

LaJolla Montessori SCHOOL



Toddler Parent Handbook

2022-2023

Toddler Parent Handbook

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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 organizations.

We currently enroll children ages 18 months to six years in mixed-aged classrooms. Our year-long Toddler program serves children 18 months to three 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.

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.

Toddler Classroom Guidelines & Procedures

The overarching goals of the toddler program are to provide a trusting environment where young children can learn to separate from their parents, develop their capacity to care for themselves and their environment, develop their ability to communicate their interests and needs, and work on controlling and coordinating both their gross and fine motor movements. During the two-hour work period, Toddlers will be offered individualized lessons to improve their movement, communication, and expression through developmental materials, art and music. We offer a bilingual immersion program in which one teacher speaks only in English (and provides English language lessons) and another teacher speaks only in Spanish (and provides Spanish language lessons).

Our toddler program is comprised of children between 18 months and 3 years of age. There is a 6:1 child-teacher ratio with no more than 16 children in the environment. The goal of this program is to provide the young child with a learning experience away from home and parents, to foster independence and a healthy self-image, and to develop a positive attitude toward learning. The Toddler program is often an introduction to the Montessori Method for both the parent and the child. The environment is designed to support the young child in psychologically separating from their parents. Young children learn to feel safe away from their parents in the presence of loving guides, consistent routines, and interesting work.

The Toddler program allows the young child to enjoy a Montessori experience in a small group setting. The children have an opportunity to explore and experiment in an environment that has been carefully prepared to meet the unique needs of this age. The environment is designed to support toddlers in learning how to care for themselves specifically with regard to separating from parents, using the toilet, and eating independently (or feeding themselves). The environment supports the process of toilet learning with a secondary goal to master using the toilet independently. Guides work with children on learning how to be aware of the need to use the toilet and will prompt children proactively to support success. In the Toddler environment, a guide is always available in the bathroom to support the young child in learning how to dress and undress and use the toilet.

As the children work together in the classroom, they are gently guided in a manner that enhances their innate sense of independence, order, and love of learning. Social skills are developed, as the children become active members of a loving community through real, purposeful experiences. In addition, students are introduced to Spanish as a second language. Toddler children will tentatively transition into the Primary program around their third birthday. The Toddler program lays the foundation for the Primary program.

Toilet Learning in the Toddler Community

Dr. Montessori observed that, generally, the sensitive period for toilet learning begins around 18 months. During this time, we strive to begin the child's toilet education. The goal of toilet education is for your child to learn to use the toilet independently. This process requires both physical and psychological readiness. These signs not only involve longer periods of dryness and physical independence with taking pants on and off but also that a child is showing signs of awareness that she has to (or has already) urinate(d). Lastly, Montessori teachers look for signs that a child is becoming interested in toilet learning. When your child appears ready to begin toilet learning, our general process involves: preparing the home environment for the child to use that toilet, purchasing clothes that support toilet learning, initiating invitations to use the toilet at common elimination times (waking, eating, departing/returning home), using appropriate terms for parts of the body, toilet, and bodily waste, and teaching your child how to wash hands after. Parents will be notified when signs of readiness have been apparent in the classroom and urged to support this process at home.

We are happy to offer our support in the toilet training process. When your child is ready, we will recommend beginning the toileting process. This will involve setting up your home environment and sending them to school in underwear. Once a child is ready to begin toilet learning, we eliminate diapers. We do not use pull-ups during the day. We ask that parents bring in several pairs of training underwear. Throughout the day we will consistently invite, encourage, and remind the child to use the toilet. You'll be pleasantly surprised to find your child excitedly indicating when they need to use the toilet and learning how to pull down and up their pants! Learning to use the toilet affords the young child an immense sense of pride and confidence.

Daily Reports

Throughout the day, teachers carefully track your child's toilet use (time, type of movement, self-initiated or invited), quality of meal at lunch, amount of time napping, and any changes of clothes. This data will be shared with you in a daily report. These reports are designed to inform and support parents with toilet learning, nutrition, and rest.

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. 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.

Please send your child to school with **4 changes of clothes** (shirt, pants, underwear and socks). Each item of clothing should be clearly labeled with your child's first and last name. These clothes will be stored in a cubby that your child can access. Whenever your child's clothing has become wet, for any reason, he/she will be offered clean, dry clothes to change into from their classroom's supply. Wet and or soiled clothing will be sent home at the end of the day in a wet bag. For each set of clothes we send home, we ask that you please send back a fresh set. We are not responsible for unmarked clothing.

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.

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, 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 Toddler Classroom. 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 to 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 toddler 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 12+ 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 Toddler Community, one or two children will take turns working to prepare the table for lunch daily. This involves arranging the tables and setting placemats, plates, glasses, silverware and napkins. Toddler teachers prepare each child's plate. They 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) and how to clean up at the end of the meal. Below are some notes to consider when planning lunch for their young child.

- La Jolla Montessori School is a peanut and tree nut-free environment. Nut-butters, in particular, are really dangerous in the preschool setting because the children have not yet developed the internal hygiene standards we need to ensure the safety of all children. Please do not send any nut-butter spreads (including Nutella).
 - We recommend alternatives, such as sunflower seed butter (sun-butter) or pumpkin seed butter, that taste similarly and can be spread on crackers and sandwiches. In the past, we have found parents can make the switch to these alternatives and most children don't notice the change.
- We ask that you please pack a low fat, low sugar, and high protein lunch.
- Throughout the year, children will learn how 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.

Napping at School

The State of California requires that any child under the age of four years old be brought to a napping area and be given an opportunity to sleep. A quiet environment will be provided for families who need an extended day for their Toddlers. We will provide a mat and a sheet for your child to rest. We ask that you send a small (crib-sized) blanket. Please make certain it has your child’s name on it. The blanket will be sent home on Fridays to be washed and must be returned by the following Monday. Children are not required to sleep. However, Toddlers must demonstrate the ability to rest quietly during the nap period. If the napping environment is not a good fit for your child, the Guide will work with the parent (i.e. he/she excessively cries or disturbs other children), and for their own benefit and that of the other children, LJMS will re-assign him/her to a half-day schedule.

Toddlers who are enrolled for a full-day program are invited to sleep in a community of no more than 10 children inside their classroom. Children prepare for naps by using the toilet/changing clothes after lunch. Children are invited to rest on a cot with a sheet in a quiet room. To help children adapt to the environment and to learn to put themselves to sleep, parents are encouraged to send them with a blanket to snuggle, if necessary Guides play soft music to help children calm down, and guides may rub their back gently. In general, we discourage sending additional comfort objects (i.e. stuffed animals/’lovies’) as children can become distressed if these items don’t return home/don’t come to school. 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 two weeks. We expect toddlers in the nap room to sleep or rest quietly for the entire period. If, after two weeks, your child does not seem to be adapting to napping in a community, we may schedule a conference to discuss the extent to which your child is ready for a full day with napping.

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 Toddler classroom, birthday celebrations contain two 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 (i.e. first words, favorite toys, special trips). Don't worry, we send home a packet that guides you through the whole process.

Then, on the day of the celebration, your child's teachers will gather the children together to tell the story of your child's life. The children sing "Happy Birthday" in both English and Spanish. The teacher will light a 'birthday candle' for your child to blow out. 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.

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 cakes/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.

Finally, 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.

Transition to Primary

Children in the Toddler program will transition into the Primary program around their third birthday. It is possible that this transition may occur earlier should the child show the developmental readiness, be completely toilet trained, and with parent support. Children between 30 to 36 months old may be asked to stay in the Toddler program for developmental maturation before going to a Primary classroom.

Parents must observe the Primary environments before their child makes the transition. Parents may observe, unobtrusively from the one-way windows. Observation, attending Parent Education events, and consulting with your child's guides will provide you with valuable information and insight about LJMS's whole Montessori program and how it meets the developmental needs of your child from 3 to 6 years old.

Understanding Pushing, Hitting & Biting

Young children push, hit, or bite for many reasons. Toddlers are still in the process of acquiring language to meet their own needs. They may push or hit another child to get something they want or to 'get away' from a child in their space. They often view their mouth as a tool for solving problems and may bite as a way to cope with frustration, anxiety or anger. From the young child's perspective, pushing, hitting, and biting are often effective strategies to get attention, cope with feelings of being crowded, and express anger. But, these behaviors are a type of 'misbehavior' that can presents danger to the teachers and other children in the class. For this reason, teachers must closely monitor and redirect any child who is hitting, pushing, or biting.

If your child is involved in an incident of hitting, pushing, or biting, the Teachers will notify you via an incident report. This report will offer clues as to what preceded the incident and how the teachers' responded to the indecent. Dr. Montessori believed that children 'misbehaved' when the demands of the environment (social or physical) exceeded the child's capacity. Thus, teachers will work with families to observe and modify the environment and to offer the child alternative strategies and language for coping with frustration.

In order to protect all children, repeated incidences of biting cannot be tolerated at LJMS. Repeated biting may signal the child is not ready to be enrolled in a formal schooling setting. If a second instance of biting occurs, teachers will schedule a meeting with the child's family, the teachers, and the director to discuss how we can work together as a team to eliminate the child's need to bite. After a third instance, the child may be dismissed.

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 seats on the passenger side. For the safety of our staff and children, **please avoid passing cars on the right.**

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.

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 to 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. Our 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.

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 of 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 either a half-day or full-day program dismissal).

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 CAMPUS AT ANY TIME.

No Solicitation Policy

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