



Montessori School of Pensacola Parent Handbook – 2024-2025

The Montessori School of Pensacola strives for academic excellence in a nurturing environment which fosters confidence, independence, and a love for learning.

WELCOME TO MSP!

We are so happy to welcome you (new families as well as all returning families) to this academic year. We are all looking forward to another successful school year for students and teachers alike!

Here at MSP, we all recognize that your involvement in your children's educational experience is critical. You are encouraged to take advantage of the many volunteer opportunities available throughout our school community and to spend time in your child's classroom.

We welcome your comments, concerns, or observations. Feel free to email us or call us. We look forward to seeing you at our many school functions. Follow us on social media (Facebook, Instagram). Look for information from MSP via email, School Cues, and www.montessoripensacola.com.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

I. Welcome Information

Commitment Statement	4
School History	4
Accreditation	4
Montessori Classroom	5
Integrity	5
Portrait of a MSP Graduate	6
Admissions Process	6

II. General Information

Arrival & Dismissal.....	9
Cell Phones/Electronics	9
Visiting the Classroom	9
Confidentiality.....	10

III. Communication

Calendar.....	11
Emails	11
Audio/Visual Recording.....	11
Telephone Calls	11
Website	11
Concerns & Conflict Resolution	12
Conferences	13
Emergency Situations	13
Extended Care	14
Field Trips/Enrichment Visits.....	14
Financial Aid	14
Fund Raising.....	15
Health/Medication	15
Illness Policy.....	16
Library/Media Center	16
Lost & Found.....	17
Lunch Blessing.....	17
Orientation	17
Parent Workshops.....	17
Parent Involvement	18
PTO	18
Sexual Abuse Prevention Policy.....	18
Snacks & Lunches	19
Special Information from Home	20
Supplies.....	21
Tuition & Registration	21

IV. Early Childhood Specific Information (Toddlers, Preschool, Kindergarten)

Attendance / Punctuality.....	23
Bathroom Independence	23
Birthdays	22
Books.....	22
Clothing.....	23
Disciplinary Statement for Early Childhood	24
Separation Guidelines	27
Toys	27

V. Entry/Toddler Specific Information

Pacifiers and 'Lovies'	27
Diapers/ Bathroom Independence	27

VI. Elementary and Middle School Specific Information

Academic Expectations.....	28
Anti-Bullying Policy.....	28
Attendance and Punctuality.....	30
Class Agreement / Class Constitution.....	31
Dress Code Policy.....	31
Homework.....	31
Plagiarism/Cheating	32
Student Discipline Policy	32
Technology Policy.....	32

V. Appendix

Confidentiality Policy.....	33
Continuity of Operations Emergency Plan.....	34
Dress Code (Elem/Middle).....	35
Gun Policy.....	36
Library Policies.....	37
Financial Policy Agreement (see website)	



I. WELCOME INFORMATION

MSP COMMITMENT STATEMENT

MSP is committed to providing a [Montessori education](#) that inspires academic excellence and fosters respect, integrity, independence, and critical thinking in a caring community.

*Forty plus years serving the Greater Gulf Coast educational community is a proud achievement for our school. We asked our staff to help create this new document by providing input. They shared wonderful stories, anecdotes, and personal growth experiences that the management team along with a consultant used to craft our new “commitment statement”.

HISTORY

The Montessori School of Pensacola was founded in 1977. We serve children from 18 months through the 8th grade and have two locations. The school is owned and managed by Mary Gaudet, Administrator; Maria Mitkevicius, Head of Elementary & Middle School; and Kathy Turtle, Early Childhood Program Director. [Click here to read an article](#) with further information about the school’s history.

ACCREDITATION

The Montessori School of Pensacola is the only accredited Montessori school in the Pensacola area. MSP is accredited by [The American Montessori Society](#) (AMS), [AdvancED/Cognia](#), and [National Council for Private School Accreditation](#) (NCPSA).



THE MONTESSORI CLASSROOM

In the Montessori classroom, each child is encouraged to reach their full potential in all areas of life. The specific needs of individual children are met at each developmental level. The classroom contains many multi-sensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials that facilitate learning. Concepts are presented concretely and students work with materials until they are ready to move to abstraction. Children are free to work at their own pace with material they have chosen, either alone or with others. All classrooms have multi-age groupings, which encourages a family-like atmosphere where learning can take place naturally. Our curriculum, which is challenging, interdisciplinary, and real world related, provides a strong academic bridge to high school.

INTEGRITY, RESPECT, AND RESPONSIBILITY

MSP classrooms uphold the values of integrity, respect, and responsibility. The Montessori classroom provides many opportunities at all levels for the development of these universal values. Integrity is trust and honesty. Honesty in personal relationships and academic work is a cornerstone of the classroom. Students are expected to treat themselves, their peers, their teachers, and the materials in the classroom with respect. There are two kinds of responsibility. First, there is personal responsibility for one's own needs in the learning environment such as: time management, getting homework and class work completed in a timely manner, focus, physical organization, and problem solving. Second, there is responsibility for others and contributing to the group. This involves supporting others, working cooperatively, active listening, and self-management in groups. Both are important in establishing a classroom community.

PORTRAIT OF AN MSP GRADUATE

Graduates of Montessori School of Pensacola are:

ACADEMICALLY PREPARED

INTRINSICALLY MOTIVATED

CREATIVE THINKERS

GLOBALLY AWARE

RESPONSIBLE, SERVICE-MINDED CITIZENS

ABLE TO RESOLVE CONFLICT PEACEFULLY

INDEPENDENT, CONFIDENT, AND RESPECTFUL

ADMISSIONS PROCESS

The admissions process is two-fold. It gives the parents an opportunity to learn about the school, its philosophy, and policies. It also gives us the opportunity to assess each child's situation and to determine whether we will meet the child's needs and the expectations of the family. Families who enroll are expected to accept the school's values, goals, and expectations. MSP's non-discrimination policy admits qualified students of any race, color, creed, national, or ethnic origin, to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school.

If you are interested in enrolling your child at MSP, the admissions process starts with viewing videos on MSP's website and looking at schedules and fees. The next step is to click the "Schedule a Tour" button on the website and fill out the form. Once this form has been submitted, someone from the Admissions Office will contact you. You will tour both campuses, observe classrooms in progress (is possible), and spend time with the Admissions Director.

This first observation is for adults only.

Admissions to the school adheres to the following priority basis:

1. Re-enrollment of current students
2. Children of staff
3. Siblings of current students
4. Five-day students
5. Transfers from other Montessori Schools
6. New students

In its effort to create a balanced educational environment true to the philosophy of Dr. Montessori, a relatively even distribution of boys, girls, and ages is important in each three-year developmental group. Each year in January, current students are given an opportunity to re-enroll for the next school year. Remaining spaces are offered to the wait pool after this time, and then are open to the public.

Admissions process for Early Childhood students:

1. After the tour, we can schedule a time to meet with you and your child. During the meeting, your child will have the opportunity to spend time in a classroom.
2. After the meeting, MSP will make a decision regarding acceptance.
3. If your child is accepted, MSP will email parents an Enrollment Contract. A registration fee and application fee are due when you are notified of acceptance in the school. The registration fee confirms your child's place and is non-refundable.
4. If there is no space available and you want to be placed in the waiting pool, you will need to complete and return the application form with the non-refundable \$100 fee.

Criteria for acceptance into a Primary classroom:

- The student's demonstration of the ability and willingness to follow directions.
- The student being well established in bathroom independence.

Process for acceptance of Elementary and Middle School students:

1. We ask that you provide your child's latest school records (report cards and standardized test scores) before you come for a tour.
2. After reviewing the school records, we will schedule a time for your child to shadow in the appropriate classroom. At this time, the \$100 application fee is due.
3. Shadow visits include spending time in the classroom for up to two days. During shadow visits, assessments may be given.
4. After your child shadows, the Head of School will meet with teachers to determine acceptance.
5. Once the admissions decision has been made, parents will be informed.
6. When you are notified of acceptance in the school, the registration fee confirms your child's place and is non-refundable.
7. If there is no space available at this time, you may choose to be placed in the waiting pool.



II. GENERAL PARENT INFORMATION

ARRIVAL AND DISMISSAL

Each classroom has specific arrival and dismissal routines. If you are leaving your vehicle to walk your child into the building, you must park in a designated parking spot. Cars left unattended in non-parking zones create a hazard and an inconvenience for others. Do not leave unattended children in your car. Please be aware of areas that are designated “No Parking” and also of children entering and exiting vehicles.

Children need to be picked up promptly at dismissal time. If you know you will be late (even 10 to 15 minutes late), please call the school. When you are late, please come in to sign your child out. You will be billed in 15-minute increments for Extended Care service.

CELL PHONES (AND OTHER ELECTRONICS)

Students may not have cell phones, iPads, iPods, smart watches, etc. with them while they are at school. Students who carry cell phones or other electronic devices must turn them in when they enter school. These objects will be returned to them at dismissal.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS (VISITING THE CLASSROOM)

MSP proudly has an “Open Door” Policy for parents. Parents are asked to refrain from visiting the classroom for the beginning weeks of school, so that the class can build its sense of community. After that, parents are encouraged to visit as often as they like. Our school welcomes classroom observations by parents, potential parents, and members of the community. Spending time at school is a wonderful way for you to understand what your child is experiencing.

Parents who bring siblings into a classroom when dropping off or picking up need to be mindful of classroom rules. Parents who are coming to observe the classroom and/or work with their child may not bring their other child/ren.

*For the children in the Toddler/Entry Program, it is best to visit them just before you take them home, rather than when you drop them off.

Here are some important guidelines to ensure the smooth operation of the classroom for all the children.

- Remember to use an inside voice.
- Choose any chair and sit during your visit. Feel free to move your chair from place to place. You are also welcome to sit on the floor while your child does work on a rug. (We don't sit on the tables or shelves!)
- Let your child lead. They will show you the things that are important to them. (Frequent visits will give you a good overview.)
- Avoid correcting your child's mistake. Many of Dr. Montessori's materials are self-correcting, which means that a direct correction from an adult is not needed. When you see an error, you are observing what your child is in the process of learning. If you wonder how the Montessori approach would address a particular mistake, discretely show the teacher what you are seeing and watch how she handles it. Never correct another person's child.
- Write down any questions, comments or situations you would like to discuss. A teacher will be glad to schedule a time to talk to you.
- Leave the classroom to talk on your cell phone or with another parent.
- The time you spend in the classroom is a special time for your child to show you the work he/she enjoys. The other children will be told that this is private time for you and your child. This allows you to focus on your child and keeps your visit from disrupting all the other children's day.

CONFIDENTIALITY

Parents are required to sign a confidentiality agreement regarding classroom visits when registering (see Addendum section at end of this handbook).

****There are special opportunities to visit the classroom each year for dads, moms, grandparents, or other representatives. Check the yearly school calendar for specific dates for these exciting events. They are so rewarding!*



III. COMMUNICATION

CALENDAR

You receive our calendar at registration time. The calendar on our school website contains the most up-to-date information.

EMAILS/EDUCATE

MSP communicates regularly through email. Please make sure the school has an updated email address for all parties interested in receiving school news. Let the office know if you are not receiving school emails or are having any other difficulties with our online communication. MSP uses an online communication system, called Educate, for email and texting communication. Parents are expected to sign up for a free Educate account and keep their email addresses and phone numbers with the school up-to-date, so that emails and texts from the school are not missed.

AUDIO/VISUAL RECORDING

Meetings, conferences, or conversations on school campus may not be recorded in any fashion without prior written approval by administration.

TELEPHONE CALLS

Call before or after class time to talk with the teachers unless it is urgent. Someone from the school will get back with you as soon as possible if you call during school hours.

If your child is going to be absent; call before 9:00 a.m or submit a School Cues absence/tardy report. If we have not heard from you, a staff member will be calling you to check on your child.

**Elementary/Middle School students may only use the phone when directed by a teacher.*

WEBSITE/SOCIAL MEDIA

The Montessori School of Pensacola has a website at www.montessoripensacola.com. This website includes a Parent Section where parents are able to view class specific information. A password will be provided to you.

Pictures taken by parents of children other than their own on any Montessori School of Pensacola campus or at any Montessori School of Pensacola function cannot be placed on any Internet site (Facebook, social media sites, etc.) without permission of the parent.

**Middle School also has a classroom website, which is updated often. The website may be accessed through the school website.*

CONCERNS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Personal relationships are often affected because people fail to communicate with one another. If you are having problems or concerns with the school's policies or any school function, it can best be solved by open and prompt discussion. By following the procedure outlined below, you provide the opportunity to resolve misunderstandings.

- Talk with the person.
- Talk with the lead teacher.

If you feel there has been no resolution, arrange a meeting with:

- Kathy Turtle (Early Childhood Program Director) or Alisen Spear (Head of Elementary/Middle).

If you feel that the issue is still not resolved, summarize your concerns in writing and request that the administrative team review the situation.

Please contact the Business Office with any billing questions (businessoffice@montessoripensacola.com or 850-433-4155).

CONFERENCES

Individual conferences are scheduled three times each year. Additional conferences may be scheduled at any time by either the parent or the teachers. All conferences are confidential conversations between you and the teachers.

EMERGENCY SITUATIONS/ANNOUNCEMENTS

During inclement weather or for other emergency messages, check the school website and/or school Facebook and Instagram pages. Texts and emails will also be sent via the Educate communication system. When the public schools in Escambia County close early/cancel after-school activities due to emergency/weather conditions, we will evaluate on a case-by-case basis and may choose to not close school early. are canceled due to emergency conditions, we will do the same. We will follow their decisions for whole day closures.

*Upon registering, you will receive access to our emergency plan letter. In case of natural disasters, or acts beyond the control of MSP, make up days will be scheduled after 5 days of school are cancelled. MSP may close due to any force majeure events, including, but not limited to, any hurricane, fire, earthquake, flooding, act of God, war, governmental action, act of terrorism, epidemic, pandemic, state of emergency, or any other event beyond the school's control.

HURRICANE INFORMATION

We will close when there is a threat of a hurricane approaching, at the same time Escambia County School system closes. We will re-open as soon as we possibly can. This may not be the same time as the public schools. As soon as possible, we will send texts and emails, as well as make website and social media updates.

TORNADO WARNINGS

When a tornado warning is issued for our area, all children are taken to the safest part of the classroom or campus and kept there until the warning has expired.

EXTENDED CARE

There are separate registration forms for Extended Day (any hours outside of the regular school day) and Vacation/Planning weeks. These forms are available online. Students arriving before or staying after school hours must be signed in/out at the actual time they are arriving/leaving, on the classroom clipboard.

If a student is not registered for Extended Care, there is an hourly charge for drop-in, which is billed in ¼ hour increments. You must call ahead of time to assure adequate staffing. Please note: There is a late fee of \$1.00 per minute charged after 5:30 pm. This will be billed through the office.

FIELD TRIPS/ENRICHMENT VISITS

Throughout the year, Primary classrooms and above go on field trips. The younger children take neighborhood walking trips. Kindergarten students and older take bus trips to various locations. In addition, many “Enrichment Visits” (in-house field trips), such as the ballet and opera, occur throughout the year.

TUITION ASSISTANCE

Limited tuition assistance funded by MSP is available for current students, primarily in Kindergarten and up. Applications for the upcoming school year are submitted in January via the TADS link on the MSP website. There are also state-funded options for financial aid available (links found on MSP website).

FUNDRAISING

Our primary source of income is tuition. To help supplement this and keep tuition as low as possible, our Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO) has several fund-raisers during the school year.

PTO sponsors a Minithon, a Fall Festival, and a Spring Gala. Visit the “Activities” link on the school website for more information.



Participation in any fund-raising event is strictly voluntary.

HEALTH/MEDICATION

All children must have an up-to-date shot record and a completed health form on file **before the first day of school**. Some children at MSP may not have current immunizations due to Florida state law allowing for medical and/or religious exemptions.

We are all concerned about our children's health and do not want to unnecessarily expose healthy children to germs. Do not send your child to school when any of the following symptoms have occurred within the past **24 hours**:

1. Fever
2. Persistent cough
3. Active cold (discharge of heavy, discolored or profuse amount of mucous from the nose)
4. Diarrhea
5. Vomiting
6. Sore throat
7. Red or discharging eye (conjunctivitis)

Illness Policy: Your child must be symptom-free without medication for 24 hours before returning to school. MSP has this policy to help ensure the health and well-being of every child in the class. If you are not sure whether your child is able to return to class, call and we will help you determine the appropriate return day. Please call the school, or submit School Cues tardy/absence report, by 9 a.m. when your child is ill. If your child becomes sick at school, we will call you. ***Please note that during times of an epidemic, the health department mandates a requirement of 48 hours symptom free, without medication, before returning to school. You will be informed if this situation occurs.*

MEDICATION

***Medication is not administered in the Early Childhood classes.**



When it is necessary for an Elementary/Middle student to take medication during the school hours, state law mandates the following:

1. There is a document at the physician's office which must be filled out and brought to the school that indicates the method, amount and schedule for giving the medication, whether **prescription or over the counter**. We cannot accept prescriptions that say "as needed" as we cannot be responsible for diagnosis. The prescription should say time, dosage, and route.
2. There must be a written statement from the parent/guardian asking the school to give the medicine.
3. All prescription medicine must have been prescribed for the child, with their name on the original bottle.
4. The parent must give all medication to the teacher. **Do not put medicine in the lunch box.** Students are not allowed to keep ANY medication.

Any other medication **including over-the-counter medication** must also include a **doctor's prescription/form**.

Early Childhood will administer Chap Stick, hand lotion, or diaper rash cream provided by a parent, with a signed parent school medication form. We will also re-apply parent-provided sunscreen to the children who stay beyond 2:30 pm when warranted. The product must be no-rub, spray on products and a signed school medication form is required. **Parents apply products (such as bug spray and sunscreen) before their child(ren) comes to the school, as they see fit.**

Elementary/Middle students may apply their own Chap Stick, as needed. They may also have their own cough drops. *Please refer to the parent section of our website for the forms needed for Elementary-Middle.

LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER

We have a Library/Media Center on our Montessori Drive Campus. There is a Parent Resource Library there. This library provides parents with a variety of reading material on education and child development. Every student in the school (regardless of which campus they attend) may check out books. Lost books must be paid for or a replacement copy must be purchased.

LOST AND FOUND

Children often leave clothing and other items at school. Please check our lost and found box periodically. All items not claimed by the end of the year will be donated to charity. Please use a permanent marker to label **all** your child's belongings.

LUNCH BLESSING

We are not affiliated with any church. Students do, however, have the opportunity to say a daily blessing before lunch.

ORIENTATION

There is an orientation meeting for parents at the beginning of each school year. We explain you're the school day, go over the highlights of the curriculum, and answer any questions you may have. The first week of school is orientation week. In Toddler/Entry, your child will attend every day regardless of their regular schedule for one hour. Three and four-year-olds will stay for 1 ½ hours each day. Kindergartners will stay for 3 ½ hours during this week. Elementary and Middle School have half days for this week. In Early Childhood classes, regardless of when you enroll, the first week of school is your child's orientation week.

***Toddler/Entry:** Upon initial enrollment in Toddler/Entry classes, an adult is expected to stay with the child the first week of school. The amount of time needed varies from child to child. We will give you a place to sit and will ask you to stay there quietly the entire time. During this time, your child will venture away from you and begin bonding with his new teachers and adjusting to the classroom.

PARENT INVOLVEMENT

Parent involvement and participation are important at our school. There are many areas where you can help. Our volunteer program is designed to use your talents and to help defray costs. It will also help you become familiar with your child's routine at school and give you a chance to meet their classmates. We welcome your participation and ask that you fill out the parent involvement form. **We offer a tuition credit based on the number of hours you volunteer.**

PARENT WORKSHOPS

Meetings are held throughout the year on various topics of interest. Some of the topics we cover are: Montessori in the Home, How Children Learn, Discipline, Internet Safety, and Open Forums. We offer Saturday morning overviews to present the Montessori approach to Math, Language, Cultural, and Montessori philosophy and materials from Early Childhood through Middle School. We are always looking for new ideas and speakers. We welcome and appreciate your suggestions.

PTO

MSP has an active PTO (Parent Teacher Organization). Parents serve on a non-profit volunteer board for the PTO. Every parent of an enrolled student is an automatic member of the PTO. The function of the PTO is to enhance and support the education of our students. PTO sponsors a **Fall Festival, Minithons, and a spring Gala** (*see activity section of website for further information – www.montessoripensacola.com*).

CHILD ABUSE & NEGLECT POLICY AND PREVENTION

All staff have criminal background checks, personal interviews, and professional/personal recommendations. Our staff is trained to recognize and react responsibly to child abuse. Our staff is aware of the mandatory reporting of any suspected abuse or neglect, sexual or otherwise.

SNACKS AND LUNCHES



We have observed a direct correlation between some children's ability to learn, their mood (aggressiveness, distractibility, etc.), and what they do or do not have to eat. As educators, we want to ensure each student has every opportunity to gain positively from our enriched learning environment.

A good, balanced diet can have a marked effect on a child's social and emotional behavior and can affect the child's intellectual abilities. Learning what to eat and why is an essential part of a child's education. We need your cooperation in providing healthy, nutritious foods for snacks and lunches.

Both campuses offer pizza as an option for lunch on Wednesdays.

In order for your child to be as independent as possible, please look for containers and lunch boxes that they can open.

We are unable to provide refrigeration or heating of food. Use ice packs for perishables.

**Middle School students are allowed to use the refrigerator and microwave.*

Early Childhood:

For lunch, send wholesome foods for your child. Do not send desserts, cookies, muffins, Jello, granola or Nutri-grain type bars, etc., or foods with added sugar or artificial sweeteners. Do not send the foods listed below that present choking hazards. Send only 100% juice, water, or white milk.

Each day the children are provided with a nutritious morning snack. The parents provide the daily snack on a rotation basis. These snacks consist of fresh fruits and fresh vegetables.

***To minimize the risk of choking**, the American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that the following foods should not be served to children under four years of age: hot dogs (unless sliced lengthwise, then across), nuts (especially peanuts), round, hard candies, grapes, (unless sliced lengthwise), spoonfuls of peanut butter, whole raw carrots (unless sliced lengthwise), cherries with pits, raw celery (unless sliced in 1 inch lengths), and popcorn. We will refrain from serving these foods at snack time and ask that children under 4 do not pack these hazards



in their lunchboxes. We will be able to serve carrots and grapes if you have already sliced them so they are no longer round.

Elementary and Middle School:

For lunch, send wholesome foods for your child. **Do not send desserts, cookies, cakes/cupcakes, Jello, etc.** Send only 100% juice, water, or white milk. If your child must drink something else, please talk to a teacher before sending any other drink.

For Extended Care students:

The children in the Toddler/Entry classrooms are served snack from the morning group snack. The children in Primary classrooms and above need to pack an additional snack in their lunchbox.

PLEASE NOTE: For Primary classrooms and older: If and when a life-threatening allergy to a food (such as peanut butter, eggs) is established by a doctor, we will inform the classroom families about the steps to keep the child/children safe. At certain times, we have found it necessary to eliminate a particular food from the classroom.

For the Toddler/Entry classrooms: We will ban the particular food from coming into the classroom.

SPECIAL INFORMATION FROM HOME

Any change at home that may affect your child's behavior, security, or general well-being should be conveyed to the teacher. All information will be regarded as confidential. The staff will also keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment that may affect your child.

SUPPLIES



Families are asked to purchase certain supplies each year for the classroom. Current year supply lists are located in the parent-protected area of the MSP website (www.montessoripensacola.com).

TUITION AND REGISTRATION

Tuition may be paid annually or monthly. Payments may be made through ACH (automatic) Debit, credit card, check, or cash. Tuition payments are due on the first of each month. Families have until the 5th of the month to pay without penalty. A late fee will be assessed on the 6th day of the month. If full payment (*including late charge*) is not received by month's end, parents will be advised that their child may not return to school until the outstanding balance is received.

TUITION ASSISTANCE: Limited tuition assistance funded by MSP is available for current students, primarily in Kindergarten and up. Applications for the upcoming school year are submitted in January via the TADS link on the MSP website. There are also state-funded options for financial aid available (links found on MSP website).

Full financial policies are available [here](#).

Registration is open to current students, their siblings, and wait pool families before it opens to the public in February. While we will maintain qualified teachers, no guarantee is made that the same teachers will be continuous throughout the year or for subsequent school years.



IV. EARLY CHILDHOOD

SPECIFIC INFORMATION

(TODDLER/ENTRY, PRESCHOOL, KINDERGARTEN)

ATTENDANCE / PUNCTUALITY

Being on time to school is essential. Kindergarten begins at 8:00 am at both 12th Avenue and at Montessori Drive. Students who are late miss valuable class time. Make every effort to get your child to school on time. Regular attendance is important for your child's success and progress. **Avoid unnecessary absences.**

BATHROOM INDEPENDENCE

In order to be enrolled in our Primary classes, your child needs to be fully established in their bathroom independence **(In other words, they need to be fully toilet trained.)** Of course, any child may have an accident and we are happy to assist them in changing his clothes. For this reason, send a labeled, complete change of clothing in a labeled Ziploc® bag. This bag stays at school.

BIRTHDAYS

We enjoy celebrating your child's birthday at school. We gather at group time and tell their life story as they hold a globe and "orbit the sun". **Please fill out your child's timeline form.** (Their "life story" information comes from the parent-completed Timeline form). You are welcome to join us at this ceremony. We are unable to accommodate party type activities. Party invitations may be given out at school only if the entire class is invited.

BOOKS

Young children are learning about what the world is really like. For this reason, in the Early Childhood Program, we only read books about real things, (for example: books about real bears vs. talking bears.)



CLOTHING

Send **two complete changes of clothing** (including underwear, and socks) to stay at school. **These sets of clothing MUST be labeled.** In addition, label jackets, sweaters, coats, socks, etc.

It is important that the clothes your child wears to school are comfortable and easy to get in and out of. Children cannot care for themselves when they wear clothes that require adult help. Snap-crotched garments, overalls, belts, and lace-up shoes all require an adult's assistance. These items take away from the excitement and pride children feel when they do for themselves. Also, in order to minimize distractions in the classroom, we ask that you *limit cartoon characters and super-heroes from clothing as much as possible.* For safety reasons, cowboy boots may not be worn to school. Rain boots may be worn to school, but then regular shoes will be worn on the playground. Flip-flops, clogs and shoes with similar design may be worn to school provided they are not a hindrance in the classroom. However, in order to play on the playground, shoes must have backs, be snug fitting and have no 'high' heel.

**For Primary classrooms, please provide a pair of clean, comfortable, and easy to put on/take off shoes that will be kept at school for indoor use.*

DISCIPLINARY STATEMENT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD

One goal our school has for the children is to be self-disciplined. There is a wide span within the range of “normal” for the development of self-discipline. To encourage self-monitoring of behavior by our students, we control the environment instead of the child as much as possible. We want it to be easy for children to behave appropriately. **Appropriate behavior is taught when children are NOT in a stressful situation.** Children who are out of control will stay with a teacher or sit away from the other children until they can control themselves. Whenever possible, children are allowed to experience the logical consequences of their actions. For example, when you throw a puzzle, you pick it up and then find other work that can be handled more appropriately.

We use peer problem solving whenever possible when children have disagreements.

In keeping with Maria Montessori's philosophy, we redirect the following behavior patterns:

- Unbecoming behavior (i.e. nose-picking)
- Behavior destructive to the environment (i.e. throwing work)
- Behavior destructive to others or their work (i.e. disturbing another's work)
- Unproductive behavior (i.e. walking aimlessly through the room)

Children can learn by role-playing acceptable alternatives to these behaviors. These lessons are given individually, at group time, and throughout the year as needed.

In the event that a child is unable or unwilling to follow the classrooms rules in a consistent manner, a parent teacher conference will be called. Before this conference, the teachers will have already used appropriate strategies to help the child. When these strategies yield no results, the teachers will schedule a conference with the parents. A plan will be made that involves all parties. If the teachers and the Early Childhood Program Director (ECPD) feel that outside resources are needed, the parents are expected to fully cooperate. Another conference with the ECPD may be called. If, in spite of all these efforts, the teachers/ECPD determine that the situation has not improved, enrollment may be terminated.

Children may be required to sit at a table by themselves and work will be provided for them or they may be required to stand with a teacher. They will lose their freedom of movement for a period of time based on their development. This could range from a short amount of time to an entire work period. If a child's behavior (*for example: temper tantrum*) is disruptive to the classroom, the child will be taken out of the classroom until they calm down. When necessary, someone will need to pick up the child. Parents will be notified of these situations either by phone call and/or incident report. Physical punishment is not used for any reason.

Parents may be called when more serious situations such as biting, hitting, or scratching occur.

In a serious situation, the following steps are followed:

1. Check that everyone is safe.
2. Remove those not involved.
3. Describe what is happening in a non-judgmental way.

4. State the appropriate ground rule.
5. Separate the child from the situation as gently as possible.
6. Preserve self-dignity.

When aggressive behavior occurs suddenly/unexpectedly, we immediately call a conference, which most often includes the ECPD, in order to make an action plan.

Child Discipline Policy (DCF requirement consistent with section 402.305 (12)):

The child care facility shall adopt a discipline policy including standards that prohibit children from being subjected to discipline which is severe, humiliating, frightening, or associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited.

Toddler/Entry Disciplinary Statement:

Aggressiveness/Biting:

Not all children bite, nor are all children aggressive. However, these behaviors can be considered a normal developmental stage for children between the ages of 12 and 30 months.

Most incidents of biting and aggressive behavior, like scratching or pinching, happen when children are very young and their language skills are still emerging. They lack the vocabulary to adequately communicate their wants and needs and become frustrated. Children at this age can also lack impulse control, which can further complicate behavior.

Teachers try to diffuse potential problems by giving children the language needed when a situation occurs. Even so, sometimes, due to teething, illness, fatigue, or temper, a situation may arise quickly. The MSP teaching team wants this to be a safe place for all children, so the following plan of action has been implemented.

When a biting or severe scratching incident occurs, an Injury/Incident Report is written for the children; the child who acted out and the child who was harmed. One copy is sent home to the parents and copies are kept on file at school. When two biting or severe scratching incidents happen in one day, the parents will be called to take the child home. In this case, there may be a reason the child is acting aggressively, such as illness or fatigue, and going home may be all that is needed to break the cycle.

When there are two aggressive incidents within one week, the teachers, after consultation with the ECPD, will meet with the parents and ECPD to create an action plan. If after instituting the action plan, the child's behavior persists for more than a two-week period, the school will consider appropriate actions to resolve the situation that can include but are not limited to:

- Additional Parent Meetings with the teachers and ECPD
- Requiring a Consultation with a child psychologist or outside expert
- Removal of the child from the classroom on a temporary or permanent basis

Suggested readings: *Getting it Right with Children by Madelyn Swift*
 The Secret of Childhood by Maria Montessori

How to Really Love Your Child *by Campbell*

How to Talk so Kids Will Listen, How to Listen so Kids Will Talk *by Faber and Mazlish*

SEPARATION GUIDELINES

When children first come into a new environment, they need sufficient time to adjust. Parents play an integral part of this adjustment. **Our guidelines are custom tailored to each child's individual needs.** A parent or significant person must stay in the Toddler/Entry classrooms with the child until the child is ready to be left. This period could last from a day to a week or longer. If your child has enrolled for less than a 5 day-week, he/she will come every day until this adjustment has been successfully completed.

TOYS

Students should leave toys at home. Toys and other personal items distract children from their school environment and may become lost or broken.

Sometimes classroom items are inadvertently taken home—many of these are very valuable to the classroom. Please have your child return them.

V. TODDLER/ENTRY SPECIFIC INFORMATION

PACIFIERS AND 'LOVIES'

We encourage parents to leave items at home or in the car. If it is necessary for them to come into the classroom, one special place will be provided for their use. Our goal will be that these items be kept in your child's cubby and used only at naptime.

DIAPERS/BATHROOM INDEPENDENCE

We want children involved as much as possible with the transition from diapers to toilet use. Diaper changing occurs standing up. This allows the child to help the teacher and gives the child the beginnings of independent toileting. When the time comes to begin toilet training, it



is very important that all adults involved cooperate and work together for the benefit of your child.

We do not use pull-ups or “sippy” cups in our environment.

In order to transition to a Primary classroom, your child must be well established in their bathroom independence (using the toilet on their own).

NAPPING

In order to be at school until 2:30 or 5:30pm, the Toddler/Entry child must be quiet and peaceful during naptime, in the event that they are no longer napping.

VI. ELEMENTARY & MIDDLE SCHOOL SPECIFIC INFORMATION

ACADEMIC EXPECTATIONS

In most cases, we require that students complete their coursework with 80% mastery. Typically, work must be corrected to 100% accuracy.

ANTI-BULLYING POLICY

At the Montessori School of Pensacola, we believe that every child has the right to an educational environment that is safe. Bullying is not tolerated; we educate our staff and students about bullying. We monitor the behavior of our staff and students to ensure that bullying is not allowed to occur and we take swift action when we observe or are notified of such behavior.

Definition of Bullying: MSP defines bullying as a series of repeated intentionally cruel incidents, involving the same children. Bullying is a willful, conscious desire to hurt, frighten, or threaten. Bullying is ongoing in nature. It can be physical and/or verbal and includes racial, religious, or sexual harassment, offensive gestures, inappropriate touching, intimidation,



extortion, and/or social exclusion. It is behavior that is designed to hurt, injure, embarrass, upset, or discomfort the other person.

For Non-Violent Behaviors

Step 1: Student – Teacher Conference

- Documentation (concern form)
- Consequences established up to and including removal from the classroom.

Step 2: Student – Teacher - Head of School Conference

- Documentation (concern slip)
- Additional consequences established

Step 3: Family Conference with teachers

- Action plan established (long form); additional consequences established.

Step 4: Family Conference with teachers and Head of School

- Action plan reviewed; alternate strategies/consequences planned;
- Follow-up meeting scheduled.

Step 5: Second Family Conference with teachers and Head of School

- Student is placed on probation. Action plan reviewed; additional strategies/consequences planned. Timeframe established for resolution of issue(s). Student/family are notified that dismissal is the next step.

Step 6: Family Conference with Head of School to terminate enrollment when sufficient progress has not been made in resolving issue.

For Violent Behaviors

Step 1: Student is placed on in-school suspension for at least the remainder of the school day. Family conference with teachers must be held before the student can return to the classroom. Documentation (long form) may include additional consequences and plan to avoid reoccurrence.

Step 2: Student is sent home for minimum of the remainder of the school day or longer.

A family conference with the teachers and Head of School must be held before the student can return to school. A second plan is made to help avoid reoccurrence. Documentation (long form) will include additional consequences.

Step 3: Student is placed on probation and is sent home for the remainder of the school day or longer. A family conference with the teachers and Head of School must be held before the student can return to school. A third and final plan is made to help avoid reoccurrence. Documentation (long form) will include additional consequences.

Step 4: Student is expelled.

ATTENDANCE AND PUNCTUALITY

Regular attendance is important for a child's success and progress and being on time to school is essential. Students who are late must receive a tardy slip. *Please make every effort to get your child to school on time.* A student who misses two or more hours of a school day will be considered absent. When students are out of school, they miss important group lessons, some of which cannot be duplicated. Some lessons can be made up, at the teacher's convenience. Students are expected to take responsibility for the work/lessons missed. **When a student is absent for scheduled tests, the missed test(s) will be administered when the student returns to school. Students who miss 20 or more school days (AN EQUIVALENT OF 4 WEEKS OF SCHOOL) must attend a week of summer school (additional fee required) in order to receive credit for the school year.**

Note: 5 tardies equal one absence.

Saturday School is held several times a year for Upper Elementary and Middle School based on academic needs and with an additional cost.

CLASS AGREEMENT / CLASS CONSTITUTION

For optimal learning to occur, the classroom atmosphere must be physically and psychologically safe. During the first weeks of school, students and teachers develop a mutually acceptable set of guidelines that will maintain an environment which provides for the needs of all. This enables the students to take ownership of the classroom rules.

DRESS CODE POLICY

The dress code policy is on the school website. Student dress and personal grooming are primarily the responsibility of the student and parents.

Students are expected to come to school clean, neat, and appropriately attired. Students whose personal attire or grooming distracts other students or teachers or is a hazard to themselves or to others in the course of school activities must make necessary alterations. Our intentions are to create and foster a safe, orderly, academic setting in which students are not distracted in their educational endeavors. Parental support is vital to achieving this goal.

***See the Dress Code in the appendix for full details.**

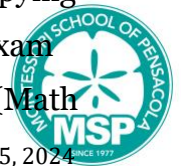
***Teachers will determine when attire is unacceptable-all decisions are final.**

HOMEWORK

Lower Elementary students typically have approximately 15 minutes of homework every night. **Upper Elementary** students have about 45 minutes of homework each night. Additionally, we ask all students to spend 30 minutes reading a book of their choice daily. **Middle School** students typically have between 60-90 minutes of homework each night.

PLAGIARISM/CHEATING

Cheating, plagiarism, and inappropriate collaboration are examples of a breach in integrity. The school will exercise professional judgment in determining consequences (up to and including expulsion) for such actions. **Cheating includes, but is not limited to**, copying another person's work and representing it as your own, use of notes on a test, getting exam questions from an earlier test taker, or deliberately marking wrong answers as correct (Math



homework). Plagiarism is when an individual uses another person's ideas, expressions, or writing as if it were his or her own.

STUDENT DISCIPLINE POLICY

We set high but realistic standards in this area. It is our policy to expect and foster a sense of self-discipline and appropriate conduct. When a student fails to maintain the necessary standards of conduct, **disciplinary measures shall be taken. Disciplinary action is never corporal in nature. Every effort is made to apply logical and natural consequences when disciplinary problems arise.** Examples of conduct for which disciplinary action will be taken include intentional and repeated disruptive behavior, disrespect, defacing or damaging property, failure to complete assignments, and other inappropriate conduct. In the event of chronic or major discipline problems, we use a cooperative plan of action that requires parental support.

TECHNOLOGY POLICY

Technology at the Montessori School of Pensacola supports and enhances the work of faculty, students, and staff. Every student, faculty, and staff member will have access to the technology essential to fulfilling assignments and job responsibilities:

- a) Internet access
- b) Email account
- c) Assigned storage space for documents and other files
- d) Access to instructional software

Access to technology at the Montessori School of Pensacola is a privilege. **The computers may only be used for academic purposes.**

Although the School employs web filtering and anti-SPAM software to block harmful content from the Internet, these methods do not provide a foolproof means for preventing absolutely all harmful content from being accessed through the system.

Any violation of the School's technology policy will result in disciplinary action, from removal of technology privileges up to and including suspension or expulsion from school. The user is



responsible for any damages or impact on job or academic performance resulting from the inability to use the system appropriately.

Upper Elementary and Middle School students sign a yearly technology usage agreement.

Appendix:

CONFIDENTIALITY AGREEMENT

At MSP we respect the privacy of our children, families, and staff.

All information concerning children, families or teachers must be kept totally confidential. When you visit any MSP school campus (as a parent, grandparent, volunteer, observer, etc.), you may overhear or observe sensitive, confidential information. By signing below, you agree to keep any and all information relating to children, families, or teachers confidential.

You further agree to report any pertinent information or concerns to administration. Additionally, you may not take photographs of children, other than your own, without permission. *This does not apply to school events.

Meetings, conferences, or conversations on school campus may not be recorded in any fashion without express prior written approval by administration.



COOP (CONTINUITY OF OPERATIONS): MSP Emergency Policies

In accordance with Early Learning Coalition requirements, these policies inform you of what our plans are in case of emergencies.

Depending on the circumstance of the emergency, we will use one of the following protective actions:

*Immediate evacuation: Children are evacuated to a safe area on the school grounds in the event of a fire, etc.

*In-place shelter: Sudden occurrences, such as weather or hazardous materials being present, may dictate that taking cover inside the building is the best immediate response. On Montessori Drive, the children are taken to their bathrooms. On 12 th Avenue, all children from all classrooms are taken to the hallway in the main building if time permits. If not, they are placed in the bathrooms or storage rooms.

*Lockdown: All students and staff will go to a locked location that is not visible from the outside and remain there until directed to leave.

*Evacuation: If authorities require students and staff to leave the campus, parents will pick up their child/ren at a neighborhood site. On Montessori Drive, the students will be at the East Hill Baptist Church (3960 Spanish Trail). On 12 th Avenue, the students will be at Saltmarsh, Cleveland, and Gund (900 N. 12th Ave).

*Evacuation from neighborhood: Total evacuation of the school may become necessary if there is a danger (i.e., chemical spill on train) in the area. In this case, the children will be taken to our other campus. In this extreme situation, the children will be driven by staff in staff vehicles. If it were to be necessary to evacuate Pensacola proper, we will all go to Shae Brown's home (former 12th Ave. Toddler teacher) in Cantonment (1607 Amanda Lane, 32533). To get to her home from 12th Avenue, go north on I110, merge west on I10 and exit onto Pine Forest Rd. Turn right onto Pine Forest, heading north. Cross 9 Mile Rd, continue approximately ½ mile. Turn right onto Amanda Lane. It is the last house on the right. From Montessori Drive, take Wimbledon to Scenic Hwy. Turn left onto Scenic Hwy., going north. Go west on I10 and follow the above directions.

*Modified operation: This may include closure or rescheduling of normal activities. This is usually the result of a building problem, utility issue, or extensive staff illness. The children will be relocated to another classroom on the same campus unless total evacuation is required.

In an extreme situation, listen to local radio/television for announcements. We will contact you as soon as possible with updates. We ask that you not call during an emergency so that the school's phone lines are kept free to make necessary emergency calls and relay information.

It is imperative that you regularly update your emergency contact information/authorized persons allowed to pick up your child.

Please feel free to contact the office (MD 433.4155, 12th Ave 469.8138) should you have any questions or concerns regarding our emergency operating procedures.

Dress Code

Dear Parents,

Following is the dress code policy for the 2023-2024 school year. The dress code policy is mandatory. Student dress and personal grooming are primarily the responsibility of students and parents.

Students are expected to come to school and school-sponsored activities and events clean, neat, and appropriately attired. Doing so demonstrates a respect for self, others, and school policy.

Our intentions are to create and foster a safe, orderly academic setting in which students and teachers are not distracted in their academic endeavors. Parental support is vital to achieving this goal. Please help by giving us your support in making sure your child(ren) are in dress code when they come to school or school-sponsored events. We expect and appreciate your cooperation in enforcing this policy. Student dress is applicable during school hours and during school-sponsored events.

- ***Students whose personal attire or grooming does not adhere to the dress code and/or distracts the attention of other students or teachers from school work or which may be hazardous to themselves or to others in the course of school and school-sponsored activities shall be required to change into acceptable attire . (The school reserves the right to make the final decision on what is acceptable at school or school-sponsored events.)***

The following are the dress code requirements:

- Pants, skirts, and shorts shall be worn properly fastened so that the waistband is not below the top of the hip bone.
- **Leggings (one seam) must be worn with tops that are at least mid-thigh in length**
- In the **Upper Elementary and Middle School** levels, the hem or slit of skirts, shorts, pants, or dresses shall be worn **no shorter than fingertip length around the entire circumference of the article of clothing with relaxed shoulders.**
- At the **Lower Elementary** level, the hem or slit of skirts, shorts, pants, or dresses shall be worn **no shorter than mid-thigh around the entire circumference of the article of clothing with relaxed shoulders.**
- Shirts, t-shirts, and blouses shall be of appropriate size and length to cover the waistband while sitting or standing.
- Caps, hats, hoods, scarves, and other head coverings shall not be worn in any building, except those worn for religious or medical purposes.
- Tennis shoes (or a shoe similar to a tennis shoe) are required to participate in physical education and/or playtime.

The following clothing items may **NOT** be worn:

- Unnatural hair colorings, styles, or cuts
- Clothing or accessories that reference the use of drugs, alcohol, tobacco, or violence;
- Clothing or accessories associated with any form of discrimination;
- Clothing exposing the torso or upper thighs such as see-through garments, spaghetti straps, mini-skirts, mini-dresses, halters, backless dresses or shirts, tube tops; or visible undergarments;
- Undergarments worn as outer garments; nightwear/loungewear/pajamas;
- Footwear that is deemed hazardous or dangerous to the health and safety of students or others, such as bedroom slippers, or cleats (The classroom teacher may further designate the footwear that is permissible under the dress code policy.)
- Clothing that exposes private body areas;
- Articles of clothing, jewelry, buttons, haircuts, tattoos, markings, body piercing, or other attire that is disruptive, offensive, suggestive, or indecent or considered a safety issue;
- Sunglasses worn inside the building; or other inappropriate or disruptive items as determined by classroom teachers or administration.

The following exceptions to the dress code shall be permitted when:

- A student may wear a costume or special clothing necessary for a school play or other school-sponsored activity as permitted by the school.
- A student may wear clothing in the intended manner of a nationally recognized youth organization, i.e., Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, on regular meeting days.

GUN POLICY

Purpose

Pursuant to Florida Statute § 790.06 and to ensure that the Montessori School of Pensacola (MSP) maintains a campus safe and free of violence for all employees and students, the company prohibits the possession or use of guns on school property or at school sponsored functions (except for authorized law enforcement personnel and/or as provided by law).

Persons Covered

All MSP employees/students are subject to this provision, including contract workers and temporary employees as well as visitors and customers on all school grounds and parking lots. A license to carry the weapon on school property does not supersede school policy. Any employee/student in violation of this policy will be subject to disciplinary action, up to and including termination/expulsion.

Definitions

“School property” is defined as all school-owned or leased buildings and surrounding areas such as sidewalks, walkways, driveways and parking lots under the school's ownership or control.

Searches of Personal Property

MSP reserves the right at any time and at its discretion to search all company-owned or leased vehicles and all vehicles, plus packages, containers, briefcases, purses, lockers, desks, enclosures and persons entering its property, for the purpose of determining whether any weapon is being, or has been, brought onto its property or premises in violation of this policy. Employees/students who fail or refuse to promptly permit a search under this policy will be subject to discipline up to and including termination/expulsion.

Enforcement

This policy is administered and enforced by MSP. Anyone with questions or concerns specific to this policy should contact the Human Resources Department or MSP Management.

Below is an explanation of the law.

Gun Free School Zones in Florida

The possession of a firearm on school grounds is generally illegal, with few exceptions. Florida Statute § 790.06, contains several subsections that explicitly prohibit the carrying and possession of firearms on school grounds. Firearms are not allowed at any school or college athletic event not related to firearms. Florida law broadens this prohibition by applying it to all school-sponsored events and school property. A person may not possess a firearm or other weapon at a school-sponsored event or on the property of any school, school bus, or school bus stop subject to the exception explained below, found in Florida Statutes § 790.115. This includes the grounds of any elementary or secondary school facility or administration building and career centers.

Florida does not allow for the concealed or open carry of firearms on university or college campuses. However, if an individual is a registered student, employee, or faculty member of the college or university, they may carry a stun gun or nonlethal electric weapon or device designed solely for defensive purposes, if it does not fire a dart or projectile. F.S. 790.06(12). Further, recent court decisions have approved having a firearm securely encased in one's vehicle on a college or university property.

As mentioned above, a person may carry, under one of the few exceptions laid out in Section, 790.115(2)(a). A firearm can be carried in a case to a firearms program, class or function that has been approved in advance by the principal or chief administrative officer of the school as a program or class to which firearm can be carried, or carried in a case to a career center having a firearms training range.

MSP LIBRARY/MEDIA CENTER POLICIES:

MSP's Media Center is a fully functioning library and true multi-purpose building. The Media Center has books and resources for the students, parents, and teachers. If you are interested in learning more about our library, or volunteering time, please feel free to stop in.

The following information will help all of us when checking out books:

1. Every child in our school has a library card and may check out books (family members/guardians may check out books under their child's card).
2. All books need to be checked out and checked in on the library computer. Books may be checked out from the library during a child's designated library time or after school when someone is available to run the computer. Books may be returned at any time. (Just place your books in the return basket in the Media Center or to the designated area in your child's classroom). Please do not put books back on the shelves.
3. Students may check out two books at any one time.
4. Books may be kept for two weeks.
5. You may not check out another book if there is an overdue book on the account. Please try to return all books on time, so other children can have a chance to enjoy them.
6. Books that are damaged or lost will have to be replaced. You may purchase another copy of the book or we can give you the cost associated with the title.
7. Encyclopedias and reference books may not be taken from the library. Students may photocopy information from these books or hand copy the information they need.
8. Videotapes and DVDs may not be checked out.

PLEASE NOTE:

- Graduating 8th graders will have transcripts held until the account is paid or the book is returned.
- Overdue notices will be emailed to parents and a hard copy will be sent home with the student.
- Overdue notices will be sent between fall and the Winter Break, before Spring Break, and at the school year's end.
- If a book is lost and/or overdue past the two week period, the fine will be the cost of replacing the book.
- Families may pay fines by check to MSP, cash, or on the payment portal of the MSP website.
- Book check out will stop three weeks prior to last day of school. This allows for all overdue books to be returned. Final overdue notices will be sent home one week before the last day of school.



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