



Grace Montessori School

Parent Handbook

2024-2025

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WELCOME TO GRACE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Vision, Mission and Principles

Our vision is to generate a citizenry of creative thinkers, lifetime learners, and community builders who embrace diversity and are equipped to build a better world. We will do this by providing a safe, secure and stimulating environment, which nurtures the mental, physical and spiritual growth of the child.

Our mission is to nurture children's Spirit and natural love of learning by providing a Montessori program that educates the whole child, fostering cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual growth.

Our Guiding Principles:

- We are a non-profit 501(c) 3 organization of the Episcopal Diocese of Bethlehem licensed by the Pennsylvania Departments of Education and Health and Human Services.
- We invite families of all economic, ethnic, religious, and social backgrounds to be a part of our school.
- We are an inclusive school for toddlers through elementary with full and half-day classes, extended care hours and summer camp programs.
- We are a community of teachers prepared to support each child's learning in a prepared environment and space of beauty.
- We respect children as different from adults and as individuals who differ from each other.
- We encourage parents to participate actively in the education of their children.
- We are committed to the improvement of the lives of people living in Center City Allentown and reserve 30 percent of our enrollment for children coming from economically disadvantaged families to whom we provide scholarships.

Programs we offer

Here at Grace Montessori School, we rejoice in the basic tenet of Dr. Maria Montessori—children want naturally to learn. Children delight in seeing how the world works and in mastering it. Our teachers respect the children's interests and abilities. Free to follow their inner dictates, children acquire an ability to learn that is virtually unlimited.

Our children learn in multi-age classroom settings and explore the prepared environments with the finest Montessori materials designed to be self-teaching and with child-size furnishings. Growing in a safe harbor with Montessori-trained teachers, we

offer the following programs:

- Toddler Program
- Early Childhood or Primary Program
- Elementary Program
- Extended Childcare
- Summer Camp

Montessori Curriculum

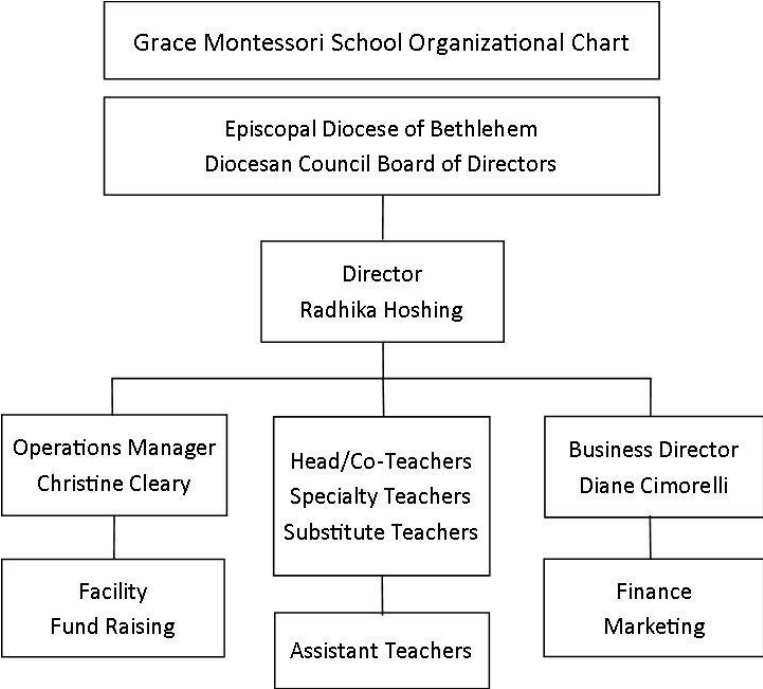
The Montessori environment is carefully prepared and designed to include experiences in the following:

Language	Mathematics
Geography	Science/Biology/Zoology
Gross Motor Development	History
Arts and crafts	

Additionally, our Elementary Program includes Specialty class in the afternoon:

- Art (at the Baum school of Art)
- Yoga
- Science Class (DaVinci Science Center)
- Allentown Library

For more information on GMS Board and GMS curriculum please visit our website www.gracemontessori.org



SCHOOL DAY PROGRAM

Please consult the school calendar available on our website for holidays, start and end dates of the school year.

Hours of Operation

Half Day Program: 8:30 am -12:00 noon (Toddler and Primary)

Full Day Program: 8:30 am - 3:00 pm (Toddler, Primary, Elementary)

Office hours: 9:00 am to 5:00 pm

Regular attendance at school is critically important to our program, arriving on time is respectful to teachers and to classmates. Families who repeatedly arrive late or maintain sporadic attendance will be asked to reconsider their commitment to their child's education at GMS.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Arrival and dismissal routines are an important part of the Montessori experience, for both students and families. We strive to keep the atmosphere within the school and classrooms child-centered. It is specifically for this reason that the arrival and departure procedures are in place. Your ability to drop off and pick up on a timely basis sets a positive example for your child. The following are the guidelines for arrival and dismissal at Grace Montessori School.

Short-term Parking Court Street extension is available for drop off and pick up.

- Please note that the Court Street extension is ONE-WAY traffic heading East (towards 8th Street).
- Short-term parking for drop-off and pick-up only (10 minutes maximum) is available on the NORTH side of the street (adjacent to the playground).
- DO NOT block the center lane (for through traffic) or use the South side of the street. The South side is for DaVinci patrons and their field trip school buses.

Please do NOT stop or park cars on Lumber Street to drop off/pick up students.

Morning Care: 8:00-8:30 Please bring students to the rear entrance (double grey doors inside the stairwell) and ring the bell (bottom button on the keypad). A staff member will meet you at the door. A staff member will then escort your child to the classroom.

Morning Drop Off: 8:30-8:45 Children will be greeted by the teachers at the playground gate adjacent to the Court Street extension short-term parking. If you arrive after 8:45, drop off your child at the office door on the corner of Lumber and Linden Streets. A staff member will meet you at the door.

Half Day Dismissal 11:50-12:00 or Full Day Dismissal 3:00-3:10: Children will be dismissed by the teachers at the playground gate adjacent to the Court Street extension short-term parking. You may be asked to show a picture ID if the teacher does not recognize you.

Afternoon Extended Care: 3:00-5:30: Please ring the bell at the office door (corner of Lumber and Linden Streets). A staff member will greet you.

If someone else will be picking up your child, please inform the office. Others picking up children must show a picture ID.

Our highest priority is the safety of the students entrusted to us for education and care. No child will be dismissed to any person who is not authorized in writing by legal guardians. The only exception is that we do make accommodations for emergency pick up via phone. We will require photo ID of the person you authorize to pick up your child. We will be held blameless for any mishap occurring prior to drop off or after the dismissal of the students into the guardianship of their families.

Late Policy– Morning Drop-off

Except in cases of scheduling conflicts communicated in advance with front office or traffic delays, repeatedly bringing your child to school after the doors close for morning arrival is not acceptable. If repeated lateness occurs, you will be asked to reconsider your commitment.

Late Policy — Dismissal Times

If you are more than 5 minutes late picking up your child after dismissal, you will be subject to a late fee. For a first occurrence, you will be given a courtesy reminder. On the second occurrence, you will be charged \$10, and with the third occurrence and all others thereafter, you will be charged a \$20 fee. If repeated lateness occurs, you will be asked to reconsider your commitment. After multiple occurrences of late pick-up, you will be required to make more realistic arrangements for picking up your child.

Late Policy — Extended Care

For extended care, late will be considered 2 or more minutes beyond the end of your contracted time. If you are later than 2 minutes beyond the time when you are to pickup your child from extended care, you will be charged for an additional 15 minutes of care at the emergency rate of \$11 per hour. One exception: if you are more than 2 minutes beyond the close of business, which is 5:30 pm (during the school year) or 5:00 pm (during camp sessions), you will be charged a late fee of \$25, as no staff are employed to be in the building beyond closing.

Absences

We request a phone call or voice mail to the school office by 8:30 am on any day your child will be late or absent from school or extended care. If a previously scheduled appointment means that your child will be late or must leave early, we request a phone call, voice mail or email with that information to the school office prior to the day of the schedule change. Any absence of 3 days or more jeopardizes social interaction with classmates and Montessori curriculum. Such occurrences on a regular basis may result in student dismissal from GMS. If a child is absent for more than 3 consecutive days in a month without a valid reason from the parent. Parents will be contacted for a parent teacher conference.

Bus Transportation- (Primary and Elementary)

This service is available to students who meet the age requirement for kindergarten in the school district in which they reside. Parents are responsible for contacting the office to request busing to GMS for their children. Parents are responsible AT ALL TIMES for confirming bus schedules and notifying bus drivers/school district transportation personnel of ANY change in schedules. Please notify us in writing or call the office in advance if you change your plans for transportation (i.e., parent pickup for a day).

The school will not assume responsibility of any kind if there is a change in your regular schedule. Please notify your school district when possible, in advance. Remember that in the event of inclement weather, you MUST confirm busing schedules and ensure proper drop off times as it relates to GMS's schedule.

Video/Audio Surveillance on the Bus

The use of a video/audio recording is intended to assist the administration, contractors, and drivers (of the busing company) in observing behavior, preventing violation of bus rules, school rules, regulations, district policies and Pennsylvania law, and utilizing and/or dispensing such surveillance when required for disciplinary, civil and/or criminal matters. Video/Audio recorders may be placed on any and all buses or schools. All students are subject to being videotaped on the school bus or at school at any time. The video/audio media are intended for use with respect to issues relating to safety and behavior on the bus and at school. Video/audio media are not intended for general viewing by a student, employee, parent/guardian, or public and shall not be made available for general viewing purposes.

Transitional Period

For new students, the first 60 days of attendance is a transitional trial period for your child and GMS. You are encouraged to speak regularly and consistently with your child's teacher to discuss how the adjustment process is proceeding. Teachers can often suggest a variety of strategies to maximize success for your child during this time. At any time during the transitional period, either the school or the parent may request a conference to discuss whether GMS can adequately meet the needs of your child. At the discretion of the school, the transitional period may be extended.

Mandated Reporter

According to Pennsylvania law (049Pa code 42.42) suspected child abuse mandated reporter requirements: Licensees who, in the course of the employment, occupation, or practice of their profession, come into contact with children shall report or cause a report to be made to the Department of Public Welfare when they have reasonable cause to suspect on the basis of their professional or other training or experience, that a child coming before them in their professional or official capacity is a victim of child abuse.

Special Education, Psychological, Behavioral, or Medical Screening Referrals

The teachers will observe the students for the first few weeks of school to determine if Montessori classroom is a suitable environment for the student. The teachers will host a parent teacher conference with new families in the third week of September. This time will be used to communicate if Montessori environment can meet the needs of your child/children. If the staff believes that we cannot meet the needs of the students. The parents will be asked to seek other alternatives. If the staff believes that the child can benefit from evaluation while staying in the Montessori environment the teachers will share evaluation information with the family.

Students observed by staff to have possible special education and/or medical needs will be referred for assessment. These written referrals are made to the parents/guardians accompanied by contact information for the appropriate agency/professional. Referrals for special needs may include, but are not limited to behavioral/psychiatric, speech, vision, dental, auditory, developmental, and medical. Once the initial referral to parents is made, parents/guardians have a maximum of 15 days to make appropriate arrangements for the assessment and must tell the administration the details to keep the student's file current and to assure progress. Failure on the part of the parent to follow this policy in a timely manner will result in the student's suspension from school. Assessment results must be shared with the Director, along with any plans for treatment/follow-up services. If the student is qualified for Early Special Education services from the Carbon Lehigh Intermediate Unit/qualified professional/any other agency, the Head Teacher is to be included in any Individual or Family Educational Plan meetings as the child's regular education teacher.

If it is determined through the assessment process that the student will benefit from the special education services and/or devices, the parents/guardians are obligated to pursue these services in order to continue their child's enrollment at GMS. Examples include the necessity of wearing eyeglasses or hearing aids during class, participating in auditory or speech therapy, behavior modification plans, or individualized educational plans (IEP). If parents fail to provide necessary, consistent and effective support for needed special education services/devices in a timely manner, they will be asked to find other placement for their child. GMS believes STRONGLY that early childhood is a crucial developmental time for students in identifying and dealing with special problems to ensure the lifelong success of that child. Neglecting these needs at this age can be irrevocably damaging to the individual. GMS will work as hard as possible to provide an environment for the special needs child that will promote their educational, physical and social growth to the greatest of their potential. Only in situations where there is lack of compliance/cooperation from parents/guardians, where it is evident that the GMS environment is not effective, or in the event of irreconcilable classroom disruption will GMS make alternative placement recommendations or requirements.

Contracts, Suspension, Expulsion

Montessori is not always ideal for students needing small class sizes, intense social skill strategies or behavior management interventions. If GMS feels we cannot meet your child's

needs, we will refund any unused portion of your tuition accordingly except for non-refundable deposit.

No reduction or credit on tuition will be granted if a student is expelled or suspended for misconduct or parent's failure to abide by school policies.

Sample Daily Schedule- Toddler Program

Here is a sample schedule of a typical day in the Toddler program.

- 8:30-8:45 - Regular Drop Off/ Arrival. Children are encouraged to put away their personal belongings.
- 8:45-10:00 - Work Cycle. Children choose their own activities. Presentations/lessons are offered to individual children. During this time children are invited/encouraged to use the potty and/ or diaper change.
- 9:45-10:15 – Wash hands/ Group snack.
- 10:15-10:45- Outdoor time. Gross motor activities.
- 10:45-11:50– Work Cycle/Music and Movements. Children choose their own activities. Presentations/lessons are offered to individual children. During this time children are invited/encouraged to use the potty and/ or diaper change.
- 11:50-12:00- Dismissal of Half-Day Children
- 12:00-12:45 - Wash hands/Lunch. After lunch children are invited/encouraged to use the potty and/or diaper change.
- 12:45-2:30 - Nap time
- 2:30-3:00 - during this time children are invited/encouraged to use the potty and/ or diaper change. Snack if needed.
- 3:00-3:10 - Dismissal

All times and activities are approximate. Diapering and toileting are an on-going process and are done at regular intervals throughout the day. Please dress children in clothing that allows them the highest level of independence they can achieve when dressing and undressing themselves, especially when toilet training. "Onesies" are not recommended nor are belts with buckles. The Montessori teacher has the autonomy to establish a schedule that fits the needs of her students.

Children have a group snack at 10:00am. Parent must send snack from home. The children go out daily, weather permitting. We will take the children out in the winter months with 25 F as our cut off. We do take the wind chill factor into consideration when making our decisions.

Sample Daily Schedule- Primary Program

Here is a sample schedule of a typical day in the Primary program.

- 8:30-8:45 - Regular Drop Off/ Arrival. Children are encouraged to put away their personal belongings.
- 8:45-9:00: Circle Time. Discussions about seasonal topics, calendar, songs, presentations of new materials or activities in the environment.
- 9:00-11:15 - Work Cycle. Children choose their own activities. Presentations/lessons are

offered to individuals or small groups of children depending upon their developmental needs and/or interests.

- 11:15-11:45- Morning outdoor time.
- 11:50-12:00 - Dismissal of Half-Day Children
- 12-12:30 - Lunch
- 12:30-1:15 – Clean Up & Outdoor Play Time
- 1:15-2:30 - Afternoon Work Cycle. Optional nap for children 4 years and under
- 2:30-3:00 - Group Reading/Activities.
- 3:00-3:10 – Dismissal

All times and activities are approximate. The Montessori teacher has the autonomy to establish a schedule that fits the needs of her students.

The children go out daily, weather permitting. We will take the children out in the winter months with 25 F as our cut off. We do take the wind chill factor into consideration when making our decisions.

Sample Daily Schedule- Elementary Program

Here is a sample schedule of a typical day in the Elementary program.

- 8:30-8:45 - Regular Drop Off/ Arrival. Children put away their personal belongings.
- 8:45-9:00 – circle time, daily planning, begin work cycle
- 9:00-12:00 – work cycle continues, formal lessons
- 12:00-12:30 – Lunch
- 12:30-1:15 – Afternoon reading program.
- 1:15-1:45 – Outdoor play time
- 1:45-2:45 – Group reading and Rocket Math
- 2:45-3:00 – Clean up
- 3:00-3:10 – Dismissal

The Afternoon schedule might change based on the afternoon specials.

Monday- Yoga

Tuesday- DaVinci Science center

Wednesday- Baum school of Art

Thursday- Allentown Library

All times and activities are approximate. The Montessori teacher has the autonomy to establish a schedule that fits the needs of her students.

There will be group snack at 10:00 am. Children will bring snack from home.

The children go out daily, weather permitting. We will take the children out in the winter months with 25 F as our cut off. We do take the wind chill factor into consideration when making our decisions.

Clothing, Diaper supplies, Toys and Items from Home- Toddler Program

Children must be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions, i.e. shorts are not appropriate in winter. Children do go outside every day, weather permitting.

Your child may enjoy bringing a pair of slippers for the classroom. We strongly advise that parents not send their children to school with items of value. The school does not take responsibility to find or replace any item which is brought to school and lost or broken.

Diaper/Clothing Supplies

- 2 sets of complete clothing (when toilet training send 4 changes of clothing)
- Wipes
- Diapers

Please label all clothing and personal items, and replenish your child's extra supply of clothes and diapers as needed. Please check with your child's teacher to make sure they have the full amount of supplies needed.

Toys, gum and candy are not allowed in school. If you find any school equipment which has made its way into your home, please return it to us. Montessori materials are expensive, specialized, and take some time to re-order.

Please do not send your child to school with items labeled "keep out of reach of children" in their backpacks, lunchboxes or pockets. Common items that we don't always associate with this warning are ***hand sanitizer, some lip balms and sunscreen.***

Clothing, Toys and Items from Home- Primary and Elementary Program

Children must be dressed appropriately for the weather conditions, i.e. shorts are not appropriate in winter. Children do go outside every day, weather permitting. Remember that school is a place where we use paint, glue, and all sorts of other learning materials that may occasionally spill on your child's clothes.

Children should wear washable, comfortable clothes that encourage self-dressing and allow the child to work freely without concern for his/her clothes. Place names on all clothing labels with an indelible marker. Please provide an extra set of clothing **LABELED WITH YOUR CHILD'S NAME** to be kept at school in case of emergencies. Your child may enjoy bringing a pair of slippers for the classroom. We strongly advise that parents not send their children to school with items of value. The school does not take responsibility to find or replace any item which is brought to school and lost or broken.

Toys, gum and candy are not allowed in school. If you find any school equipment which has made its way into your home, please return it to us. Montessori materials are expensive, specialized, and take some time to re-order.

Please do not send your child to school with items labeled "keep out of reach of children" in their backpacks, lunchboxes or pockets. Common items that we don't always associate with this warning are ***hand sanitizer, some lip balms and sunscreen.***

Special Activities & Field Trips

Special Activities are planned throughout the school year and we schedule at least one field trip per school year. Parents will be given a minimum of two weeks prior notification with details outlining any planned special activity and cost, if applicable. Written notification (permission slips) will be emailed disclosing destination, length of stay, mode of transportation, and cost if applicable. Written parental permission is required for ALL children leaving school to attend field trips whether students are walking or traveling by car.

Field Trip Procedure

- Permission slips need to be signed as soon as possible, otherwise your child will not be able to go on the trip. We reserve the right to deny entrance if we do not receive written consent.
- A parent or responsible adult chaperones are always welcome to assist on our field trips.

CODE OF CONDUCT

The Montessori principle of teaching and modeling respect for self, for others and for the environment gives children opportunities to make appropriate choices in behavior. Routines in school and childcare encourage self-discipline in children and social skills are acquired and developed at GMS. The school philosophy is one of positive reinforcement. We believe that adults should model the behavior they wish children to learn. To ensure that a safe and respectful environment exists, behavioral expectations are high. Abusive, disruptive, hurtful, or destructive behaviors are not acceptable.

Our trained staff will use a variety of developmentally appropriate behavior management techniques to direct/redirect your child in a positive, clear, and relaxed manner. These management techniques, called positive discipline, help children:

- Learn to make good choices
- Learn problem-solving skills
- Learn basic values of respect, trust, responsibility, honesty, and caring for others
- Learn to communicate their needs
- Be encouraged in self-control
- Be enabled in self-discipline

GMS strictly prohibits spanking or any form of corporal punishment, physical or mechanical restraint, the withholding of food or water or any form emotional abuse. At GMS, we use "Peace Corner." During Peace Corner, the child sits quietly to think and returns when they are "ready" to rejoin work/group or when invited back to activities of the classroom or extended care by the teacher.

Parents of children who have difficulty with the Montessori environment will be treated with respect following these procedures:

- Written notice to parents.
- Parent & Staff conference.
- Parents agree to get their child/ren evaluated for mandatory behavioral, psychological, and educational screening or assessment by a qualified professional.

If GMS feels we cannot meet your child's needs, we will refund any unused portion of your tuition accordingly except for non-refundable deposit. No reduction or credit on tuition will be granted if a student is expelled or suspended for misconduct or parent's failure to abide by school policies.

Disrespectful behavior that results in expulsion

- Repeated physical aggression; hitting, kicking, pinching, pushing, biting, poking, etc
- Repeated disruption of school activities.
- Child's behavior prevents the staff's ability to care for the safety & well-being of the individual child or group.
- Disrespect for the school's policies and procedures.
- Damaging or defacing property.

Procedure to communicate with parents/guardian

- Parents will be given written notices (behavior occurrence report).
- After 3 written notices within a month, Parents will receive an email from the teacher to schedule a Parent/teacher meeting.
- Teacher will discuss the concerns with the parents and may suggest behavioral screening if necessary. (If the Montessori environment is not suitable for the child will also be discussed).
- Parents have 15 days to act upon the teacher's requests. If parents do not abide by the procedures the school reserves the right to revoke the child's contract.

Biting/Aggressive Behavior Policy- Toddler and Primary Programs

Not all children bite. Not all children are aggressive. However, these behaviors can be considered a normal developmental stage for children between the ages of 12 and 24 months. Most incidents of biting and aggressive behavior, like scratching or pinching, happen when children are very young and language is emerging. (They are lacking the vocabulary to adequately communicate their wants and needs and become frustrated). This behavior is not normal for children ages 3 and up.

Our teachers try to diffuse potential problems by giving children the language needed when a situation occurs. Yet sometimes, due to illness, fatigue, or temper, a situation may arise quickly. GMS wants this to be a safe place for your child, so the following plan of action has been implemented.

When a bite or severe scratching incident occurs, an occurrence report is written for the aggressor. One copy will go home to the parents; the other original is filed at GMS. An incident report will also be written for the other child involved. A copy will be sent home to the parents; the original will be filed at GMS.

When there are three aggressive or hurtful incidents within a month, the class teacher will hold a meeting with parents to create an action plan. During the next two weeks, the classroom teachers will closely observe and record the child's behavior to help discern if and why the child is being aggressive. If the child is still aggressive during those next two weeks the parents and class teacher will meet with the Director to discuss a further plan of action and to note whether or not it might be necessary to remove the child from the program for the time being until it can be determined whether the situation can be resolved. The plan may include a mandatory behavioral, psychological, and educational screening or assessment by a qualified professional resulting in a plan of action that may require one-on-one support for the child. If the situation is not resolved to the school's satisfaction the child may be suspended or expelled.

BATHROOM POLICIES

Bathroom Policy- Toddler Program

Supervision of Children in Bathrooms

- Children who are able to completely tend to their potty needs independently are allowed and encouraged to do so.
- A teacher will supervise independent children by keeping them in sight and sound distance while they are in the bathroom. For the same reasons the bathroom doors inside the classroom have door stoppers.
- Children that are not yet independent with their potty skills are accompanied by an adult. A teacher will help them as needed and allow for as much independence as possible. Before assisting a child the teacher helping them will notify the surrounding teachers.
- When we are on the playground and a child needs to use the bathroom, a teacher will accompany them inside once they have communicated with their coworker that they will be taking a child inside.

Diapering Procedure

- Prepare diapering area with needed supplies, i.e. wipes, diapers, etc.
- Put on disposable gloves
- Remove clothing and diapers in a way to minimize contact with soiled clothes and diapers.
- Wipe child from front to back with disposable wipes.
- Throw away wipes and disposable diapers into covered hands free receptacle.
- Soiled clothes go into a plastic bag to be sent home to parents.
- Clean area around where child was diapered as needed.

- Remove and dispose of gloves.
- Place clean diaper and clothes on child.
- Help child wash hands.
- Disinfect diapering area.
- Teacher will wash hands with soap and warm water at least 15 seconds.

Diapers are checked and changed mid-morning, before or after lunch and as needed during the morning program. Children staying for the afternoon will also have diapers changed after rest-time and as needed.

Toilet Readiness

In order to transfer your child to our Primary program, your toddler will need to be 36 months old and toilet-trained. Our criteria for toilet trained is defined as follows:

- Child must demonstrate at least one month with no potty accidents while in attendance in our Toddler program.
- Child must be fully able to pull down and pull up their own pants/underpants.
- Child must be able to use the toilet independently (i.e. be able to wipe themselves without assistance).
- Child is able to verbalize the need to go to the bathroom without verbal reminders from teachers.

Bathroom Policy- Primary Program

Children must be fully toilet trained and able to wipe themselves. At no time will the teachers wipe your child, and in the event of a bowel movement accident, the parent will be contacted via phone and asked to come and change or pick up their child. Children will use the bathroom (in their classrooms, one for females, one for males) one at a time and the door will always remain propped open so that the staff can have the child in view at all times for safety reasons. Parents of students having ongoing "accidents" or regression are expected to speak with their child's teacher to develop a management plan. If consistent efforts fail, the child may be asked to leave our program.

If a child has soiled themselves, teachers will encourage children to wipe as much as possible and will have them use a wet flushable wipe. If the child is unable to perform the task, the parent will be called. Once the parent arrives, they will do a thorough wipe of their child. We ask that parents practice with their children at home to maximize success.

FOOD ALLERGY GUIDELINES

Food Allergies are becoming more widespread, and their reactions can be quite serious and, in some cases, life threatening. At GMS, the following policies and procedures have been adapted to best serve the needs of all our students. Our GMS staff strives to provide a safe and healthy

environment for all children. We will follow these guidelines to the extent possible, but we do not guarantee that we can keep our environment completely free of food or other allergens that might cause a severe reaction.

Avoid Nuts:

Some of GMS's children have life-threatening allergies to peanuts, and tree nuts. Even trace amounts of these products can cause a serious, sometimes fatal, reaction. Allergic reactions to nuts are often more severe than allergies to other foods. Due to the particularly dangerous nature of these allergies, GMS requires that you avoid sending in any nut products, including those that contain nuts, nut oil, nut flour, and other nut byproducts of any kind. Please do not bring food with a label indicating that the item "may contain traces of nuts." Try also to select food that has not been processed on equipment that processes nuts food that has not been made in a facility that processes nuts, but these foods are permitted in the classroom".

To abide by these guidelines and ensure the safety of the children, it is the responsibility of all parents to carefully read the ingredient labels and allergen warnings on any foods they bring to the school.

Food Allergy Guidelines

Our GMS staff strives to provide a safe and healthy environment for all children. We will follow these guidelines to the extent possible, but we do not guarantee that we can keep our environment completely free of food or other allergens that might cause a severe reaction.

- All children's allergies that require treatment must be documented by a medical professional, including the symptoms that indicate a reaction is occurring and instructions for administering medication. GMS's Food Allergy Action Plan available in the office must be turned in before the start of school.
- We talk to the children about the importance of keeping the classroom safe and healthy for fellow classmates.
- We encourage frequent hand washing, especially before and after meals.
- We clean the tables and other work surfaces, before school begins, before and after lunch, and at the end of the day.
- We do not permit the sharing of foods in lunches or snacks.
- We post lists of allergies in every classroom. The Teachers and Assistants are required to be familiar with every child's allergies.
- We make every effort to avoid serving foods that contain peanuts or tree nuts or may contain traces of nuts. Foods sent in for lunch that are processed on equipment that also processes peanut or tree nut products are allowed to be served.
- If children have life-threatening allergies to foods; they must provide an acceptable non-perishable snack to be kept at school and served as an alternative, as needed. If their parents request, these children may sit apart from others when eating snack or lunch.
- Every staff member who works in a classroom with a child with severe allergies is required to be trained in the use of an epipen.

- We require that a child not bring foods containing peanut products or tree nuts products, in their lunches. If a staff member discovers such foods in a child's lunch, it will be removed and the parent will be reminded of our guidelines. The child's hands and lunch area will be immediately cleaned.
- While we make every effort to be nut free, it is important to recognize that food prepared in parent homes or restaurants may not be coming from a nut-free environment.
- Our guidelines apply to all functions in the school building in area where children would be present.

Students should bring a water bottle every day. Water bottles should be labelled with your child's name. Other beverages (juice, milk) should be packed in your child's lunch box.

Snacks- Primary Program

Snacks provided in the classroom usually consist of fresh fruit or vegetables, crackers, and water. Children also participate in food preparation activities such as apple cutting, banana slicing and spreading cream cheese on crackers. These exercises are part of the Practical Life area and encourage independence and self-sufficiency.

Snacks- Toddler and Elementary Program

The classroom will not provide snacks for toddler and elementary students. Students should bring snacks every day.

Lunch

Your child should eat breakfast prior to arriving at GMS each morning. If your child will be staying for lunch (full-day student), he/she must bring a lunch to school. Parents may not make a practice of delivering lunch for students after school has begun in the morning. Lunches will not be refrigerated. Please place an ice pack in your child's lunch if needed. Please make sure lunch containers are labeled, compact and easily storable.

Lunch is a quiet and social time when good manners and polite conversation are encouraged. Many children set out their own lunches and all are required to tidy up after eating. Please send a balanced nutritional lunch for your child. For toddlers we recommend that parents send bite size pieces so children can feed themselves with ease.

Birthday Celebrations

It is our custom to celebrate this most important day for your child. Upon coordination with your child's teacher, a child's birthday can be recognized in the classroom.

Please refrain from sending in "treats", "loot-bags" or "goodie bags" for the children. We ask that you notify and make arrangements with your child's teacher at least 72 hours in advance. Once the celebration is complete, we request that you leave the classroom. Please do not linger in the classroom as it can be highly disruptive.

Invitations for birthday parties are extremely disruptive at school. Please, do NOT distribute invitations at school, or ask the teachers to do so on your behalf. Mail your invitations directly to your invitees.

Montessori teachers have the autonomy to establish their classroom birthday celebration policies. Please communicate with your child's teacher to understand the policies of your child's classroom.

HEALTH AND SAFETY POLICIES

The following health guidelines are implemented in the classroom. Specific health concerns should be discussed first with your child's doctor and then with the Director.

The Practice of Universal Precautions

We practice universal health precautions. Body fluids from any person can be infectious, and precautions are practiced with all children. This means wearing disposable gloves when handling blood or body fluids that may contain blood. Toys contaminated by body fluids are cleaned and disinfected.

Conditions Necessitating Absences

Please keep your child home from school if he/she has experienced:

- A contagious disease (not including a common cold)
- A fever of 100 degrees F or higher within the past 24 hours
- Diarrhea and/or vomiting within the past 24 hours
- A rash (until the cause is diagnosed and determined to be non-contagious)
- Draining sores or burns
- Influenza

If your child comes to school with one of these conditions, parents will be required to come pick up their child.

The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that your child stay home from school if he/she has an illness that prevents him/her from comfortably participating in classroom activities or if his/her need for care is greater than the staff can provide. Using these guidelines, you might keep your child home even if he/she is only suffering from a common cold. When making these decisions, please consider the well-being of your child's classmates as well as your own child's health and comfort.

If your child develops a fever of 100 degrees F or higher, is vomiting, or has diarrhea while at school, you will be notified. An early pick-up will be necessary unless the fever develops close to dismissal time or end of extended care time.

PLEASE KEEP THE PHONE NUMBERS WHERE YOU CAN BE REACHED, AND OTHER REQUIRED

DOCUMENTS CURRENT BY CONTACTING THE OFFICE WHEN A CHANGE OCCURS. If a parent cannot be reached, a message will be left at the available numbers, and your emergency contacts will be called. You must provide three emergency contacts.

Health Alerts

If your child is exposed to a communicable disease or condition, please let us know when he/she was exposed. We are required by law to notify the parents of other children in the school; however, we will not disclose the name of your child in the communication.

Some communicable diseases and conditions we should be made aware of include:

- Strep throat
- Chicken pox
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- Ring worm
- Encephalitis
- Roseola
- Hepatitis
- Mumps
- Measles
- Impetigo
- Lice
- Covid-19

Immunization Exemptions

If you have provided signed documentation electing, on religious or medical grounds, to exempt your child from immunization, you must abide by the following regulation. Per the policy of the Allentown Health Bureau, in the case of an outbreak taking place in our school, of a childhood disease for which your child has not been immunized, your child must be kept home from school until the outbreak has ended.

First Aid

Teachers are certified by the American Red Cross for CPR and First Aid. They will administer minor first aid as needed, such as cleaning and bandaging any scrapes or bruises. An incident report will be sent home with your child explaining what happened.

Medications

If your child will be taking medication in school, you must sign a medication form authorizing administration. Teachers are not permitted by law to administer any medication unless this form is completed. Once this form is filled out, the following should occur:

- Medication must be in its original container. If it is a prescription medication, container must include child's name and doctor's prescription and any instructions.
- Be sure to indicate if the medication needs to be refrigerated.
- Be sure to tell the teacher when the last dose was administered and when the next dose

will be needed.

- Children who require on-going medication or who may need to be medicated on an emergency basis must have a medical doctor's written orders on file with the school.
- Depending on the complexity of the procedure, school may require its staff to be trained at the parent's expense by the doctor's written orders.
- Children with food allergies must complete the Food Allergy Action Plan to ensure appropriate treatment is given in the event of a reaction.

Emergencies

In case of a serious medical emergency, the school will contact 911. If it is necessary to go to an emergency room, a staff member will accompany the child. When the child's immediate need has been met, a parent will be contacted. PLEASE KEEP THE PHONE NUMBERS WHERE YOU CAN BE REACHED CURRENT BY CONTACTING THE OFFICE WHEN A CHANGE OCCURS. If a parent cannot be reached, a message will be left at the available numbers, and your emergency contacts will be called. You must provide three emergency contacts.

Emergency Preparedness Plan

This information is to assure you of our concern for the safety and welfare of children attending Grace Montessori School. Our Emergency Plan provides for response to all types of emergencies. Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

Immediate evacuation: Students are evacuated to a safe area on the grounds of the facility in the event of a fire, etc. In case of inclement weather, we may then proceed to Grace Episcopal Church.

In-place sheltering: Sudden occurrences, weather or hazardous materials related, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response.

Evacuation: Total evacuation of the facility may become necessary if there is a danger in the area. In this case, children will be taken to a relocation facility. We currently have 2 available, they are:

- Emergency Relocation Facility A: Grace Episcopal Church.
- Emergency Relocation Facility B: Allentown Public Library

If it ever becomes necessary to relocate, a sign will be posted on the door stating which facility we've gone to (A or B). If you're not sure how to get there, please ask for directions before there is an emergency.

Modified Operation: May include cancellation/postponement or rescheduling of normal activities. These actions are normally taken in case of a winter storm or building problems (such as utility disruptions) that make it unsafe for children but may be necessary in a variety of situations.

Please listen to WFMZ for announcements relating to any of the emergency actions listed above. We ask that you not call during the emergency. This will keep the main telephone line free to make emergency calls and relay information. Your child's Emergency Contact form will be used every time your child is released. Please ensure that only those persons you list on the form attempt to pick up your child.

Emergency circumstances may require changes to your plans, but we urge you not to attempt to make different arrangements if possible. This will only create additional confusion and divert staff from their assigned emergency duties.

OTHER POLICIES

School Closing/Inclement Weather/Delayed Start

We make every effort to contact the following sites by 6:00 am, to announce our closing or late start. We have no control over what time the posting will appear. Please check multiple times prior to leaving for school. If we have posted a late start, we may decide later to close. Please check again prior to leaving for school. If GMS is on a delayed start, there will be no early morning childcare and school will begin at 10:00 am. Drop off at the playground date will be from 10:00-10:15.

WFMZ.com and WFMZ television list our school closings. Parents can sign up at WFMZ to get alerts.

An email will be sent to parents indicating school closure or delayed start.

If inclement weather occurs during the day, we encourage parents to again watch for information from the local media for early dismissal plans. Please make arrangements accordingly.

Late Payment/Returned Checks

A fee of \$10 per month will be assessed for any late payments received after the 10th of the month. A fee of \$25 will be assessed for each check deposited against insufficient funds. If payment is two weeks overdue, a warning will be issued. Accounts more than one month overdue will result in suspension of child until payment is made. Continual late payments will result in dismissal of child. Students with an accounts receivable balance may not begin classes in the fall until the balance is paid. Please contact the office if you anticipate a payment problem.

Tuition refunds or credits will not be made for school closure due to illness (outbreak), weather related or power outage closings.

Re-enrollment

GMS has the right not to extend application for re-enrollment if the school considers child or parent to have failed to abide by the terms and conditions of the tuition contract and the conditions set forth in the Parent Handbook. If a child is ready for our "Kindergarten" program GMS will determine by verifying the child's birthday. A child must be 5 years by September 1st.

If a child does not qualify to be a kindergartener GMS will not allow the child to be a part of the kindergarten program. All kindergarten students attend the full day program.

Withdrawals

If parent withdraws child from school, parent is required to give school written notification and pay the lesser of three additional months beyond the month in which written notice is received (not including the non-refundable deposit) or the tuition due for the remainder of the school year.

Families withdrawing from GMS with the intention of avoiding payment for an extended vacation or other personal reasons will not be re-admitted to GMS, as this behavior undermines the educational process and disturbs the class structure. GMS follows an academic year, September to mid – June.

The following are conditions that will cause School or Extended Care services to be terminated:

- Continual late payments or continual late drop off/pick-up (more than three within a one month period)
- Child behavioral problems deterring successful school experiences. Disrespect of the school or extended care setting, policies, or staff
- Failure on the part of parents to follow school policies or respect staff
- Sporadic attendance
- Consistently arriving late and disturbing the educational process

Evaluation or Referral Paperwork for Other Schools

As per our policy parents are required to give the teachers 15 working days to complete the evaluation and referral paper work. Please submit the paper work at the front desk 15 days prior to the submission date.

Scholarships

- Application forms for scholarship are available in the school office. We must have all financial documents by the announced deadline and prior to awarding scholarship.
- No full scholarships will be awarded. Parents must pay a portion of the tuition.
- No scholarships are available for extended care or summer camp.
- Scholarships are limited and awarded based on financial need and may be withdrawn at any time.

- Families eligible for Child Care Subsidy must first apply for this funding before being considered for scholarship.

The scholarship program at Grace is separately funded and families paying full tuition do not subsidize the scholarship program.

Summer Camp

Our summer program generally runs for 8 weeks. The summer camp is staffed with our Montessori Teachers and/or Assistants. Hours are daily from Monday through Friday. Extended care is available if the demand exists.

Summer camp applications will be accepted in early spring. Applications are distributed to students at the end of March or may be picked up at our school office.

Summer camp is educational and recreational in nature. We retain the Montessori philosophy with an emphasis on a quality educational and recreational experience. Themes vary from session to session.

COMMUNICATION

Communication is the cornerstone of a good relationship between school and home. GMS acknowledges that clear, timely and effective communication between parent, staff and teachers is essential. Parents can call or email to schedule a visit or come to the school any time there is a concern. Staff and teachers return calls as soon as possible. Be aware that teachers and assistants are responsible for children the entire school day. They will return your call at their earliest convenience (typically by the end of each work day). Soliciting staff members for personal contact information is strictly prohibited. Concerns regarding extended care issues should be directed to the Director. We encourage you to communicate regularly with us, so we may work together to best meet the needs of the students. Please pay attention to the papers, notices, and emails you receive. **Please accept the virtual invite from Transparent Classroom to receive these communications.**

School Administrators are available by appointment to answer questions or concerns. We are a school community and value open communication between parents and the school to make our school the best it can be for our children. It is important that the Executive Director/Program Director know of any unresolved issues which are of concern to you.

School News/School Calendar

School news/calendar will be available throughout the year from the school website and/or social media. The school calendar and parent handbook are available for downloading from the school website. You will be asked to acknowledge receipt of both of these publications via email.

Backpacks

Please send your child to school with a backpack on Fridays. Important information and student works will be send home every Friday. It is your responsibility as parents to check your child's backpack every Friday.

Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are an important part of your Montessori experience. They provide an opportunity to learn more about your child and his/her growth.

During the school year there are two mandatory parent/teacher conferences, one in the fall and one in the spring. Parents are responsible for signing up for these conferences at the designated times. At the initial conference, parents and teachers discuss expectations and goals as they relate to the child and the Montessori philosophy. During the second conference the child's progress is evaluated, and new goals can be set. Written descriptions of progress are issued at these times. Parents receive the progress reports in advance of the conferences. Our hope is that you as parents will ask questions and discuss concerns with teachers openly and honestly.

Additional conferences may be requested by either the parent or teacher at any time. Additional conferences will be scheduled at times convenient to both parents and teachers and may address any concern or need not being met during the ongoing day-to-day communications which occur between staff and parents.

Classroom Observations

- We have an "open door" observation policy. As parents you are invited to observe your child. We understand, however, that children need time to feel at home in the classroom. For this reason, we encourage you hold off with your classroom observations until October in order to give our students time to become comfortable in the environment.
- You are welcome to observe after all the children are settled in their classrooms. We welcome observations after 9:15 am. You must notify the office before doing so.
- You will be asked to read the Observation Guidelines before entering your child's classroom.
- Photography is prohibited as is the use of cell phones.
- During the observation period, please jot down any questions or comments you may have and submit to the Director. We will follow up accordingly.

Parent Education

It is vital all our parents familiarize themselves with the Montessori philosophy. We host a parent education morning to explore the philosophy, specific areas of the classroom and Montessori materials. We require, in our contract, all our parents attend.

E-mail

The primary way we provide information and updates is through e-mail. In addition, each class Teacher can be reached via e-mail. Please know that the teacher will respond to you within 1-2 school days. E-mail correspondence is strictly for educational and child-related matters. DO NOT SEND or INCLUDE the teacher on "forwards". Do not solicit staff for their personal e-mail addresses.

Class 1: Ms. Jessie and Ms. Radhika

elem@gracemontessori.org

Class 2: Ms. Leah and Ms. Sabrina

class2@gracemontessori.org

Class 3: Ms. Kelly, Mrs. Attia and Ms. Mamura

class3@gracemontessori.org

Class 4: Ms. Aicha, Ms. Stacie and Ms. Anne

class4@gracemontessori.org

In accordance with the school's Employee Policy Manual, employees may not work outside the parameters of the school for parents, and extended family members, or request or accept transportation from them. The school considers the respect of professional boundaries to be essential, and requests that parents refrain from asking employees to engage in activities, such as those stated above, which are prohibited.

Family involvement

One of the pillars of a Montessori education is an involved family unit. All children benefit when the school and parents work together. Our school's vision is to generate a world of creative thinkers, lifetime learners and community builders who are willing to work with each other and are comfortable with diversity. It also gives needed support to the teachers and administrators to keep tuition affordable for everyone. We want your involvement to fit your schedule, as we know how busy life can be with young children. Each family is required to devote a minimum of ten hours of time, effort, and talent to benefit the school. We want to make your child's and your time here at GMS memorable, and we need you to be involved.

Families are responsible for:

- Participation in orientation, parent conferences, and parent education.
- Participation in the scholarship fundraiser.
- Providing a home environment that supports the development of positive self-esteem, learning attitudes and habits, and social intellectual competence.
- Supporting the smooth operation of the school by fulfillment of parental responsibilities such as timely arrival and departure, prompt tuition payments, adherence to school policies and procedures, keeping informed by reading newsletters and notices.
- Supporting and valuing the school's philosophy and policies through positive interaction including courteous validation and policy through private meeting with the director and/or teaching staff when and if concerns arise.
- Supporting, valuing and protecting each student's personal development during and after classroom observations and participation in school activities.
- Abiding by the Code of Conduct as set forth in our tuition agreement and all policies set forth in this Parent Handbook.

SHAKEN BABY SYNDROME

Shaken Baby Syndrome (Abusive Head Trauma) Prevention Policy- Toddler Program

This policy is designed to prevent the possibility of abusive head trauma during care. Abusive head trauma (also referred to as Shaken Baby Syndrome) occurs in infants and young children, whose neck muscles are not well developed and whose heads are larger relative to their bodies.

As a result, they are especially susceptible to head trauma caused by any type of forceful or sudden shaking, with or without blunt impact. Damage can occur in as little as 5 seconds. Abusive head trauma can occur in children up to 5 years of age; however, infants less than one year are at greater risk of injury. Shaken baby syndrome can lead to serious conditions including:

- Brain damage, problems with memory and attention, cerebral palsy;
- Blindness or hearing loss;
- Intellectual, speech or learning disabilities; and
- Developmental delays.

Signs and Symptoms: The signs and symptoms of shaken baby syndrome or head trauma include:

- Seizures
- Bruises
- Lack of appetite
- Vomiting
- difficulty sucking or swallowing
- Lack of smiling or vocalizing
- Rigidity, inability to lift the head
- Difficulty staying awake, altered consciousness
- Difficulty breathing, blue color due to lack of oxygen
- Unequal pupil size
- inability to focus the eyes or track movement
- Irritability.

Injury Prevention: Infant crying is normal behavior, which improves as a child ages. Caregivers should develop proactive strategies to manage stress levels and appropriate responses to a crying child. This includes being self-aware and noticing when the caregiver may become frustrated or angry. Parents/guardians, caregivers and coworkers should discuss what calming strategies are successful with a particular child at home or in the center.

Emergency Response: If a child presents any of the above symptoms or you suspect a baby has suffered abusive head trauma:

- Call 911.
- Call the parent/guardian.
- Inform your director and regional manager.

Report to the appropriate child protective services agency (or law enforcement, if applicable) within 24 hours or less as required by law. See Child Abuse/Neglect and Mandated Reporting Policy and Procedure for further information. See Medical Emergencies-Calling 911 for additional information.

Policy Created March 29, 2022 Strategies for Caregivers and Parents A child is usually shaken out of frustration, often when the child is persistently crying or irritable. The following strategies may work some of the time; but sometimes nothing will comfort a crying child. A teacher should seek support from a coworker or center management. If a child is inconsolable on a regular basis, the director and regional manager should be notified and determine if the right supports are in place for the child and for staff.

Do:

- Hand the child to another caregiver.
- Place the child somewhere safe in the classroom (or home) and call the office (or a neighbor) for support; take deep breaths and count to 10.
- Check to see if the baby's diaper needs changing.
- Give the baby a bottle. If baby readily takes bottle, feed slowly stopping to burp often.
- Do not force the baby to eat.
- Check for signs of illness and call the parent if you suspect the child is sick.
- Give baby a pacifier.
- Hold the baby close against your body and breathe calmly and slowly.
- Gently rock the baby using slow, rhythmic movements.
- Sing to the baby or play soft, soothing music.
- Use "white noise" or rhythmic sounds that mimic the constant whir of noise in the womb.
- Hold the baby on its side or stomach position to help with digestion. Babies should always be placed on their backs to sleep.
- Take the baby for a walk indoors or outside for a ride in the stroller.
- Be patient: let the baby cry it out if necessary. Never:
 - Shake a child.
 - Drop a child.
 - Throw a child into the air or into a crib, chair, or car seat.
 - Push a child into any object including walls, doors, and furniture.
 - Strike a child's head, directly or indirectly.