

LaJolla
Montessori  ri
SCHOOL

Primary Parent Handbook

2022-2023

Welcome

Welcome to La Jolla Montessori School! We provide an early childhood, educational program of excellence based upon Dr. Maria Montessori's principles of human and child development. At La Jolla Montessori School, we focus on the young child's primary goal of self-construction. Our curriculum creates opportunities for your child to develop his or her own will, self-control, concentration and intellect. Utilizing time-tested Montessori practices, our environments engender self-esteem, independence and a sense of responsibility. We are honored that you have chosen our school to nurture, support and love your child. Thank you.

Overview of La Jolla Montessori School

Situated on the campus of the Beth-El Congregation, we also share our space with Beth Montessori School and the Montessori Institute of San Diego (and AMI training center). La Jolla Montessori School, however, has no affiliation with any religious orientation or organization.

We currently enroll children ages 18 months to 6 years in mixed-aged classrooms. Our year-long Toddler program serves children 18 months to 3 years and supports the youngest members of our community in learning how to feel safe and secure at school, how to explore a classroom environment, and how to independently use the toilet. Children enter the Primary environment at the age of 2 ½ to 3 and continue in the same environment through Kindergarten. For some children, this may be their first school experience. Our Primary teachers also support the young child in orienting to the school environment. However, our Primary curriculum focuses on developing the young child's concentration, communication, problem-solving and sense of self. We offer a 5-day program for all Primary students with a half-day option for children under the age of 4.

Choosing To Enroll in a Three-Year Educational Program

Prior to enrollment in La Jolla Montessori School, it is important for all of the families to understand that our Primary program is organized around Dr. Montessori's three (3) year, cyclic curriculum. From the very moment the child enters the classroom, all of the materials and lessons they will receive are visible on the shelves. Over the three years, children observe their growing opportunities to work with and master more and more of these materials. By the end of the third year, the six-year old child truly owns the classroom and is able to look back and see, in a very concrete way, all of the things they have learned.

We expect all children enrolled in our Primary program to complete Kindergarten at our school. Every year the environment offers new materials, new lessons, and new learning opportunities for the child. Children in their third year not only complete the same Kindergarten curriculum found in traditional schools, but they are also afforded the opportunity to develop their skills as leaders and role models for the younger members of their class. Our AMI training, experience and knowledge aid us in preparing and managing the mixed-age classroom. Below is a description of the curricular goals for each year of our Primary program:

During their first year in Primary, the children are familiarizing themselves with the environment and how to choose and complete 'work' at school. This work involves learning how to care for themselves and the classroom environment. Lessons at the beginning of the

year are designed to cultivate the child's ability to focus and concentrate, to communicate, and to move independently inside the environment and on the playground. Many changes occur in those first weeks and months as the child finds confidence in achieving important self-related goals. A large part of the indirect curriculum is observation. In the first year, children spend a great deal of time observing their new environment; they notice older children working with fascinating materials. This helps them both cultivate interest in more traditionally 'academic' materials but also develop the ability to emulate the responsibility of older children. By mid-year, children begin lessons that help them to refine their five senses and map the sounds of letters onto the symbol.

Children returning for their second year return with a sense of confidence and comfort in the environment. This allows them to jump right back into the rhythm of receiving lessons, and choosing their own work; no time is wasted having to adapt to a new room or new set of adults. Children in their second year have developed the ability to concentrate on multi-step work and can learn how to teach themselves anything they show interest in. It is during their second year that children are introduced to more traditional academic work: writing their ideas, linear counting, mathematical operations, and sounding out words.

In many ways, the third year (Kindergarten Year) is the most important year. Children in their third year are capable of seeing connections across the curriculum. They truly feel confident, secure, independent and with a sense of self-worth. The third-year child now shares work and lessons with the smaller children in the class. Lessons in the third year crystallize all of the knowledge they have learned in previous years. Socially, children in their third year learn the difference between equity and equality. They begin to question what is fair? Is it fair to hold the three-year old child to the same standards we hold the five-year old child? They learn that equity involves being responsible for your community and caring for each member's unique needs.

In Dr. Montessori's mixed-aged classroom, children have the opportunity to experience being the "youngest", "middle" and "oldest" child. The Three Year Cycle offers children the opportunity to safely explore advanced, abstract concepts in a known environment with the help of peers and teachers. The child is provided with the security and consistency that so very important at this age.

It is important to understand that each child and each family are essential members of our school. Parents and teachers work as partners to serve the developmental needs of the child. We ask that you please take this information to heart. We believe choosing a Montessori Education, and choosing to pursue the three-year cycle, *requires your commitment to this stimulating program.* Thank you.

Admissions & Enrollment Policies

It is the policy of La Jolla Montessori School to admit students without regard to race, culture, color, creed, national and ethnic origin, gender/sex, religion, or ability/disability. In both staff hiring and student enrollment, we encourage diversity.

Our program accepts children with special needs as long as we can provide a safe, supportive environment for the child to grow. We have expertise working in partnership with specialists (speech and learning pathologists, occupational therapists) to meet each child's needs. When we identify that a child has special medical or learning needs, our teachers will meet with parents / guardians to review the child's care requirements and create a learning plan. Consistent with our philosophy of providing the best and most relevant service, all admissions are on a trial basis. We reserve the right to observe and evaluate each child to see where they would best fit within our environment.

Tuition is due prior to the first of each month. La Jolla Montessori School will give a 30-day notification of any tuition changes. Similarly, we understand that modern-life often presents families with challenges such as relocation for work. We ask that if you need to leave LJMS for any reason, please give the school a 30-day written notice so that we may fill the spot in the classroom. Similarly, for the safety of our children and staff, we need to make sure we have adequate staffing for our extended day program (EDP). If you need to modify your EDP schedule (i.e. later pick-up time), we ask that you please give us at least two weeks' notice to be sure we have the staff to support that change.

Extended Day Program and Enrichment Classes

La Jolla Montessori School offers an Extended Day Program (EDP) after school to all students. Parents may use our EDP services after school until 5:30 pm. The **prepaid** EDP rate is \$9 per hour. Please fill out an EDP application/schedule to let us know your needs each month. We charge \$11.00 per hour (and any part thereof) for **drop-in** EDP. Please call the front office 24 hrs in advance to check for the availability of drop-in EDP.

LJMS keeps our kitchen stocked with fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges), cheeses, and crackers that teachers use for snack preparation materials. ***Parents do not need to send their children with an afternoon snack.***

Please note we use the schedule you provide to make staffing decisions for our EDP program. We must keep a safe teacher-child ratio. Therefore, we will charge a late fee for picking up your child after the designated time. Our rate is \$15 for the first 5 minutes and \$1 per minute thereafter. Please be prepared to pay this fee upon picking up your child.

Primary Classroom Guidelines & Procedures

The Montessori Environment is a prepared environment designed to aid your child in their search for independence, concentration and happiness. Dr. Montessori observed that the young child learns best through presentations given individually by the teacher. Children need an interactive, hands-on, educational environment to become self-motivated and successful learners. From their first visit to the classroom, children learn the procedures and limits of the classroom. To ease your child's transition to the Primary environment, it may help to discuss these procedures with your child before the first day of school.

- Children must wait for the teacher to give them a lesson. This presentation shows them how to use and clean up the materials.
- Children may only take work from a shelf for which they have had a lesson.
- Children may work at a table or on a mat.
- We generally sit down to do our work.
- Once children have had a lesson, they may choose that work as often as they like, and practice with the work for as long as they like, any day that they are in school.
- When they are done with their work, each child must clean up their material and put it back, in order, on the tray.
- Children are responsible to return the work to the shelf where it belongs.
- We ask children to remember to push in their chairs or roll up their mat.
- Children may observe other children working.
 - If you want to watch another child at work, you must stand with your arms at your sides, or behind your back, and make silence. We do not want to distract the child who is working.
 - If the child you are watching asks you to leave, please respect their wishes and go choose your own work.
- Children learn to refrain from interrupting lessons.
 - If you need to speak to a teacher, or another child who is busy, please rest your hand on that person's arm or shoulder and wait patiently for them to call upon you.

Practicing some of these procedures at home (such as putting away one toy / game before choosing another, cleaning up your own work, and waiting to interrupt) may help your child to adjust to this new school environment. We appreciate any consistency that can be offered at home.

At La Jolla Montessori School, children are encouraged to explore with their senses in order to fully understand the world around them. We follow Dr. Montessori's method of

preparing an environment for the child to be independent, inviting the child to acquire new skills by working with the materials in the classroom, and representing lessons when needed. **They are free to explore and learn at their own pace.** We never push children academically. Children require ample time and space to practice and perfect their abilities. Dr. Montessori found that children need more than just academics; they need to be allowed to explore their world and society. The Montessori materials provide children with a variety of interactive experiences including learning activities of practical life, sensorial, language, math, science, history, culture, music, art, etc.

Dr. Montessori believed the fundamental purposes of early childhood education were to develop a child's sense of independence and concept of community. Through authentic participation in a community, children come to develop a concept of 'collective interest'; that is, that people in communities share space and resources. She wanted children to learn how to feel free to pursue their goals without infringing on the goals of the others in their community. She observed that children would naturally learn to share resources in communities where resources are limited and they could observe their peers behaving in responsible ways. So, she designed mixed-age environments where children shared the responsibility for taking care of the environment and learned to take turns with the materials.

Dressing for Success

We ask that you send your child to school dressed in comfortable, non-restrictive clothing. Our goal is to foster your child's sense of independence. If your child needs to ask for help in using the bathroom because of a complicated belt buckle or button, then they may get frustrated and feel dependent on an adult for help. It is also important that the children can remove their own clothing if needed (i.e. they get wet when working with water). Please dress your child in pants with elastic waists and roomy shirts. If your child prefers to wear dresses, we ask that they be short dresses (knee length) so the hem does not drag, get stepped on, or fall in the toilet.

We also ask that you send your child with appropriate shoes. Our environments contain materials that are breakable (glass, ceramic). Please send your child in closed-toed, comfortable shoes. Ideally, shoes have solid tread to prevent slipping on the outdoor patios / playground. Sandals and Crocs are not permitted. In contemplating shoes for your child, we ask that you purchase shoes that they can put on and remove on their own. If your child is just entering our program, shoes should be fastened with Velcro. Around the age of 4, we begin teaching the children how to tie bows, we may ask that your child come to school in shoes with laces so that they may practice.

At the beginning of the year, teachers will ask you to please bring 1-2 spare changes of clothes (socks, underwear, pants/shorts and top). Whenever wet or soiled items come home, we ask that you send a fresh change of clothes. Your teachers will let you know when replacement items are needed. Please **label all clothes** brought to school, especially jackets as those are often misplaced.

Finally, we ask that you do not permit your child to wear clothes to school that depicts cartoon characters or violent acts (i.e. superhero shirts where the characters are 'fighting'). We all love cartoons! But, cartoons are so appealing that they can be very distracting for the young child. Similarly, young children often do not understand how 'play fighting' can be

misunderstood or dangerous on the playground. We ask that you help us maintain a peaceful, friendly environment on the playground by saving these kinds of clothes for the weekend.

Nutrition: Community Snack and Lunch

Dr. Montessori believed in the importance of food and food culture to the young child's development. During the work period, we help the young child develop a concept of healthy eating and healthy snacking through our practical life preparations and community snack traditions. Through the practice of community snacks and through practical life presentations, our Guides strive to introduce the children to many new fruits and vegetables so they may discover what they enjoy.

Community Snack:

Snack is an integral part of the day in a Montessori Primary Classroom. ***Parents do not need to send their children with morning snacks.*** LJMS keeps our kitchen stocked with fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges), cheeses, and crackers that teachers use for snack preparation materials. Each week, families will rotate shopping for supplements for the community snack. Supplements to the community snack can vary by class and will depend on the palates of the children in the community and their readiness to engage in more advanced food preparation (i.e. baking, guacamole, making mini pizzas, etc.).

Bringing community snacks represents a type of parent involvement with our school. We ask that you set aside time to go to the store with your child to pick out an arrangement of flowers and permit your child to pick out the different items on your list. Allowing your child to accompany you to the store to purchase the snack supplies will help enhance his/her sense of responsibility to the community. When it is your turn to bring a 'snack', please be mindful of timely delivery.

In the primary environment, preparing and taking snacks is a 'work'. And, just like any other work in the environment, there are limits (i.e. only two children at a time, the quantity you can take). The children are expected to take snacks independently (serving, eating, and cleaning up) at a designated snack table. Our Teachers work with children to develop self-control when taking a 'reasonable portion' of snack as well as taking turns. With 20+ children in the community, children may have to learn how to keep busy while waiting for a turn to take a snack.

Lunch:

In the Primary community, children take turns working in groups of 3-5 to prepare the table for lunch daily. This involves arranging the tables and setting placemats, plates, glasses, silverware and napkins. The environment assumes children can independently prepare their plates, feed themselves, and clean up. Primary guides work with children on developing a concept of table manners (chewing with mouth closed, having a conversation at the table, cutting larger portions with a knife). Below are some notes to consider when planning lunch for their young child.

- We ask that you please pack a low fat, low sugar, and high protein lunch.

- Children work to set their own plates. Some brands of food-storage containers are more child-friendly than others. Please be thoughtful about the containers you send for lunch. Smaller containers with a twist or snap or pull lids offer the young child opportunities to practice opening and closing as well as provide for the child to become independent in eating their lunch.
- Please pre-cut food for all children under the age of 5 years old into bite-sized portions. Smaller pieces offer the young child more opportunities to practice using utensils.
- Some foods, such as popcorn, represent choking hazards that cannot be served at school. We cannot serve children under the age of 5 years old whole grapes or grape tomatoes – even if they are packed in their lunch. If your child is under the age of 5 years old, we ask you to please cut their grapes (and any cherry/grape tomatoes) in half before sending them.
- Lunches need to come ready to eat. If you would like your child to experience a hot meal, please send food warmed at home in insulated containers. **We do not have the means of reheating food in a microwave.**
- Please monitor the portion size and send a portion that the children will be able to finish.
- Please refrain from including a 'treat' to have after lunch. We try hard to communicate to the children that school is a place for eating healthy.

Finally, breakfast is a very important meal in the day and we ask that your child get some form of protein during breakfast as they are expending a lot of energy during our 3-hour work period. Fruit is also important as it is a complex carbohydrate and will last longer than the quick fix of pop tarts or other like items. We suggest eggs, whole grain breads or muffins, fruits, hot cereals, and yogurt as a good start to the day. These foods have "staying power" and your child will be happy to work all morning. Proper food will feed the brain, allowing it to function.

Afternoon Work Period

The afternoon work period is designed for older children (4+) as a time to offer additional lessons in Language and Mathematics as well as to afford the child opportunities to attempt work that requires either sustained time with a guide, more physical 'space', and fewer distractions in the classroom. We can accommodate three-year-old children who demonstrate the ability to sustain concentration and are able to work independently. The State of California requires that any child under the age of 4 years old enrolled in a full-day program be brought to a quiet area and be given an opportunity to rest. Thus, three-year-old children capable of afternoon work must still rest quietly for a minimum period of 30 minutes prior to returning to the classroom (see below Developing the Concept / Capacity to Rest).

Full-Day Option with Nap / Rest

The State of California requires that any child under the age of 4 years old who is enrolled in full-day care be brought to a quiet area and be given an opportunity to rest/sleep. Primary children must be toilet independent to sleep in the napping room. We do not use pull-ups/night underpants for napping in the Primary children.

Primary children who are enrolled in a full-day program, and still nap at home, will be invited to sleep in a darkened, climate-controlled area of the classroom. Children prepare for naps by using the toilet after lunch. Children are invited to rest on a cot with a sheet in a quiet area of the room. To help children adapt to the environment and learn to put themselves to sleep, parents are encouraged to send them with a blanket to snuggle, occasionally guides will play soft music to help children calm down, and guides may rub their back gently. If your child needs an additional comfort object, we recommend rotating different objects on a weekly basis.

It can take a young child several weeks to adapt to the nap room. During that time, he/she may not sleep much at school and come home tired and irritable. We ask for your patience and support during the transition. Most children adapt by about 2-weeks.

It is also important to understand that children are not required to sleep. However, it is important to understand that Primary level children must demonstrate the ability to rest quietly for a minimum rest period of 30-minutes. If a young child is capable of concentrating during the afternoon work period, after 30-minutes of rest the child will be invited to return to the classroom. If the napping environment is not a good fit for your child (i.e. he/she excessively cries or disturbs other children), for their own benefit and that of the other children, LJMS may re-assign him/her to a half-day schedule. **We do not provide reports for Primary children regarding the amount of rest/sleep.**

Items from Home

We know that some children feel the need to bring things from home to school, whether for comfort reasons or just to share with friends. We do understand this need but have seen the unhappy consequences of allowing this: items can be lost, broken, or distracting to the learning environment. Too often the temptation to touch your child's favorite toy or animal will be too much for the other young children. And this will often cause the owner distress. Please avoid this by leaving all cherished items in the car. We often remind children that they need to be ready to give their friends "a turn" with the item if they bring it to the classroom. For safety reasons, we cannot permit the children to wear jewelry of any kind as they present risks of choking and cutting off circulation.

Birthdays Celebrations

In Montessori schools, birthday celebrations represent the child's introduction to history and time. These celebrations help to ground the child in time and space. In the Primary classes, birthday celebrations contain several parts. The first part involves telling the story of the child's life. The week prior to the celebration, we ask that you prepare a brief biography and 1-2 photographs for each year of your child's life. Don't worry, we send home a packet that guides you through the whole process. For older children (children turning 5-6 years old), we encourage you to prepare this packet with your child.

On the day of the celebration, your child's teachers will help them to prepare the birthday presentation. This presentation includes: writing their name with the moveable alphabet, representing their age with the number rods and sandpaper numbers, the continent and country they live in from the puzzle maps, and a candle that represents the sun with 'rays' that name the months of the year. The class will be invited to sit around the ellipse. The teacher will begin the ceremony. During the ceremony, one of the teachers will tell the story you prepared of your child's time on 'Earth'. After each year of the story, your child will be invited to carry the globe around the sun (a candle). This represents the passing of time for the year of his/her life. At the end of the ceremony, the class will sing birthday songs (in English and Spanish) and your child will be invited to blow out the candle.

The last part of the celebration is optional. We invite your child to bring a gift for the class. This gift will remain in the class as a reminder of the celebration / passage of time. We encourage parents to choose the gift with their child. Gifts might include a favorite book (non-fiction or realistic fiction only), a beautiful small vase or object that can be polished, or a carefully chosen plant is always appreciated. Children also have the option of sharing a special, healthy snack at lunchtime. Children are invited to serve their friends a healthy snack as part of their birthday celebration (often after lunch). No cupcakes with frosting, please. If you are interested in bringing a snack to share, please let your teachers know ahead of time. They will alert you to any potential food allergies in your class.

All birthday celebrations at LJMS are classroom community events only. Parents may request the teachers or administrative assistants take photos and are invited to observe from the windows. Similarly, we ask that you please do not send party invitations for "out-of-school" birthday celebrations - especially when the whole class is not invited. We recommend using Evite and will provide email addresses as needed.

Homework

Dr. Montessori believed that the purpose of 'formal' early childhood education was for the child to develop a concept of school / schooling. Over the three-year program, we hope the young child will come to associate completing traditionally academic work (i.e. language, mathematics, global studies, science) at school, not at home. It is for this reason that Dr. Montessori cautioned against giving the children 'schoolwork' to take home. Dr. Montessori viewed time at home as time with the family. **We also do not regularly send home paperwork from the classroom.** Often around the age of four years old, the children enjoy producing / creating work to bring home to share. For this reason, we have 'art bags' that children will bring home at the end of the week filled with work they may wish to share with you. Only after much practice and perfection, might a child bring home a book of math problems, words they have written or parts of a flower book (for example). Please understand that the work your child is doing is solely for themselves, not necessarily for others to see. **We encourage the child to be proud of their work, and not to look for approval from others.** When the child loves their work, then they will want to work for themselves and will therefore be much better at what they accomplish.

Additionally, we have found that when children do schoolwork at home (math problems, learning their sounds, etc.) they often have no interest in doing the same kind of work provided to them at school. Instead, they will gravitate toward the work in the practical life-sensorial

area. For this reason, we do encourage practical life work (i.e. baking, cleaning, arts and crafts, caring for pets and the outdoor environment, etc.) or sensorial work (i.e. nature walks, puzzles) to be done in the home.

Kindergarten Field Trips & Graduation

Dr. Montessori observed that a fundamental need of young children was to orient themselves to the world. As such, she built the children's house as a self-contained holistic environment for children to explore the world on their own terms. However, in their third-year of the program, older children often show a need for 'bigger' learning spaces and tasks. As a bridge to the elementary experience, Kindergarten children will have an opportunity to experience field trips during the Spring semester of their third year. Field trips can range from visiting a local post office, fire station, or library, a trip to the store to plan a classroom event, or visiting the local Birch Aquarium. Kindergarten parents will be invited to volunteer as drivers and chaperones. Information regarding field trips, with appropriate permission slips, will be sent home two weeks in advance. If you have any questions about the outings, please see the front office for more information.

Completing our three year program represents a major milestone in the young child's life. In the spring semester of their third year, Kindergarten children are offered an opportunity to complete an extended project that symbolizes their Montessori experience. Children present their projects and what they have learned from each area of the classroom at a small ceremony with their classroom peers and parents.

Attendance, Arrival, and Departure

Student Attendance Policy

There are no transportation services provided by La Jolla Montessori School. *School attendance is required five (5) days a week, except for holidays. Please see the school calendar for details.*

Dr. Montessori found through her observations that children have a great need for order. Children need firm consistency and repetition to define the boundaries and limits of their home and school environments and our society. **In respecting this need of the child we would like to stress the importance of your consistent and prompt arrival to school every day that your child is well.** If you are having a hard time getting your child out the door in the mornings, please see the Director as she has many helpful ideas. It is also very important that your child comes to school every day that they are well so that they will feel more comfortable as they are familiar and happy within their environment.

Arrival and Departure Information

We share our beautiful campus with the Congregation of Beth-El community, Beth Montessori, and the Montessori Institute of San Diego (an AMI training center). In order to facilitate safe arrival and departure for children and the smooth flow of traffic, we have a one-way driveway, use two entrances, and follow a staggered arrival and departure schedule. In order to respect our neighbors, we need to do our best to have compassionate but expedient transitions to and from school. Your attention in this matter is greatly appreciated.

At both Gates, we have three spaces available. Please drive **slowly** when on campus. Resist the temptation to use your cell phone. Please pull forward to the first available space. Some families have multiple children and have their car seat on the passenger side. For the safety of our staff and children, **please avoid passing cars on the right.** We ask that if you are a Primary parent and arrive at school past 8:30 am, please park on La Jolla Scenic Dr. N. and walk your child down the stairs to drop off. There is a white loading zone where you can park. Please contact the office for the current access code.

Starfish & Whale Primary Rooms: (Gate 2)

School starts promptly at 8:15.

Please drop your child off at Gate 2 between 8:00 and 8:15.

The Full-Day Program pick-up at Gate 2 is between 2:15 and 2:30.

Sea Turtle Primary Room (Gate 1):

School starts promptly at 8:30.

Please drop your child off at Gate 1 between 8:15 and 8:30.

The Full-Day Program pick-up at Gate 1 is between 2:30 and 2:45.

All Half-Day program Primary Students are picked up at Gate 1 between 12:30-12:45.

Jellyfish and Dolphin Toddler Rooms (Gate 1):

School starts promptly at 8:45.

Please drop your child off at Gate 1 between 8:30 and 8:45.

The Half-Day Program Toddler pick-up at Gate 1 is between 12:15-12:30.

The Full-Day Program Toddler pick-up at Gate 1 is between 2:45 and 3:00.

Montessori schools strive to develop the young child's sense of independence. We believe all children are capable of walking into the school by themselves (or with a friend or teacher). Your emotions at drop-off communicate to your child how you feel about them going to school. Please make your goodbyes **cheerful and brief**. If you show hesitation, then the child may feel that this isn't a safe or fun place and could feel anxiety. We want school to be a wonderful experience for each child and you can help in many ways.

If you drop off by vehicle, pull forward as far as possible. We have enough room to fit three cars at each Gate. **Please remain in your car**. A teacher or staff will approach the car, say good morning, and welcome your child. They will unbuckle your child and help them down from the car. Teachers will do their best not to rush your child out of the car. However, some children need more time to transition into the building. In this case, teachers may carry them safely inside the Gate where they sit on the green step / grass, wait for a friend, or chat until they are ready to walk on their own into their classroom.

If you prefer to walk down the steps, please do not carry your child. Carrying them can convey a dependent message and will discourage children from feeling independence. Allow for enough time for them to explore the steps (count, collect leaves). Teach your child to be careful when crossing the driveway. Please insist that they hold your hand and look both ways. Be sure to make eye contact with the driver before crossing. Once inside the Gate offer them a hug or high five.

Remember that even when you love your work, there can be days when it can be difficult to get up and go to work. Children have these same feelings about school. They may love their school, their teachers, their friends, and their work - and still have days when they find it hard to go to school. On these days, they may cry or say they don't want to go to school. Dr. Montessori believed it was important to honor the child's feelings while at the same time maintaining consistency and routine. At La Jolla Montessori, we do our best to help children process their feelings so that they can move on with having a productive day. Please do not worry if your child is crying when you leave. Most children stop crying by the time they reach the classroom. Others stop crying once they are greeted by their teacher and their teacher can guide them towards "work that helps them feel better." We will always call parents if any child cries in a way that is inconsolable. And, you can always call us back to check in if it was a rough morning at home.

When it is time to pick your child up, you will need to exit your car and walk up to the Gate to retrieve your child. **Teachers are not permitted by law to buckle children into their car seats**. In order to facilitate the line, please do not exit your car until you are in one of the designated spots. It will be tempting to chat with the teachers, but please remember the other parents waiting in line behind you. If you have questions or want to briefly discuss something with the teachers, we ask that you park at the top of La Jolla Scenic Drive and walk down the stairs. When walking back to your car, **please insist that your child holds your**

hand. We have many families needing to pick up siblings from other schools. We need arrival and drop-off to be quick and efficient.

Procare Sign-In and Sign-Out Policies

The State of California mandates that parents / authorized guardians must sign in and out their children. Our school must keep a record of when the child arrived at school, if they transitioned to our extended day program, and when you picked them up. In order to facilitate this record-keeping and to provide parents with a tool for communicating with their child's teacher about changes to drop off / pick up, we have adopted the Procare automated system.

To use Procare for communication with the teachers, parents must download the Procare App to their phones. Procare App can be used with iPhones or android phones. Parents who do not want to download the App to their phone must still create a Procare account. Parents will receive an invitation to create an account. Once they create an account, they will be given a unique 4-digit pin that can be used for sign-in / sign-out. Procedures for sign-in / sign-out:

- Using the App on your phone. When you arrive on campus, open the Procare App. Go to the 'Sign-In' icon on the bottom.
 - Ideally, the App will use your GPS to tell that you have arrived at school and will display your child / children's names. Tap their names, and use your finger to sign them in.
 - There is a place to put a note to the teacher - but we ask that you are conscious of the line behind you. Please avoid holding up the line to send a note to the teacher. Once you drive down the hill, you can pull into the parking lot at Beth-El and send a note.
 - In the event that the GPS does not recognize that you are on campus, the teachers will have a QR code that you can scan. This QR code will 'activate' the sign-in process and display your child/children's names. Tap their names, and use your finger to sign them in.
- Using the Parent Kiosk. Each gate will have an iPad 'kiosk' that can be used for signing the children in / out. To sign your children in/out you MUST know your unique four-digit pin number.
 - Type in your pin number. The App will display your child / children's names. Tap their names, and use your finger to sign them in.

We will not allow your child to go home with anyone who is not on your emergency card. Please keep your emergency contact list updated. If you need to make a change, contact the office via phone or e-mail with the name and contact phone number of the new authorized individual. **Anyone on your emergency list picking up your child must have their ID ready to show the teachers every time.**

- Each gate will have an iPad 'kiosk' that can be used for signing children out. Individuals signing out children will need to know the unique 4-digit pin associated with your family's account. They will be asked to type in the pin. The App will display your child / children's names. Tap their names, and use your finger to sign them out.

Lastly, any child who appears to staff to show signs of illness may be excluded from class and will have to be taken home.

Health and Wellness Policies

School and State Mandated Wellness Policies

La Jolla Montessori School requires that you **KEEP YOUR CHILD HOME** or we will send them home if we notice **signs of illness** such as:

<u>Symptoms</u>	<u>Children May Not Return to School Until</u>
Fever of 100 or above	Their temperature has returned to normal for at least 24 hours without the aid of fever-reducing medication. You may be required to submit a negative Covid test.
Covid / Cold / Flu Symptoms	They have a negative Covid test, a note from a physician confirming they are not contagious, when thick mucus is no longer draining from the nose, coughing has subsided, and energy returned. NOTE: Thick yellow or green mucus from the nose, cough, and lethargy are signs a child is fighting an infection. Children over 2 years old may be asked to wear a mask if coughing is persistent.
Diarrhea/Vomiting	They have a negative Covid test, a note from a physician confirming they are not contagious, symptoms have subsided for at least 24 hours <u>and</u> your child has returned to normal eating with no stomach upset. NOTE: Loose stools and vomiting can be a sign that a child is fighting an infection.
Sore Throat / Painful Earache	They have a negative Covid test, a note from a physician confirming they are not contagious, the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours, or symptoms have subsided. NOTE: Sore throat could be a sign of the Strep bacteria.
Red Weepy Eyes /Discharging Eyes	They have a note from a physician confirming they do not have bacterial conjunctivitis, or your child has been on antibiotic drops for 24 hours, or eyes are now clear. NOTE: Some forms of conjunctivitis are more dangerous than others.
Rash (i.e. Face, Mouth, Hand, Feet)	They have a note from a physician confirming they are not contagious, the rash is not spreading, itching and / or discomfort has disappeared (to prevent outbreaks in the classroom). NOTE: Some rashes are associated with common contagious illnesses.
Head Lice, Scabies	They have been treated with lice shampoo and <i>all nits have been removed from their hair</i> . The child's skin has been treated for bites and for 24 hours and the rash has subsided.

Daily Health Evaluation

Upon arrival, staff will evaluate each child's health and wellness. Teachers can not allow sick, or potentially ill, children in the classroom. Teachers will look for signs like runny noses, cough, rashes on cheeks, etc. ***We know that your time is valuable, and taking time off work is costly, but we ask you to think about your impact on the classroom community.*** At this age, children do not yet have the hygiene standards to avoid infecting others. They are still learning how to cough / sneeze in their arm, use tissues and blow their nose, avoid touching their eyes, and wash their hands. We work with the children daily on these hygiene standards. But one child with mild symptoms can infect an entire class.

Should your child **become ill while at school**, your child will be isolated in the office and we will immediately call to notify you. Children with a fever, diarrhea, vomiting, and / or lethargy will be sent home. If we ask that you or someone authorized on your list arrive at the office to pick your child up within 30 minutes of the call. If there is a disagreement with the teacher's or office's decision to send the child home, it is the parent's responsibility to provide verification from a healthcare professional stating that the child is not contagious and is well enough to take part in the program. Please contact the office regarding the most recent Covid Policies from the county / State.

We are required by the State of California to keep track of all absences and illnesses. Please contact the office if your child will miss school and if they are staying home sick. Please let us know if your child is diagnosed with a **contagious disease** such as: Covid-19, chicken pox, pertussis (whooping cough), mumps, measles, strep throat, pinworms, hand-foot-mouth disease (HFMD), impetigo, conjunctivitis, or head lice. We are required by law to keep records of incidents and outbreaks of contagious diseases. Additionally, if your child has suffered a more serious injury (broken/fractured bone, reactive bee sting, concussion, etc.) at home, please contact the Director before arriving at school to provide specific guidelines for returning to school safely.

Lastly, if your child needs to stay indoors because of severe outdoor allergies, it may be best to keep them home until the allergens in the environment subside. Each of our classrooms has an outdoor patio area for practical life work and we take the children outdoors to play each day. It is very difficult to keep one child inside while the others are all outside.

Medical Emergency Plans

La Jolla Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of special needs. When we identify that a child has special medical needs, our teachers will meet with parents / guardians to review the child's care requirements and create a medical plan. These plans will provide clear guidelines for how staff should prevent and respond in the event of a medical emergency.

If your child requires an Epi-Pen for an allergy, please be sure your Pediatrician indicates as such on the Physician's report and bring two (2) Epi-Pens to the front office before the first day of school. We will keep one in the classroom's first aid kit and one in the EDP room's first aid kit. Please bring all relevant paperwork from your doctor to be included.

Medication and Medical Emergencies

We do not have a nurse and are not allowed to give medication to the children. In general, if your child must use medication during school hours (i.e. antibiotics when recovering from an infection) you must bring it to the office at the appointed time and administer it yourself. We will call the child to the office for their medication.

Exceptions may be made under certain circumstances (i.e. inhalers, EpiPens, etc...); please see the Director for more information if needed. **Please do not send medicine (including cough drops) in lunch boxes, as other children will have access to it.**

It is very important to completely fill out your emergency information paperwork so that the staff can contact you in the event of an emergency. If your child has a medical or dental emergency, we will first call the necessary emergency services and then contact the parents. If a child needs to go to the hospital, a staff member will accompany them if a parent is not available. The staff will stay with the child until the parent has arrived.

Grace and Courtesy of Masking

Grace and Courtesy is a common phrase in Montessori classrooms. It reflects what polite adults do quite naturally when interacting with other adults. Dr. Montessori designed a curriculum around helping the young child to decode and acquire these skills. These *Grace and Courtesy* lessons represent the social-emotional core of our Montessori curriculum.

During the global pandemic, families learned the value of mask-wearing when in large groups to reduce the spread of disease. Masking has practical implications for educators, working families, and families with immunocompromised members who may need to continue to send their children to school during cold and flu season because they do not want to risk infection. And masking also has cultural implications around the world; with some citizens wearing masks to protect their health when air quality is low.

Across Montessori Schools, it is common to begin the academic year with a review of health and safety practices. Children read books such as "[*Germ* are not for Sharing](#)" and receive lessons in how to use a tissue to wipe or blow their nose and cough in their elbow. At La Jolla Montessori School, we have chosen to integrate Grace and Courtesy lessons related to masking. At the beginning of the year, teachers will introduce a lesson to the group surrounding the choice to wear a mask when not feeling well. They will show how to put on a mask, how to take off a mask, and reflect with the children on the reasons why some families / children might choose to wear a mask to school. We will also respect the rights of individuals to remain unmasked when not working in close proximity to those who want or need to mask.

Similarly, there may be times throughout the year when our teachers choose to wear masks / face shields such as to protect themselves from getting sick during cold and flu season or to protect the children when they are not feeling well - but well enough to come to work. We believe all students and staff have the right to feel free, safe, and comfortable at school. We are choosing to frame masking as one way to be respectful of your community.

School & Classroom Discipline Policies

One of the goals of the Primary program is to help the child to develop their ability to self-direct / self-control. Dr. Montessori believed that the young had the capacity to exert self-control but sometimes lacked the motivation to make the same choices as an adult. Our classrooms follow a general practice of [Positive Discipline](#). A Positive Discipline approach argues that children 'misbehave' under three conditions: 1) the child does not understand the behavioral expectations, 2) the child has not developed the necessary skills to exert self-control, 3) the environment does not support children in learning how to control their own impulses. At LJMS, we understand that "misbehavior" is a form of communication. We believe in helping the child to develop self-discipline through the activities and materials in the classroom.

For this reason, our teachers generally handle the majority of disruptive behavior in the classroom following this approach:

- Dr. Montessori believed rewards and punishments undermined the child's ability to develop self-discipline. We do not use rewards or punishments of any kind. We refrain from verbal praise.
- We prepare and manage the classroom environment to deter problematic behavior.
 - Offer grace and courtesy lessons on how to observe, how to wait in line, how to interrupt etc.
- We clarify behavioral expectations such as: "Walking feet, please." "Please make space for your friend." "Please wait your turn."
- When children struggle to manage their behavior, we may invite them to observe the class (with teachers' support). Discuss consequences for not following the 'rules': "If you push your friends in line, you will have to go to the back of the line." At this point, teachers may begin sending notes home about challenges they are having in the classroom. We do not believe in punishments or "timeouts" for a child having problems working, concentrating, listening, etc... When children are invited to observe, they do so with the support of a guide.
- When behavior persists despite the teachers' attempts to Guide the child, we reach out to parents to schedule a meeting to discuss the behavior and make a plan of action. If behaviors may be indicative of other developmental challenges, teachers may discuss the importance of early intervention and bringing in specialists for support.
- When teachers are concerned about persistent behaviors or behaviors that endanger the child or the other children in the class, they will report them to the Director. The Director will observe and the team will come up with a plan of action.
- Some behaviors (see below) may require the assignment of an adult to shadow the child during the work period or transition periods (i.e. transition to play, transition to lunch, transition to home).
- Parents may be contacted at any point in the process about the problematic behavior. Teachers may ask questions about parents' observation of behavior with other family members (i.e. siblings) and in other settings (i.e. parks).

When a child's behavior is aggressive or unsafe to the child or others, the child may need to 'take a break' in the office or may require an adult to shadow. These behaviors cannot and will not be tolerated by the staff of La Jolla Montessori School. We cannot endanger other children. If a child is physically aggressive to another person, they will be removed from the immediate environment and invited to calm down (i.e. take deep breaths and offer strategies

for calming their body). If the aggression is severe (example: hitting, kicking, punching) your child must go home immediately. We ask that when at home, you make the time to discuss their feelings (i.e. anger, frustration) and offer alternate strategies (i.e. offer words they can say, offer guidance on how to get an adult to help, etc...) Teachers will reach out to parents to discuss the event and make a plan of action. If we have a child continuing to be unsafe after we have explained our concerns to them, then they may be asked to leave the classroom.

We consider parents our partners in helping the child learn self-discipline. Parents may be contacted at any point in the process. Teachers may ask questions about parents' observations of the behavior with other family members (i.e. siblings) and in other settings (i.e. at the park / birthday parties).

Finally, there will be no corporal punishment, humiliation / shame, or violation of children's rights at La Jolla Montessori School.

Parent Communication and Participation

School Communication

At La Jolla Montessori School we value parents as our partners in helping each child to fully realize their potential. We communicate with parents in a variety of ways:

- Daily Procure Access: Open and ongoing communication with all our families is of the utmost importance to us. The Procure App provides parents with access to send and receive information from their child's teachers. Messages from parents go directly to the teachers' 'dashboard' where they can respond to any questions or concerns parents have.
- Monthly School-wide Newsletter: We begin each month with a School-Wide newsletter that updates parents on important dates and events happening that month as well as sends out health and safety reminders.
- Mid-month Montessori Bites: Mid-month your teachers will share with you insights on Dr. Montessori's theory, how the Montessori curriculum is unfolding in your classroom or emerging research in child development. They may attach articles and various resources to help provide insight into the curriculum and your child's mindset.
- Parent Education Events: We offer different types of events for parents and caregivers to learn more about Dr. Montessori's approach to early childhood education. Some events are hosted by the Director with the teachers' support. Other events are hosted by the classroom teachers. Space for these events is limited and parents will be asked to sign up to attend.
- Parent Involvement Activities: Three times during the year, we offer parent involvement activities. These activities are hosted by the classroom teacher, in the classroom, during normal school hours or after school. These events permit parents to socialize with their children (*Picnic with a Parent* and *Granola with a Guardian*) or to observe how their children use materials (*Give your Parent a Lesson*).
- Parent Volunteering Opportunities: We need parent support to build a strong sense of school community. Each year, we seek parents who are interested in helping organize

three community events (*Fall Festivities, Silent Auction and Art Show Fundraiser, and End of Year Picnic*) and two classroom-level fundraisers (*Small Hands by Montessori Services and Usborne Book Fair*).

- School Conferences: We conduct Parent-Teacher conferences twice per school year in order to keep you updated on your child's progress. ***These conferences are required for all parents at La Jolla Montessori School and are crucial to your child's success.***
- Classroom Photosharing: Each classroom maintains a photo-sharing website: Shutterfly. Only parents in the classroom community have access to the website. Twice a month, teachers will upload photos they have taken of children working in the environment. You may log on at any time to view/download photos of your child.

Guidelines for Effective Teacher Communication

When the children are on campus, our number one priority is to be physically, emotionally and intellectually present in our interactions with them. For this reason, our school policy is for teachers to refrain from responding to questions or concerns submitted via Procure. Instead, we ask teachers to scan their messages prior to the start of the day (7:30-8:00 am) to note important messages from parents regarding schedule changes. Then, at the end of the day, we ask that teachers respond to parent communications. Teachers stay until 3:30 each day.

If you need to speak with your teacher immediately you may call the office to leave a message. We will ask the teacher to call you back during their break or after school. Sometimes things happening outside of school can make for a tough day for the child at school. For example, the arrival of exciting visitors or difficulties sleeping. An effective way to alert your teacher to changes / challenges at home is to send a handwritten note to school with your child or call the office / send a note to the office that we can print out and share.

Finally, it is important to note that the ***teachers are not available to discuss your child's day at arrival or dismissal.*** During this time, the teachers are striving to set a positive tone for the day when greeting the children or saying goodbye to the children. Time at dropoff and arrival is also quite limited; as we are striving to make the process efficient for parents who are going to work / dropping off siblings or taking children to extracurricular activities. Teachers are not going to be the most effective listeners or communicators at this time because they will feel the combined 'pressures' of talking to you in front of your child and the demand of the 'line'.

Parent Observations

The best way to understand your child's work at La Jolla Montessori School is to come to observe their work in the classroom! We offer parents a variety of different ways to observe the classroom:

- Schedule Time at the Observation Window.
- In-Classroom Observations prior to Parent Conferences.
- Give Your Parent a Lesson Event.

What can I expect to see when I observe? Dr. Montessori observed (and we still see today) that our world, our society is made for adults. Nearly everything the child comes into contact with inside and outside the home is adult-sized. In contrast, a Montessori environment is created solely for the children. Every single thing is selected and designed with the child in mind. The pictures are hung at the child's eye level. The lamps, chairs, tables, shelves and materials are all made specifically for children. All of the materials are made from natural, not plastic; they are real wood, glass and metal objects just like adults use. You can begin to see what a wonderful sanctuary this is for children! That is why Dr. Montessori called her school the "Children's House".

The children come to understand quite quickly that this is *their* place. When new adults enter *their* environment, they can become unsettled / uncomfortable. Observing at the privacy window ensures that you are viewing the children in their 'natural state' in the classroom environment.

Throughout the year our staff has opportunities to observe their own class and other classes. Each classroom has a special "observation chair" for adults to sit and observe. The children learn during this time that it is important to respect the 'work' of the observer. During in-classroom observation, we invite parents to use the "observation chair". Please use this chair for quiet, reflective moments of pure observation. Children may say "hello" or ask you what you are doing. But if you say a quick hello and add "I am doing my work," they usually go back to their work. Your child may have difficulty working during this time - they may want, instead, to sit with you and observe. That is perfectly normal. We ask that you refrain from talking to your child, however, as that will just attract more attention and undermine the culture of the "observation chair".

A Montessori Perspective on Parent Involvement

At La Jolla Montessori School, parent involvement takes many forms: observing your child in the classroom setting, sending them with healthy lunch, participating in community snacks, assisting with material preparation, volunteering with gardening or 'spring cleaning', and volunteering to help plan and offer Community Events (i.e. Fall Festival, Silent Auction and Art Show).

Sometimes, parents are disappointed that we do not, as a practice, invite parents to serve as daily or weekly volunteers in the classroom. This is a more common practice for Elementary-aged children. Dr. Montessori, however, viewed a critical milestone for young children was to achieve physical, emotional and intellectual independence. She observed that young children may struggle to achieve this independence when they are constantly worrying about their parents 'leaving'. She observed children had the most success when they were able to adapt to a predictable routine of parents departing (i.e. to go to work) and returning (at half-day or full-day program dismissal).

Sharing Your Expertise, Your Culture

If you have a special talent or want to share about your career with the children, please reach out to the teachers to plan a meaningful, developmentally appropriate experience.

Teachers will help to identify / develop classroom materials the children can work with prior to your visit and they can continue to practice after your visit.

Similarly, we are a diverse community at La Jolla Montessori. Many of our families celebrate holidays from around the world. Please make arrangements in advance with your teacher. These special days make life interesting, connect us to our heritage, and ground our identities. Families are invited to share special holidays they celebrate with the class. These experiences provide children with the opportunity to learn about the cultures of other children in their class. If you are interested, we ask that you come to give a short presentation, perhaps read a book with the children, that helps us all learn about your holiday/celebration and how it is celebrated around the world. You and your child may come dressed in the clothing of your country and bring traditional food to further impress upon the child the beautiful differences and similarities of our world. We ask that the presentation be brief, specific, simple and non-denominational.

Grievance Policy

There may be times when you and your child's teacher disagree. If you are having a problem with any aspect of the classroom, then we ask that they first meet with their child's teacher to discuss the issue. Teachers may request time to observe the child, make modifications to the environment, and meet with you again. If the issue cannot be resolved, then you may request a meeting with the teachers and the Director. Again, the Director may request time to observe the child, make additional modifications to the environment, and meet with you again. If you are still not satisfied with the process and/or the Director's decision, we ask that you please notify the Board of Directors in writing. Parents should follow the same procedure if unsatisfied with a policy or program at La Jolla Montessori School.

Statement regarding Smoking, Drugs, and Alcohol on Campus

Smoking, drugs, or alcohol are not permitted on the Beth El Campus or La Jolla Montessori School at any time.

Soliciting

Occasionally, LJMS may participate in a 'selling' fundraiser (i.e. Small Hands Fundraiser from Montessori Services or an Usborne Book Fair). However, beyond these planned fundraisers, there is NO soliciting permitted on the premises. Any contact information shared with parents via classroom rosters are for personal use only and may not be used for solicitation unless previously approved by the LJMS Administration.



Parent Handbook Agreement

*Please print, sign, and return this sheet to the LJMS office within two weeks of your start date.
If you have any questions, you may address them with the office at that time.*

I, _____, have read and understand the information outlined in the
Parent/Guardian

La Jolla Montessori School Parent Handbook. By signing below, I agree to follow the policies and procedures described in the Handbook.

Signature _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian

Signature _____ Date: _____
Parent/Guardian