held once each month at the school and will be announced in advance. Summaries of the minutes of each meeting are available to all members of the corporation.

School Administration

The Head of School handles daily school administration and finances. This includes managing school operations, teaching staff, customer service, financial administration, and long-range planning.

The administrative staff, led by the Head of School, is interested in getting acquainted with each and every parent. Please stop by the office, introduce yourself, and meet all of the staff.

Parents should feel free to contact anyone on the administrative staff with questions, requests for more information, or for advice concerning any aspect of the school.

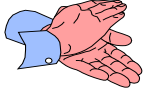
Grievance Procedure For Parents

Although non-faculty/staff members are not required to follow the following Grievance Procedure, if any faculty/staff member or member of the Board of Trustees is contacted by a non-faculty/staff member regarding a grievance, the faculty/staff member or Board member shall provide such non-faculty/staff member with the Grievance Procedure and shall direct such non-faculty/staff member to the initial step which may be taken in an attempt to resolve such matter. Any faculty/staff member or Board member contacted regarding such matter shall keep any and all information confidential and shall disclose such information only in response to an investigation conducted by the Head of School, Board of Trustees, or a Grievance Committee appointed by the Board of Trustees, or in response to a proper request made during legal proceedings regarding such matter.

If, and only if, the complainant's problem directly involves the Head of School, the complainant may skip steps 1-3 and may present his/her grievance in writing, on the form provided in Appendix B of this Handbook, directly to the President of the Board.

1. The complainant should schedule a first conference, as soon as possible, with the Head of School. If a specific incident has given rise to the problem, this first conference should be scheduled as close to the date of the event as possible.
2. If this first conference with the Head of School fails to resolve the problem, an official complaint should be submitted to the Head of School, in writing, on the form provided in Appendix B of this Handbook, within fifteen (15) working days following the first conference. The grievance form requires the complainant to describe in detail the problem and steps that have been taken to resolve it. Upon receipt, the Head of School shall date the grievance form and return a dated copy to the complainant.
3. The Head of School shall begin an investigation into the problem. The Head of School shall have ten (10) working days to complete the investigation. Upon completion of the investigation the Head of School shall meet with the complainant and inform him/her of the results of the investigation and what remedy the Head of School thinks is appropriate. This meeting is the second conference. The Head of School shall also provide an answer to the grievance in writing at or prior to the second conference. If the situation warrants, the Head of School may choose to bring the problem to the attention of the President of Trustees at this time. If the complainant is not satisfied with the Head of School's investigation or suggested remedy, he/she may appeal to the President of the Board of Trustees by submitting a written complaint, on the form provided in this Handbook, within ten (10) business days following the second conference. Upon receipt, the President of Trustees shall date the grievance form and return a dated copy to the complainant.
4. If a problem is brought to the President of the Board of Trustees, a Grievance Committee appointed by the Board shall conduct their own investigation into the complaint and shall respond in writing to the grievance within thirty (30) working days. The Grievance Committee shall consist of three members, including at least one member of the Board of Trustees and one member of the teaching staff. Any decision made by the Grievance Committee shall be final and binding.

In order to preserve the integrity of this internal procedure, no faculty/staff member is to take any matter to a member of the Board of Trustees or to any other person without first taking the appropriate steps laid out in the grievance procedure. Any conferences between faculty/staff members and Board members, or other non-faculty/staff members who are not directly involved concerning a grievance, which take place outside of the internal grievance procedure, are highly inappropriate and inconsistent with our goal of maintaining the integrity of the process and the confidentiality of employment information.




Parent Obligations

A parent-owned school depends upon the support of the parents in order to function. Parental involvement is a necessity; without the time and resources provided by parents, The Montessori School for Shreveport would never have been founded and would not exist today. The children at The Montessori School for Shreveport benefit in immeasurable ways from seeing their parents take an active role in supporting their school. By their involvement, active parents underscore the importance of education and the value of each and every child.

This section of the Handbook describes both the required and optional obligations of parents.

Required Parent Service Agreements

 **All parents of enrolled students are required to do a minimum of 10 hours of Parent Service during each school year, but asked to contribute as many hours as their schedule permits.** Please note: this is the minimum commitment required of *each parent/guardian*.

The majority of AMS accredited Montessori schools have parent service requirements. In fact, in order to maintain full accreditation status, our school must demonstrate at each reaccreditation juncture that our parents are actively working to support the school. There are several reasons for imposing a parent service requirement, including:

- The children benefit both scholastically and emotionally when parents are active participants in their schooling.
- Parent service is a tangible way for parents to actually live and practice the Montessori approach.
- Parents who serve are providing excellent role models for their children.
- Parent service helps keep tuition at affordable levels; when parents trim the hedges, build shelves, clean classrooms, listen to children read, and assist teachers, the school saves a significant amount of money.
- Parent service is fun! It provides a way for families to interact with other families, building close ties.

The parents of The Montessori School for Shreveport have a history of enthusiastic activism, and welcome families that understand the importance of playing a direct role in the education of their children.

There are many ways to fulfill parent service obligations. For example, parents have painted, landscaped, made classroom materials, and have listened to children read. In addition, parents can support fund-raising activities (described in the following section).

At the start of the school year, a **Parent Service Commitment Form** is issued listing service opportunities and schedule commitment information. Parents are welcome to contact the Head of School or the President of the Board of Trustees to learn more about service opportunities.

The following activities **DO NOT** count towards fulfilling the parent service requirement:

- Attending parent-teacher conferences

- Attending classroom parties or presentations

At the end of the school year, parents are required to fill out and submit to the school office the **Parent Service Hour Contributions Form** presented in Appendix A.



Please note: the school does not contact parents during the school year to make sure that all parent service obligations are completed. On your honor, seek out activities and ways to help, and track your own hours. **Use the form provided in the Appendix to keep track of your parent service hours; all families are required to turn in a completed form at the end of the school year.**

Fundraising



In order to keep tuition at affordable levels and to purchase supplemental capital equipment, program materials, and fulfill other program and school needs, several fundraisers are held throughout the year. Without these fundraisers, tuition levels would increase markedly! It is important to bear in mind that our tuition levels are below those of other private schools in the area, and are one third to one half that of comparable Montessori schools in other parts of the country. This is no fiscal miracle; our school must make up the difference by optional means. Therefore, we count on our families to give extra resources as available. Remember, every dollar is raised on behalf of our precious children. Please give generously!

The Board of Trustees and the Head of School approve all fundraisers. Approved fund-raisers are listed below. Refer to a separate Calendar of Events for schedules. You will receive detailed information about these events during the school year. Be sure to contact the chairs of each fundraiser to find out how you can best contribute.

If you can not contribute your time, please donate money. If you have any questions or require more information about how much money is typically involved in supporting fundraisers, please contact the school administration office.



The first two listed -- the Annual Fund Drive and the Silent Auction -- are the major fundraisers; **parental participation in these fundraisers is critical.**



Annual Fund Drive - Each fall, parents, grandparents, and friends are asked to make a donation to the Annual Fund Drive. Specific plans for the funds are explained during the campaign and are targeted at the school's most pressing needs for that year.



Silent Auction - This fundraiser, held in the spring, is the biggest, most important fundraiser of the year. The school has held a Silent Auction each year since 1973. The money from this event goes directly into the operating budget for the school, keeping tuition costs down.

There are a number of committees, all chaired and filled by parents, to organize and hold this fundraiser. Parents contact community businesses to solicit silent auction items. Parents are also asked to make a commitment to purchase admission tickets and raffle tickets. Both the admission tickets and raffle tickets can then be sold to family and friends.

Montessori Book Fair - In the fall, a book fair is usually held in cooperation with Barnes & Noble. Books of every variety and for all ages are available for purchase. The school receives a percentage of the revenue from the fair. Parents contribute by purchasing books and assisting with book fair duties.

Lunch Bunch - For two 17-week periods, the school serves a student lunch on most Fridays (and some Thursdays) of the school year. Parents may pay for sessions at the

beginning of the school year, or pay for each session at the beginning of the 17-week period. The lunch may include chicken tenders, pizza, fruit, vegetables and cookies. Parents are needed to help facilitate this fundraiser. The children love this “social time.”

Box Tops for Education – Families collect the box tops from General Mills products designated by “Box Tops for Education” logos and deposit them in a designated collection jars near the school office. The school periodically sends the box tops to General Mills in return for money. A list of participating products is available from the school office.

Parent Group

The Parent Group organization is a very vital part of The Montessori School for Shreveport. The Parent Group works on school functions and sponsors parent education.

One reason our school is outstanding is because of successful parental involvement. Volunteer to join this organization at the beginning of the year. There is a small fee per family to join; the money goes to sponsor informative meetings, refreshments, security guards for evening meetings, and mail-outs. Six issues of *Tomorrow's Child*, a publication of The Montessori Foundation, are included in membership fees.

By belonging to the group, you will be more involved with your child's Montessori approach to learning. What a wonderful way to support your child! The reward will last for generations to come.

Buildings and Grounds

The Building and Grounds chair and committee are responsible for the upkeep of the school. Two major workdays per year are held, with other workdays scheduled as needed. Parents are asked to work on the grounds and in the school buildings on these days to clean and improve our facilities and preserve the safe and cheerful learning environment we provide for the children.

Classroom Participation

Parents are encouraged to participate in the classroom. Each teacher has different needs for parent support in the classroom; please contact your child's teacher for more information. Examples of ways parents have supported classrooms include:

- Coming as special visitors to share skills or experiences with the children
- Listening to children read
- Showing the children how to work with sandpaper letters
- Typing
- Making classroom materials

Qualified parents are also encouraged to serve as substitute teachers or help in the office. If you are interested in participating in any way, please let your child's teacher or the office staff know - **we need you!**

Lee Martin Rabalais Scholarship Fund

The school's scholarship fund began many years ago, and was renamed the Lee Martin Rabalais Scholarship Fund in 1996 when Brenda Martin Rabalais established a scholarship fund in memory of her son. Lee was a former Montessori School for Shreveport student who died of bone cancer. Contributions are greatly appreciated and a wonderful way to make a memorial gift or to honor someone on a special occasion. The interest from this fund is used each year for partial scholarships based on financial need.

Appendix A

Parent Service Hour Contributions

Please record the combined number of hours contributed by the adult members of your household for each volunteer activity during the period listed. Tally and record the total number of hours at the bottom of each column, and sign and date the chart. Please return it to the office at the conclusion of the school year.

| Adult Family Members (please print): | |
|--|---|
| Parent Service Opportunities | Number of Work Hours – School Year _____ |
| Administration Support (please describe): | |
| Annual Fund Drive | |
| Buildings & Grounds <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintenance • Landscaping • Other (please describe): | |
| Classroom Assistance (check all that apply) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Class Parent (e.g., Room Mother) • Substitute Teacher • Class Visitor (e.g., share trip experiences) • Driving to Field Trips • Fund Raising (e.g., bake sales) • Lesson Assistance (sandpaper letters, reading) • Make Classroom Materials • Sew • Other (please describe): | |
| Lunch Bunch | |
| Parent Group <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide Refreshments for School Programs • Serve as Speaker • Fall or Spring Book Fair • Days of the Child/Field Day • Teacher Appreciation Activities • Other (please describe): | |
| Phone Committee | |
| Silent Auction | |
| Other (please describe): | |
| Total Number of Hours: | |
| Please Sign and Date: | |

Appendix B

The Montessori School for Shreveport Grievance Form

Name: _____ Date: _____

1. Please explain your complaint with specific details:

2. I discussed this matter with the Head of School on the following date:
_____ (Date of first conference). I disagree with the Head of School's
response because:

3. I think the proper solution should be:

Received by Head of School _____ Date: _____ Copy: _____
(Initial)

4. Response of the Head of School to the complaint after investigation:

Head of School _____
Date

5. A second conference was held with the Head of School to discuss the
investigation of the complaint on _____ (Date of second
conference). I disagree with the Head of School's response because:

Received by President of the Board of Trustees _____ Date: _____ Copy: _____
(Initial)

6. Response of the Board of Trustees:

Representative of Board of Trustees _____
Date