

Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center

Community Handbook

Kindergarten and Elementary

2014-2015

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Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center

“Our aim is not to make the child understand, and still less force him to memorize, but so to touch his imagination as to enthuse him to his innermost core.”

“Help me do it myself.”

Dr. Maria Montessori

Let Me Be A Child

Let me know when I make you proud. And Help me to have pride in my own accomplishments. Let me earn your trust. Then trust me. I won't let you down. Let me try my wings. If I fail, let me know it's OK. And encourage me to try again. Let me know you love me. With a hug. Or a pat on the back, or when I need it, with a firm but gentle "no." Let me be. Let me change Let me grow. Let me tell you when I'm feeling bad... or angry... Even at you. And let me know that even on my worst days, you still like me. Let me dream. Share my joy when my dreams come true. Share my tears when they don't. Let me feel secure in my home. Help me realize that love is always there ... that I can depend on you no matter what. Let me run ... let me laugh ... let me play. And most of all let me be a child!

—Anonymous

Understanding the Montessori Classroom

The Montessori Movement

The Montessori Movement was originally designed to help create a world of peacemakers. As it turned out, this method of education was proven to produce not only peaceful children who could help solve problems, it also allowed the children to take their knowledge and apply it in all different settings.

Every child possesses an inner force that drives him to grow and learn and that can be observed in his spontaneous activities. We respect his natural inquisitiveness, which makes learning an imperative, as much a basic need to the child as food, shelter, and love. We appreciate his relentless exploration through his senses and movements, which make his environment his natural school.

It is our purpose to observe the child's natural interest and activities and provide an environment in which he can develop and learn.

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that **self-motivation** is the only valid impulse for learning. Within the carefully structured order of the Montessori classroom, the child is free to choose his own projects throughout the day. Following his own inner direction, he discovers his own pattern of learning and finds satisfaction in work.

It is the child who takes the active part in the Montessori classroom, not the guide. However, the guide is constantly adjusting and modifying the curriculum to meet the needs of each student.

The child plays the active role in his self-development rather than being trained by an adult. The children are encouraged to work out their own social problems and reach their own moral conclusions.

Responsibility toward the group and the other children individually is emphasized. Adult authority acts as a background for free development. When the child is encouraged to develop understanding, compassion, and respect, he is able to cultivate his own self-discipline.

What is Montessori

Montessori is a developmentally based approach to education. Montessori determines the needs of a child through observation, then guides the child accordingly to appropriate learning activities and materials.

- Montessori Philosophy focuses on respect and partnership- on creating environments in which children learn naturally, learn in harmony with one another, and where they actually want to go to school.
- Montessori classes are warm, relaxed, and incredibly safe and secure in which children learn how to live and work in partnership with their adult mentors.
- Montessori children learn at the deepest possible level to believe in themselves in an atmosphere of independence within community and personal empowerment. They never lose their sense of curiosity and innate ability to learn and discover and be confident in themselves. They open up to the world around them and find that mistakes are not something to be feared; instead they represent endless opportunities to learn from experience.

Most of us adults are products of traditional education and upbringing. By enrolling our children in a Montessori school, we may be making a significant break with what is known and familiar and comfortable to us. We at Napa Valley Montessori have written the following pages to introduce parents to as many elements as possible that vary significantly from traditional education and childrearing. We ask that you read these brief descriptions to discover which ones you may wish to explore further with our curriculum coordinator.

Major Points of the Montessori Method

(Adapted from E.M. Standing; *The Montessori Method: A Revolution in Education*, Academy Library Guild, 1962.)

1. It is based on observations of the true nature of the child.
2. Its application is universal. The same results can be achieved in any country and with any racial, cultural, or economic group.
3. It reveals the small child as a lover of work, both of the intellect and of the mastery of the body (especially the hand). This work is spontaneously chosen and carried out with profound joy.
4. Through his work, the child shows spontaneous discipline. This discipline originates within him and is not imposed from without. This discipline is real, in contrast to the artificial

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discipline of the reward and punishment model common to other methods.

5. It provides suitable activities based on the vital urges of the child at each stage of development. Each stage is mastered before the next is attained.

6. It offers the child the greatest possible choice of physical and mental activity. In doing so, the child reaches the same or higher scholastic levels compared with traditional systems.

7. Each child works at his own pace. Students are allowed to go beyond the grade level standards.

The child has much opportunity to work in groups and to help other children with work he has already mastered.

8. It enables the teacher to guide each child individually in each subject area, according to his own unique needs.

9. It allows the child to grow in biological independence by respecting his needs and removing undue adult influence. It allows the child a large measure of liberty grounded in respect for the rights of others. This liberty is not permissive license but forms the basis of genuine discipline.

10. It does away with competition as a prime motivation for learning. The child competes with himself. It presents endless opportunities for collaborative work and reciprocal assistance-- joyfully given and received.

11. The child works from his own free choice. This choice is based on knowledge and is thus an authentic choice.

12. The Montessori method develops the child's whole personality, not merely his intellectual faculties but also his powers of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice, with the associated emotional complements. By living as a free member of an authentic social community, the child learns the fundamental social qualities that underlie good citizenship.

Napa Valley Learning Center Objectives

- To help each child develop and educate his own individuality so that he can strive toward his unknown potential.
- To enable the children to create a social structure among them that honors their contrasting needs as individuals and as a group and that makes their roles as individuals and as parts of the group complementary.
- To guide each child along a path of development and education that is natural to him so that he may remain attuned to his own nature, nurture a reverence for the organic order of the universe, and become a whole and integrated human being who is both instrumental in his own growth and sensitive to the needs of all people.

The Elementary Level

Curriculum

In this atmosphere of faith and respect for the life force in each child, the teachers present work that is worthy of the children's attention. The classroom environment honors the children's innate dignity, active interest, and their overwhelming drive to develop and grow.

Our curriculum encourages and supports the “Three C’s”—Critical Thinking; Creative Problem Solving; and Collaboration. These are the 21st Century skills our students need to meet the demands of the Information Age.

The Elementary Classroom

The Montessori method is based on Dr. Montessori's observations about how children learn, and her conclusions about the child's stages of development. The system of education used in the classroom is designed to be applied individually to each child, with his own unique interests and strengths.

A major component of this method is the manipulation of concrete materials, which requires physical coordination and conscious attention. The child progresses, for example, from the physical act of addition, using beads or rods, through gradually increasing levels of abstraction. In another subject such as history, curriculum gathered from a variety of sources is synthesized into small chapters and presented in our series of "textbooks." These and other materials cover the following areas:

Language: Reading, spelling, grammar, and usage. Phonics, including diphthongs and consonant combinations, sight words, synonyms, antonyms, homonyms, and root words. Parts of speech and parts and types of sentences. Penmanship is manuscript and cursive. Students engage in various research projects according to their interests throughout the school year.

Mathematics: Students master the four basic math operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication and division. These four operations are the basic building blocks of arithmetic, and are the foundation for algebra geometry, squaring, square roots, cubing and cube roots, operations with money, area and volume, fractions and decimal fractions. Set theory.

Read more: http://www.ehow.com/info_8002058_basic-math-operations.html#ixzz2aWXszvKv

Physical Geography: Political divisions, capitals, major cities, and commerce. Flags of countries and states.

History: Theories of the formation of the earth, development of life, development of human beings and society, and contributions of various life forms. Continental drift (plate tectonics). Specific historical events, including U.S. history and current events.

Science: Experiments revealing natural laws. Basic terminology, classification, and taxonomy of the plant, animal, and mineral kingdoms. Field trips.

Literature (e.g., Junior Great Books) and basic research tools, such as World Book Encyclopedia and dictionaries, are in constant use. Children borrow books from the library for their own reading and are read to as a group daily.

Music, drama, arts, and crafts form a regular part of classroom life, as do "practical life" exercises involving care of the classroom environment (dusting, window washing, etc.) and the out of doors (sweeping the walk, gardening). Physical education includes gymnastics, ball games, and other physical fitness exercises and yoga.

Spontaneous Activity in Education

The process by which the child struggles to unfold his own highest and best intellectual, emotional, and social development through choice of work, concentration and focus, independence and collaboration within a self-managing classroom.

Development of the Will, Freedom and Limits, Choice and Responsibility

The integral elements of Montessori practice that empower the child to self-develop and self-educate with love and joy.

Support for Individual Style and Rate of Academic and Skill Development

The recognition and respect shown for each child's individual process and pace of learning, which empowers the healthiest most authentic autonomy and industry.

Collaborative And Cooperative Rather Than Competitive Learning

The children's spontaneous organization into groups for research and study helps their caring support and assistance for one another in their struggles and successes.

Developmental Aids Rather Than Teaching and Learning Materials

The efficient, sparse, and elegant Montessori materials are designed to provide the keys to self-development and auto-education.

Evaluation and Accountability

The integrated process through which the children self-evaluate while learning and demonstrate accountability for making their highest effort for their best development and learning, including recording regularly in their work journal and assessing periodically through individual conferences and reviews with the guides; as well as the guides responsibility to engage, as much as possible, each child in this process as he or she is best able.

Education for Peace

The ultimate aim of Montessori education is that toward which all healthy, authentic human nature is directed from within, that toward which human development is innately driven, that which gives human beings the deepest satisfaction.

Individual Pace and Rate of Character Development

Recognition and respect for each child's progress along the path of truthfulness, honest, empathy, compassion, and action in relation to immediate peers and in behalf of the social, economic, and spiritual health and well-being of the earth and the human family.

Peer Mediation (Peace Table)

The dynamic process through which the children are prepared and supported to resolve among themselves, guided and encouraged by the adult, their specific and acute or generalized and on-going interpersonal issues, according to Montessori principles and values and within school policy.

Self-managing Elementary Community

The children's own ordering, organizing, and managing the daily operations of their environment and community, whether of a practical or social nature.

A Force More Powerful

The sum of the skills and attributes of character and integrity that the children develop by educating themselves and one another, and confronting their own issues in the present that will empower them to live in the world as adults in such a way that they can seek common ground and establish mutuality with others of various cultures and religions in order to pursue a peace that ensures human dignity and respect, social and economic justice, and the health and well-being of the planet.

Core Elements of the Integrated Curriculum

Particular programs are so essential as part of individual and community development that the fabric of Montessori education would begin to unravel without them.

The Study of Human Development

The study of human life from conception through prenatal development to birth, from the newborn and the symbiotic period, through the first year of life and the two toddler years, until entry into the Children's House, the Montessori program that stands in place of traditional sex education program in other schools.

Going Out

A carefully and meticulously designed core element, supervised by the guide and parents, of excursions into the larger world initiated, planned, organized, and carried out by the students themselves for the direct purpose of extending knowledge, information, or experience in relation to classroom studies, which establishes and invigorates the children's responsibility for their own safety and helps ensure their ability to think clearly and make sound choices in taking care of themselves as they reach the age to leave the house without their parents.

A core element of the elementary curriculum that provides the children with the authentic necessity for sheltering, feeding, and caring for themselves for five days and four nights within a secure organization under the close supervision of the guide and assistant who allow them to use their practical skills of menu-making, grocery listing, shopping, packing, setting up camp, cooking, cleaning, striking camp, packing, and returning, while pursuing plans they have made for themselves of science and nature activities and field trips.

Cosmic Education

The integrated study of the history of the universe, the coming of life, the evolution of plants and animals, the coming of humans, the development of civilizations throughout which geography, history, zoology, botany, and earth sciences are woven and from which mathematics, language, and the arts are pulled, emphasizing love and service as unifying principles and giving the children a sense of the meaning and purpose of their own and every other creature's life on earth.

Community Service

The particular means and methods sought out by the children of a particular elementary community for offering services variously to their own school and to the larger community as well.

Review of Basic Elements of Montessori Elementary

Development and Education for Parents

Most of us adults are products of traditional education and upbringing. By enrolling our children in a Montessori school, we may be making a significant break with what is known and familiar and comfortable to us. We at Napa Valley Montessori have written these pages to introduce parents to as many elements as possible that vary significantly from traditional education and childrearing. We ask that you read these brief descriptions to discover which ones you may wish to explore further. It is in the children's best interests that school and parents work closely together within a shared philosophy, psychology, and practice. Our school varies significantly from traditional education in the way we approach discipline and academic development, going out and campouts, and culture and religions. These differences are pervasive; they are strong and specific in their details of practice as well as in philosophical, psychological, and pedagogical foundations. We think the more you know about our school the better you will like it. It is an exciting elementary plan.

However, you may find certain elements of our program, ones that we consider to be basic requirements, unacceptable to you. Now is the time to make that discovery. Just as in a traditional school, parents could not expect that a child be exempted from taking exams, doing homework, and receiving grades, in our school children cannot be exempted from studying evolution and world religions or participating in going out and campouts. These and other elements and programs are basic to Montessori education in our school without which we cannot serve the developmental and academic needs of the children.

We have tried to name the elements about which various parents might desire extensive information and wish to reach a thorough understanding before enrolling their children in our elementary program. Please read these pages thoroughly and contact us with your questions.

The Elementary Curriculum

This new level is a time for great ideas and grand visions. It is an age for inspiration and high ideals. It is a time for broad vistas and wide horizons. We share with the children the vast ages of evolution to interest them in history and science. We look in awe at the protozoa, the dinosaur, and man. We look at systems of the body and at the individual cell. We compare the cell in its place in a system and in the body to the cell that is a protozoan, a one-celled life.

We look at the tiny atoms and at how they can form molecules because some are attracted to each other and others repelled. We see how this causes the formation of predictable patterns. We contemplate the three states of matter and how each element on the atomic chart passes through the three states according to temperature, each at its own degree. We wonder at the underlying order and simplicity. We wonder at the profound and unfathomable complexity. Since the emergence of quantum mechanics, we have come around from Newtonian physics back to a mystical reverence for the universe.

We look at humans through the ages, how we have lived and what we have thought. We consider prehistoric man; we think about the Egyptians, the Greeks, and the Middle Ages. We look at our world today, with its opportunities for service to the earth and to social justice. We are full of joy in our moment of history that we can be and think and act and celebrate. We see in history that there are always terrible crises but that life prevails and celebrates. We look at humankind around the world and throughout history by seeing how the same basic human needs are met in different ways at various times and places on the globe. We see how truly we are one and begin to penetrate the mysterious veil that creates the illusion of separateness.

We look at language and counting and imagine life before those miracles. We think and we are moved. We see the different kinds of words: names of things, actions, and characteristics. We listen to language and see its patterns. We observe and attend to conventions. Then we break the patterns and violate the conventions for the sake of poetry.

Teaching Philosophy:

Environment

The Napa Valley Montessori Learning Lower and Upper Elementary programs accept children between the ages of 5 and 12 years old. Our individualized program is designed in accordance with each child's social and emotional needs, as well as his or her academic and physical development. Our academic curriculum consists of reading, math, practical life, sensorial, geography, cultural subjects, music. Our main goal is to provide quality Montessori education and childcare to Napa Valley and neighboring areas; To empower children by giving them the opportunity to achieve their highest potential as they grow to become confident, competent, caring, and productive citizens; Provide a child-centered environment that reflects beauty, simplicity, and order, and provides materials and activities required for **learning**.

What is Montessori

- Montessori is a developmentally based approach to education. Montessori determines the needs of a child through observation, then guides the child accordingly to appropriate learning activities and materials.
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- Montessori classes are warm, relaxed, and incredibly safe and secure in which children learn how to live and work in partnership with their adult mentors.
- Montessori children learn at the deepest possible level to believe in themselves in an atmosphere of independence within community and personal empowerment, they never lose their sense of curiosity and innate ability to learn and discover and be confident in themselves, they open up to the world around them and find that mistakes are not something to be feared; instead, they represent endless opportunities to learn from experience.

Over and over again, Montessori proved that having a child teach her was the only way she could learn how to teach the child herself.

“Children must grow not only in the body, but in the spirit.”

Dr. Maria Montessori

Suggested Reading for Parents

GENERAL

Montessori: A Modern Approach, Paula Polk Lillard
The Inner World of Childhood, Frances G. Wickes
No Contest, Alfie Kohn

Punished with Rewards, Alfie Kohn

Creating Innovators: The Making of Young People Who Will Change the World
Wagner, Tony;

In Their Own Way, Thomas Armstrong
Something More, Jean Grasso Fitzpatrick
Endangered Minds, Jane Healy
The Geography of Childhood, Gary Paul Nabham and Stephen Trimble

CHILDREN'S HOUSE

The Secret of Childhood, Maria Montessori
The Absorbent Mind, Maria Montessori
A Parent's Guide to Child Discipline, Rudolf Dreikurs
Miseducation, David Elkind

ELEMENTARY

The Hurried Child, David Elkind
Between Parent and Child, Haim Ginott

ADOLESCENCE

From Childhood to Adolescence, Maria Montessori
All Grown Up With No Place to Go, David Elkind
Between Parent and Teenager, Haim Ginott

Program Offerings

Lower and Upper Elementary

Hours:

Full Day: 8:30am to 3:00pm

Full day with Afterschool/Enrichment: 7:30am to 5:30 pm

Days: 5 Days/week

Before and After School Hours/Enrichment Programs are available for a separate fee.

Here in California, a survey found that nearly half of all school districts in 2011 cut or reduced art, drama and music programs.

Despite constant cut-backs, studies have shown that these activities actually increase a child's academic abilities. Art, music, and dramatic arts study inspire creative, inventive thinking and significantly increase problem-solving skills. These enrichment activities boost self-esteem and confidence-- which helps children better succeed in the classroom and beyond into their adult years.

At *Napa Valley Montessori*, we consider these enrichment activities an integral part of a child's academic development. *Napa Valley Montessori's* after-school program focuses on hands-on activities where students learn math, science, reading and writing "by doing" in an engaging, non-competitive, supportive environment.

Music Rocks



Our "Music Rocks" curriculum incorporates song, dance and instrument playing. "Music Rocks" offers a fun, stimulating way to introduce language arts and new vocabulary as students learn new song verses and write their own!

Music is poetry and poetry is music.

Students study concepts like: beat, alliteration, rhyme, stanza, metaphor, similes and sonnets, to name a few.

During the course of the year, we explore these many elements of poetry found in songs of the past and present. With over 55 poetry forms, it's important for young writers to be able to pull from their knowledge of these varieties when writing their own song lyrics for class.

Some students will prefer singing, some will prefer writing, some will prefer playing instruments, and still some will want to practice a combination of these musical forms.

At Napa Valley Montessori, we never pressure a student to participate in any of these mediums. Rather, we allow children to freely and non-judgmentally discover different musical avenues that help them develop their intrinsic and genuine interests in music.

Some children will gain a new love of writing and musical expression-- others may decide they'd like to master playing a particular horn or string instrument. For those students, we offer separate, individual music lessons, at an hourly rate taught by professional musicians on our campus site.

For those interested, we also have "ear training" computer software available which helps students learn to identify notes, intervals, chords, modes and all of the other important music elements. Ear or *aural* training has been proven to improve concentration and verbal memory.

Finally, as a culminating event to showcase all that students have learned during class, we'll have performances and assemblies periodically for family members and the local community.

Why Music at Napa Valley Montessori?

- Our students learn songs and play instruments from many different cultures.
- Singing helps children develop better speaking skills.
- Dancing and instrument play help children develop motor skills.
- Music helps children build listening and concentration skills.

“Science and Outdoor Exploration” --our Outdoor Science Classroom

Ideally, an outdoor classroom is used for hands-on activities that children can complete themselves or with little help. Gardening offers us the opportunity to study the natural sciences in a hands-on approach.

In our outdoor science classroom we study botany and all of the living organisms in the soil that are an integral piece of the ecosystem.

Learning is extended to include the study of rocks and weather patterns. Students study the life-cycle of insects and investigate the interdependence of plants and animals.

We'll study the process of planting and growing fruits and vegetables which will later be harvested for use in our "Kids Love Cooking" classes. Students will also maintain a journal to record their observations and findings throughout the school year, using the **scientific method** they learn in our "**Experiments Galore**" class.

Culinary Arts - “Kid’s Love Cooking” Class

Science and math happen in the kitchen. A fun and interesting way to experience math and science is in the kitchen with hands-on cooking! Our planned curriculum, integrates our "**Science in the Garden**" curriculum and our "**Experiments Galore**" curriculum.

Children learn about the properties of different solids, liquids and gases. Children explore the science of cooking by observing how different foods change with freezing, cooking, boiling, baking, toasting, steaming and so forth.

Students study the metric and decimal systems while reinforcing other math concepts when measuring ingredients used during the cooking process. Your child will learn how to adjust recipe servings by using division and multiplication.

Our cooking curriculum provides an opportunity for students to observe and *verbally* express the qualities of food, including colors and textures. We discuss where the ingredients come from and how they are grown or processed. In this way, new vocabulary is introduced in an interesting and common sense manner. Students will be encouraged to create original recipes for class.

“Experiments Galore”—Hands-On Laboratory Science Fun

Science is a systematic approach to discovering how things in our universe work and how universal laws play a significant role. Students learn to aim for measurable results through testing and analysis with the goal of ruling out alternative explanations rather than proving theories.

Our creative science class introduces students to the study of science and the scientific method with intriguing hands-on science experiments. We incorporate **cooperative learning** by working in teams to engage in investigations and experiments together. Our curriculum emphasizes teamwork and creative problem-solving skills.

Not only are students introduced to basic concepts of science but they are also given a chance to handle scientific equipment and use the appropriate language for such work.

We will cover topics like weather, atmosphere, gravity and states of matter. Students make hypotheses and predictions about what might happen. They then observe, question and record the results in their science journals. Students will be encouraged to create their own experiments for class.

“Mandarin, Arts, Culture”

Our classes are suitable for children who have never been exposed to Mandarin before. They will learn basic strokes of Chinese characters, and will learn basic daily vocabulary such as colors, numbers, animals, weather, etc.

They will practice short sentences and simple dialogues that include greetings, self-introduction, and introduction of family members, etc. They will use fun pictures and physical items, sing songs, play games, and discuss engaging and age-appropriate topics to make class enjoyable and successful. They will learn Chinese nursery rhymes and be exposed to Chinese culture through art and song.

Children will be able to use familiar words to answer simple questions in basic daily topics. They will be able to read and recognize the basic strokes of Chinese characters.

Following basics of the Montessori Method the teacher uses real objects, and will introduce concepts from simple to abstract to retain childrens' interest and satisfy their inquisitive minds to achieve their Chinese language learning goals step by step.

Social/Emotional Development

Working with Children's Social-Emotional Development at School

As described in this Handbook's section on "Supporting Children's Emotional and Social Development," Napa Valley Montessori has developed a distinctive way of looking at and working with conflict in the classroom – one that seeks to uphold the best practices in Montessori education, child psychology, contemporary conflict-resolution studies and education for peace. Our approach to this and all topics related to our work with children is one of action on behalf of the child and the community of children as well as open-ended inquiry and learning. We fully expect our work to continue to evolve. Nevertheless, we wish to describe our current policy and promise to update this description as our school and our understanding evolve.

Our work with children's conflict has always been and will continue to be tailored to the specifics of the situation – hence our historical reluctance to relegate it to the status of a "policy" issue – but it proceeds from the following core principles.

- We aim for the Montessori classroom to be a safe place, both physically and emotionally, for children to explore the limits of their current capacities and knowledge and stretch to new abilities, while refining their social and emotional skills.
- Children's behavior proceeds from positive, universal human needs. The role of the adults in a child's life is to help the child find healthy, age-appropriate, pro-social ways to meet those needs.
- The child's physical, intellectual, social and emotional development proceed together, and solutions to delays, obstacles or complications in any area often involve giving extra support in all or several areas. No single area is more important than the others.
- The Montessori materials for social-emotional development include lessons in grace and courtesy; classroom customs and procedures which illuminate how to balance individual and community needs; collaborative work in groups of mixed gender and age; and the children's many interactions, both joyful and challenging. The social frictions that naturally arise in this very rich environment of interaction are "teaching moments" for the guide to observe and respond with particular support to all involved. Guidance given for values, character, and social-emotional development is woven throughout the curriculum. It is given not in the abstract but in the context of the children's real-life relationships.
- In any situation involving inter-personal conflict, all parties hold part of the solution; focusing on only one party or the other is counterproductive and often harmful to the full development of all parties.

As in all aspects of Montessori education, adults at school and at home are committed to helping children take as much ownership for their social-emotional learning as they are willing and able, observing carefully before intervening and intervening in ways that empower the children to be more self-reliant in future situations.

Any time a child gives or receives aggression perceived by the guide as excessive, whether it be physical or verbal, the guide will respond with changes in the prepared environment, materials, discussion, mediation, problem-solving sessions, relationship coaching and/or natural or logical consequences, as deemed appropriate by the guide, in consultation with the Level Coordinator. The guide will contact parents of the children involved within 24 hours of the incident. Guides will describe what was actually observed or reported, what they expect to see in children in a particular situation, and how they worked with or will work with the children to develop a plan for bringing about positive change. They will confer with the parents on how to support the children at home and throughout subsequent school days.

When a child receives or gives aggression repeatedly (i.e., there is a pattern of such interaction), the guide will get help from the Level Coordinator, and they together will decide when to involve the School Counselor, the Director of Pedagogy, the Director of Admissions or other staff. This group, together with the parents of the children involved, will form a Support Team for the children in question, working together until the negative pattern has been replaced with a neutral or positive pattern and the children have the tools they need to maintain the positive pattern on their own.

If the school concludes that the children and their families need more support than the school can give, the school may require that the family engage outside professionals to work with the child and the Support Team. Depending on the area(s) of development that need support, such professionals could include family counselors, children's counselors, occupational therapists, parenting educators, or academic tutors.

If the family is not willing or able for any reason to engage the needed professionals, it may be necessary that the family withdraw the child from the school.

The school will do its best to insure that all communications from the school in relation to children's conflicts are respectful, professional and offered in the spirit of working together. The school will expect the same from parents. Because solutions to conflictual situations often involve working with several families and the whole community of children, the school needs to know that all parents are modeling for their children respect for and willing cooperation with the school's policies and procedures, the guides, the administration, and the other children and families – both in speech and in actions.

Program Overview

Circle Time and Class Meetings

This group activity includes calling the roll, grace and courtesy lessons, stories, songs, games, or lessons on new activities in the classroom. Children help set the tables for lunch, feed any classroom animals if there are any, water the plants and perform other chores.

Work-Time

Children spend this time working on individual activities for a three hour period at tables or on rugs on the floor. Snack is available from 10:00 AM. Montessori material is available on every shelf for every child. Many activities require a lesson from the teacher before a child can use them. Others, such as puzzles, can be used without a lesson. A child who chooses an activity that is too difficult for him is offered something that better matches his ability.

Outside Play

Discovery area, games, and gardening are example of activities available on the playground.

Lunch Time

The children wash their hands, wait until all seated before beginning, concentrate on manners and pleasant conversations at the table, take a taste of everything, pack up leftovers, throw away trash, and remain seated until everyone is finished and excused. After lunch, children help clean the tables and sweep the floor.

Outside Play

Once children are finished eating they can go outside (weather permitting) to play and enjoy outside activities.

Kindergarten

Children who are five years old by September 30th, and are ready for the kindergarten experience, spend their afternoon continuing to work on the lessons that were begun in the morning; they also have lesson in geography, science, art appreciation, writing and music.

After School Fun

Activities include snack, outside play and an additional short Montessori work period in the classroom.

End of Day

All children should be picked up by **6:00 pm**. LATE FEES will be assessed after 6:00pm.

Daily Schedule

7:30 - 9:00 am	Early morning care starts
9:00 – 9:30 am	Greetings, Circle Time activities to include; morning meeting, sharing time, listening to a short story, attendance activities, classroom leader activities, group lessons
10:00 am	Self serve snack available
9:30 – 11:45am	Great Period - Independent or small group lessons and work cycle
11:45 – 12:00pm	Circle/story/music/yoga
12:00 – 12:30pm	Recess
12:30 - 1:30 pm	Lunch and clean up / quiet reading time
1:30 - 2:30 pm	Afternoon lesson/story-time
2:30 - 3:00 pm	Second recess
3:00 – 3:15 pm	Dismissal for full day
3:15-5:30 pm	<i>After- school enrichment program, student work time and final classroom clean up</i>

The daily after-school enrichment schedule is as follows:

3:15pm - 3:30pm	Snack outside if weather permitting.
3:30pm - 4:00pm	Playground/outdoor or indoor activities
4:00pm - 4:15pm	Group circle for Teacher Presentation (art, science, gardening, cooking, music, etc)
4:15pm -5:15pm	Student work time (art, science, gardening, cooking, music, etc)
5:15pm -5:30pm	Clean -up
6:00pm	Close

**Wednesdays 1:45pm – 6:00 pm*

School Policies – Admission

Enrollment Procedures

Recommended Procedures Prior to Enrollment

Prior to enrollment, all parents are invited to visit and observe the school. After the initial meeting, a date and time is arranged for the parent(s) and child to observe the classroom. At this time, the director conducts an interview with the parent(s). This interview provides an opportunity for the parent(s) to gain valuable information about the school and its philosophies as well as for the Director to gain important information about the child, and their health, disposition, likes and dislikes and emotional disposition. This enables the Head Teacher/Program Coordinator to assess how Napa Valley Montessori can best meet the child's needs.

Enrollment procedures

The Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center accepts children ages 5 to age 12 years regardless of Race, Creed, or Religion. Children are accepted on a first come first serve basis. Enrollment is open to any student provided Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center can meet the needs of that child.

Health Requirements

A certificate of good health is required at the time of admission, signed by a physician. All new students are required to have completed immunizations for Diphtheria, Whooping Cough, Measles, Polio, Hepatitis B, Chicken Pox, and Tuberculin.

The Elementary

Communication

The school strives for effective and efficient communication with its parents. Formal conferences with teachers and parents occur twice a year. Monthly newsletters are sent home via the children. Parent meetings with the teachers can be held throughout the year.

Because the teachers work with the children without a formal break, they are unavailable to meet during teaching hours or answer phone calls. We request that you communicate any pertinent information, concerns, and requests to your child's teacher through a written note or email. The teacher will communicate to parents similarly. When more appropriate, your teacher will telephone a parent.

If a message must get to the teacher before the following day and you have not sent a note, call the school and the message will be taken by the guide by the end of the school day. Emergency calls should be routed through the main office.

Attendance at the Elementary Level

For the children to self-develop and self-educate, they must be present. Be sure your child only misses school when absolutely necessary. At the elementary level, children work collaboratively. They form different work and study groups that change for various projects. Great waves of activity rise up, overtake the children, and then recede.

The guide at the elementary level gives presentations to the children in groups. If a child is absent, he will miss the presentation and be unable to participate with his group. He may feel out of sorts and at odds with the community. Later, when he receives the presentation he missed, the wave of activity for that work may have passed. Now he may have to work alone, unsupported by his best work partners. The guide, the community, and the child will be called upon to make a great effort to overcome the difficulty.

When a child is absent the group is incomplete, and the role played by the absent child leaves a gap. If a child is absent often, the other children may feel they cannot count on that person. They may be inclined to select as work partners other children upon whom they can count to be present. A child who is perceived in this manner may feel disengaged and out of step with his community. Her learning and development can be affected. For this reason, we ask that you avoid absences when at all possible.

Meals:

Students are expected to eat a healthy breakfast containing protein and whole grains before arriving at school.

School snack is provided during work period and after-school (or children must provide their own snack) Foods containing high levels of refined sugar, corn syrup, artificial colors/dyes are discouraged and not recommended. Students are responsible for bringing their own healthy lunches.

Allergies: Parents of students with allergies are required to notify school administration in writing.

Arrival and Departure

The morning work period starts at 8:30 a.m. Teachers and assistants receive children in the classroom from 7:30 a.m. to 8:30 a.m. Please watch your child as she leaves your vehicle and enters the building.

If you are in a carpool, please give a list of its members to the guide. We encourage parents involved in a carpool to meet to establish rules for conduct in cars. We encourage parents to drive their own children to school for the first few days to ease the transition.

The school day ends at 3:00 p.m. for early elementary children and 3:15 p.m. for upper elementary children. A staff member dismisses the children to their parents from 3:00 p.m. to 3:15 p.m. for lower elementary and 3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for upper elementary. If any person other than a parent or designated driver is to pick up a child, you must send written notice to the guide in advance. The notice may apply to a day, week, year, etc. Special after school plans should be made at home and not during the school day or departure. A simple note should be sent to the guide about the special arrangement.

When conversing with your child after departure, let him or her know that you are interested in all aspects of her day, not only school progress. A question such as, “What did you do today?” may imply expectations of an evaluative nature. Also, when your child brings homework, set aside a time to share it when you can focus your attention, exhibit your true interest, and appreciate his or her pleasure. Genuine, specific comments from you, which express neither excessive praise nor negative criticism, are appropriate. Questions you might have regarding the meaning or progress of children’s work should be addressed during a conference with the guide.

Late Arrival

The period of time between 7:30 a.m. and 9:00 a.m. is planned for arrival. The children put away lunch boxes, notebooks and musical instruments. They attend to their morning responsibilities such as checking the calendar, calling time and temperature, watering plants, checking the growth in their garden plots, feeding the animals, sweeping the walks, organizing for field trips, checking roll and so on. They encounter their friends and exchange greeting and updates on their interests and doings. Some children are invited to lessons upon arrival, announcements are made, or a class lesson may begin early. Then they settle into their work.

When children arrive or trickle in late, the flow of events lose essential momentum. The arrival, greeting, and responsibility period for the entire class is extended and disrupts the ideal lead-in to the day. This part of the day becomes extended and fragments the children's attention and creates irritability. It is important they have the clear opportunity to settle into their work with complete focus and minimal distractions.

School Policies - General

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent / teacher conferences typically take place twice a year, in November and in May. If you feel you need to meet with the teacher sooner, please feel free to make an appointment and they will be glad to arrange a time to meet with you.

Parent Participation

We invite parents to participate in their child's education. If you have a special talent you would like to share or would like to volunteer in your child's classroom, please let us know.

Birthdays and Celebrations

Napa Valley Montessori celebrates children's birthdays using the Montessori Model. To help us celebrate, please send a set of photographs that can be shared to show your child's development over the year. Your child may bring in a nutritious snack to share with classmates. Napa Valley Montessori maintains a no sugar policy.

Personal Property

Each child will be assigned a cubby space for their schoolwork and any personal items. We advise that parents encourage their child leave toys at home. Bringing personal play toys from home is strongly discouraged.

Clothing

Montessori is a very sensorial education process. Please ensure that your child is dressed appropriately for art exploration and outdoor play. Also, flip flops and open toed shoes are not allowed, for safety reason. You will be asked to leave a change of clothes at school marked with the child's name.

Sign in and out procedures

Napa Valley Montessori enforces that the child must be signed in or out each time he/she arrives and departs from the center. Licensing mandates that the **FULL name** of the parent or guardian be used when signing the child in and out. Initials will not be accepted.

Authorization to Pick Up

No child will be released to a person not authorized by a parent. Written permission must be given to the school, and identification will be checked upon pick up.

Learning Outside the Classroom

Elementary children regularly pursue their learning outside the classroom. This section contains information about policies and procedures related to Going Out and Field Trips. Other articles in **Section 2** of this handbook address the philosophical and pedagogical rationale for such excursions into the outside world.

A word about terminology: a field trip is usually a trip planned by the guide or the children for the whole class (e.g., Symphony Children's Concert); a Going Out is a trip planned by and for 2-5 students whose studies or responsibilities in the classroom take them out of the classroom (e.g. a trip to the public library or a trip to interview a veterinarian or a trip to buy aquarium plants).

Field Trip Procedures

FOR DRIVERS IN CHARGE OF A SMALL GROUP OF ELEMENTARY-AGE CHILDREN

We gather the drivers for each of the classes into that classroom before going to the cars. The guide reads the procedures to the children and to drivers together, so that the tone is set for everyone, thereby avoiding confusion.

IN TRANSIT

Children must be seat-belted at all times. Lively conversational tones are normal. Please discourage loud, boisterous behavior by engaging children in conversation, telling them a story or having books available. Loud, rousing music ill-prepares the children for the event or for their return to the classroom. Soft, soothing music or story tapes are fine.

Snacks are not permissible. Remember that the children work from 8:15 - 11:15 or 12:00 without a food break.

The guide will have presented etiquette appropriate to the event in advance. The driver is encouraged to ask the children for a review. "What special manners or customs do we need to remember for an expert art exhibit?"

UPON ARRIVAL

After parking the car but before unloading, unbolting or opening any doors, the adult establishes which doors will be used (curb side only) and where the children will stand to wait while the adult locks up, pays the parking attendant, or puts coins in the meter.

The children walk two-by-two beside and behind the adult and never pass each other or the adult. When approaching a parking lot or street, the two children in front stop beside the adult two feet back from the curb and wait to hear when it is safe to cross. The other children stay close behind.

THE DESTINATION

Certain field trips require more supervision than others. Sometimes it will be necessary for the children to stay with the adult driver for the entire outing, other times the class will come together as a unit. Talk to your guide about what kind of help is needed. Help focus the children in the group by directing their attention to the speaker. Ask the guide to assist you if your own child is having a difficult time. Having a parent come on a field trip (or to an event) may be over-stimulating for your child.

When parents accompany children on a field trip where a speaker, guide or docent takes questions from the children, only the children ask the questions. The guide or assistant might ask certain questions on behalf of the children in such a way that the speaker answers to the children.

“Perhaps the children would enjoy hearing why this dinosaur is called triceratops.” “Could you tell the children how you became interested in this subject?” If adults ask their own questions on the adult level the speaker tends to answer to the adults at length and above the children’s heads. The children tend to lose interest and become restless. For the children’s sake, your indulgence is greatly appreciated.

RULES

1. Each passenger will board from the curb side of the vehicle.
2. Each passenger will take a seat and buckle up
3. While the van is in motion, the children will remain seated.
4. No objects may be passed around from person to person.
5. Conversation will be held in soft voices and only with one’s seatmate.
6. No games will be played.
7. No snack/food is to be eaten.
8. Movements will be soft and gentle.
9. All objects (lunch boxes, books, etc.) will be kept away from windows.

Guidelines for Parent Chaperones of “Going Out”

“When a child goes out, it is the world itself that offers itself to him. Let us take the child out to show him real things instead of making objects which represent ideas and closing them in cupboards.”

Maria Montessori

“Going out” is an essential element in the Montessori elementary program and is very different from a traditional field trip. The children “go out” in small groups as an extension of their research and to gain experiences in the world outside the classroom. The children develop independence, resourcefulness, and self-confidence through functioning capably in the larger world without adult assistance.

Ideally the children should “go out” on their own by walking or taking public transportation to their destination, but in our time and place safety dictates the adaptation of adult accompaniment. The role of the adult is an active one because remaining focused and observant while refraining from participating or interfering is so demanding. The adult intervenes on three occasions only:

- to insure the children’s safety by preventing inappropriate adult interaction
- to interrupt unsafe or inappropriate behavior and return the children to school immediately
- to observe, record, and transmit the experience to the guide

Because having his own parent on a trip could be overly stimulating for a child and would not allow him to feel as fully independent and empowered in the group, children “go out” only with parents other than their own.

Parents are required to pass a background check and provide proof of insurance before accompanying students as a Chaperone.

Before Leaving

The children should be prepared to:

- carry all that they need-- notebooks, pencils, sketchpads, money, ID, guidebooks, etc—in a backpack by themselves
- handle all money transactions
- conduct all communications for the group
- know what behavior is expected of them before leaving the classroom
- direct the driver to the destination through a map or written instructions
- stop, look, and listen before crossing at parking lots, driveways, and streets
- stay within sight of the adult at all times

In Transit

Children must be seat-belted at all times. Lively conversational tones are normal. Please discourage loud, boisterous behavior by having appropriate books available. Loud, rousing music ill prepares the children for the event or for their return to the classroom. No music is preferable. If there is any kind of electronic device or media player (TV/VCR, CD, computer, etc.) in the car, it is to be turned off at all times. Also, cell phones are valuable on trips, but should be turned off from departure until the car is parked at the destination.

Upon Arrival

After parking the car but before unloading, unbelted, or opening any doors, the adult listens while the children establish which doors will be used for unloading (curb side only) and where the children will stand to wait while the adult locks up. The children should be prepared to pay the parking attendant or put coins in the meter.

Approaching a parking lot or street, the children stand two feet back from the curb and wait until it is safe to cross. All children should remain close together. The adult stays behind the children, watching that all their behavior is safe and appropriate, that the environment is safe, and that any adult interaction with them is safe and appropriate.

At the Destination

The role of the chaperone at this point is one of active observation and alert self-restraint. The chaperone must remain focused on the children, their safety, and appropriate behavior. It is important to stay ten paces behind the children to help them rely upon their own resources on the trip.

The children should be prepared to pay entrance fees and find their own way using maps, directions, and guidebooks. They should be the ones that seek out the contact person, if there is one, and introduce themselves. They point out the driver who is standing ten paces away and explain that s/he will be there only for safety and transportation. The driver nods and looks away in order to reinforce the children's independence.

Any time the children have questions during the "Going Out," they find adults other than the parent driver to answer them. If the children forget and ask the parent driver a question, s/he turns the other way as a reminder.

The chaperone avoids making eye contact with the adults at the "going out" site. If at any time the contact person or other adult tries to direct his comments toward the chaperone, the children reply that they speak for themselves, the driver doesn't speak. We want to give the children the support they need to conduct the outings entirely through their own efforts.

In the case of unsafe or inappropriate behavior, the adult makes no comment on it, gives no guidance, but only returns immediately to school with the children saying, "I see that we must return to school right now." Guidance is given on campus by the guide, who helps the chaperone and children discuss how to have a successful trip next time.

Rules for Riding in Cars

- Each passenger will board from the curbside of the vehicle only.
- Each passenger will take a seat and buckle up.
- While the vehicle is in motion, the children will remain seated and belted.
- No objects may be passed around from person to person.
- Conversation will be held in soft voices and only with one's seatmate.
- No electronic games will be played.
- No snack/food is to be eaten.
- Movements will be soft and gentle.
- All objects (lunch boxes, books, etc.) and hands will be kept away from windows.

Health Policies

Health Forms

Prior to the first day of class, the office must have your child's completed health form. She will be unable to attend school until the completed health form is received. This is in accordance with the Montessori licensing agency whose representative visits our campus at the beginning of each year to personally check all health records.

To meet the health requirements established by the health and social services organizations, parents are asked to keep the child at home when the child:

- Has a fever
- Is taking antibiotics – and is in the first 48 hours of the course
- Has a heavy nasal discharge
- Has a constant cough
- Is suffering from diarrhea or vomiting

Temperature must be normal for 24 hours before the child returns to school. In case of a communicable disease, the school must be informed immediately.

Children who arrive at school sick will be sent home immediately. Students may return 48 hours after head lice have been detected and treated.

Administration of Medication

If a child needs to have medicine administered at school, a doctor's written authorization is required indicating dosage, frequency, and duration. All Medication needs to be in the original container. Parents must also fill out a Permission slip to allow staff to administer medication. The instructions from the child's authorized representative shall not conflict with the product label directions on the nonprescription medication container(s). Nonprescription medications may be administered without approval or instructions from the child's physician if all of the following conditions are met: (A) Nonprescription medications shall be administered in accordance with the product label directions on the nonprescription medication container(s). (B) For each nonprescription medication, the licensee shall obtain, in writing, approval and instructions from the child's authorized representative for the administration of the medication to the child.

Parents must provide a written permission slip from physician for the administration of Epi-pens, by school staff.

Discipline Policy

Any form of discipline or punishment which violates a child's personal rights shall not be permitted. Corporal punishment of any kind is prohibited; this includes actions like hand slapping and arm squeezing. Parents will be required to sign the *Four Step Hurtful Behavior Policy* during the registration process. When there is a conflict between children or a child's actions are hurtful, Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center will follow the *Four Step Hurtful Behavior Policy* as outlined in the registration packet. If the action does not involve another person, the child's energy will be redirected either to a new activity or a job that coincides with the wrongful act. For example, if the child drew on a desk, he can help clean it. If necessary a "cooling-off" period where "students may need to spend time at the Peace Table is encouraged. At no time will a child be struck or verbally abused. When a discipline situation arises which cannot be solved at school, the Director will set up a conference with the parents to explain what is happening, how it is being handled, and then work together with the parents to solve the problem. If a discipline problem continues or the Director feels that other children in the facility are being put at risk, the child in question will be asked to leave, as stated in the *Four Step Hurtful Behavior Policy*.

School Holidays

Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center is a year round school. We will be closed up to 12 days for the Christmas / New Year Holiday, President's Day, Memorial Day, Independence Day, Labor Day, 2 days at Thanksgiving, Martin Luther King's Birthday, and up to 5 days per year for teacher training. When a holiday lands on the weekend we will try to follow local school or bank closing days. Every three or four years, the school will close up to three extra days for maintenance and repair projects such as paint, carpet, etc... **Monthly tuition rates do not change for months which include closed days due to holidays or maintenance.**

Communication Between Home & School

School Contact Information: Napa Valley Montessori Learning Center
120 W American Canyon Rd M-9
American Canyon, CA 94503
Phone: (707) 647-7178
Website: www.napavalleymontessori.com

Office Hours

The front desk is staffed from 9:30 a.m. until 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday throughout the year. School offices are closed on national holidays, during the weeks of winter break. Office hours may be modified on days when children are not in attendance. **The school year runs year-round from September to August with Summer Camp programs running in July and August.**

Communication from School

Changes to Contact Information

If you have a change of address, email, or phone number, please call or email the office to let us know. It is vital that we have current contact information, especially phone numbers, to be able to reach you if your child is ill.

Contacting Your Child's Teacher

We value frequent, timely, open communication with you about your child. We will use of media to communicate with you, including phone, email, newsletters, written notes, conferences, parent gatherings, etc. Each teacher will let you know how best to contact her or him. Formal individual conferences between guides and parents occur twice a year. Guides or parents may request additional meetings when necessary.

Because the guides work with the children without a formal break, they are unavailable to answer phone calls or speak to you in person during the school day.

Emergency calls should be routed through the main office.

Emergency Procedures

Fire

In case of a fire, the children will meet at the entrance door of the classroom. Fire drills will be practiced monthly at either exit door in case one of the exits is blocked. A safe area away from the building will be designated. Outside in the safe area the children's attendance will be taken and checked against the daily attendance records. Fire alarms and smoke detectors will be tested monthly, and a qualified person will inspect the fire extinguishers yearly.

Earthquake

Earthquake drills will be covered annually. Earthquake drills consist of the “duck and cover” procedure. A designated off site safe zone will be designated at the beginning of each school year and given in writing.

Children will be supervised by a staff member until they can be released to parents or authorized individuals listed on their emergency card. Emergency supplies such as water, food, and first aid equipment is kept in the classroom for such emergencies.

Accidents

If a child is injured and the injury is minor, first aid (clean wound, band aid) will be administered. A daily record of injuries shall be kept in the injury logbook. Records of injuries shall be reviewed by the director with the staff at least twice each year in order to determine that all preventive measures are being taken. There shall be documentation in the log book that reviews have taken place.

In the event of a serious injury or any injury to the head, the parents will be contacted immediately. If the parents cannot be reached, the school will contact the emergency numbers on the emergency forms completed by the parent at the time of enrollment.

In the case of an emergency, the child will be transported to the hospital by ambulance. A teacher will accompany the child. The parents and physicians will be notified immediately.

Transportation

Napa Valley Montessori Learning center does not provide transportation at this time.

Children Learn What They Live

If a child lives with criticism, they learn to condemn.

If a child lives with hostility, they learn to fight.

If children live with fear, they learn to be apprehensive,
if children live with pity, they learn to feel sorry for themselves,

if a child lives with ridicule, he learns to be shy.

But do not despair ...

If a child lives with tolerance, they learn to be patient.

If a child lives with encouragement, they learn confidence.

If a child lives with praise, they learn to appreciate.

If a child lives with fairness, they live with justice.

If a child lives with security, they live to have faith.

If a child lives with approval, they learn to like himself.

If a child lives with acceptance and friendship.

they learn to find love in the world.

— Dorothy Law Nolte