

# LaJolla Montessori SCHOOL

## *Primary Parent Handbook*

*2025-2026*

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## Welcome

Welcome to La Jolla Montessori School! We strive to provide an exceptional early childhood educational program 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 home-like 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 (an 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. We follow Dr. Montessori's pedagogy to design classrooms that allow for children to experience maximum independence and movement throughout the day. Materials in our curriculum are child-sized, age appropriate, and made of natural materials. Our teachers prepare individualized lesson plans for each child and introduce new lessons to children in a one-on-one format. We offer a 5-day program for all Toddler children with half-day, full-day, and full-day with extended care options depending on availability.

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. For some children, this may be their first school experience. Children who complete our toddler program may enter the Primary environment at the age of 2 ½ to 3 years old and continue in the same environment through their Kindergarten year. Our Primary curriculum focuses on developing the young child's concentration, communication, problem-solving and sense of self. Our Primary teachers also support the young child in orienting to the traditional language and mathematics learning and the expectations of group learning school environments. We offer a 5-day program for all Primary students with a half-day option for children under the age of 4 years old.

## 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, 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 is 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 and inclusion.

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.

### Enrollment in the Extended Day Program

La Jolla Montessori School offers an Extended Day Program (EDP) after school to enrolled students. **Space is limited** as a function of the capacity of our playgrounds and staffing. The **prepaid** EDP rate is \$11 per hour. Parents may enroll in EDP services on either a **3-day a week or 5-day a week plan** and pay for half-hour increments. EDP care is available until 5:30 pm; however there are fewer spaces available for the first hour (7:30 - 8:30) and the last hour 4:30 - 5:30pm. Please fill out an EDP application/schedule to let us know your needs each month. (Monthly rates attached in the appendices.)

We have a limited number of **drop-in** spaces in our extended care - and can vary based on daily absences. Drop-in is available on a first-come, first-serve basis. We charge \$13.00 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.

Our aftercare program is play-based and staffed by qualified early childhood teachers who assist our Montessori Guides during the school-day. Children have the opportunity to play on the playground for the entire time. We supplement free-play with constructive toys and arts and crafts activities. Each day, children are offered a healthy snack. LJMS keeps our kitchen stocked with fresh fruit (apples, bananas, oranges), cheeses, and crackers that teachers use for afternoon snack preparation materials. **Parents do not need to send their children with an afternoon snack.** However, children who stay until 5:30pm may want / need an additional, healthy snack in their lunchbox that we can offer around 4:30pm. Please label your child's EDP snack so that classroom teachers may encourage children to 'save it' for the afternoon.

Sample Extended Day Afternoon Snack Menu					
	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Fruit / Vegetable	Cucumber Slices	Half Banana	Apple Slices	Carrots Sticks	Raisins
Grains / Cheese	Crackers with Cream Cheese	Graham Crackers	Half Cheese Stick and Crackers	Tortilla Chips and Ranch Dressing	Pretzels
* Snack is served daily by 3:15pm. Children may also bring an additional, labeled snack from home and can also be invited to finish any uneaten items from their lunchbox.					

We value outdoor play (time away from screens). Even when it rains, we still strive to provide children in the EDP program with outdoor play - though, for safety purposes, we may need to limit the number of children on the playground at a given time and may rotate groups to play. On rainy days, we use our outdoor patio for snack and crafts and classroom space for constructive play. We will try to get the children outside-time as long as it is not a heavy / steady rain. When it rains, please send your children with sturdy shoes and jackets - so that they may still play in the rain. If they get too wet, we can invite them to change into their spare set of clothes.

**Change of Clothes:** Extended care teachers may not have access to the spare clothes in your child's classroom. We need to keep at least TWO sets of spare clothes for your child in extended care. Please send one set of spare clothes in labeled ziploc (or wet) bags. If your child has an accident (or gets wet from water work), the teachers will send home their soiled / wet clothes in the ziploc / wet bag. Please send back a replacement set the next day.

**Late Fees:** 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 late fee is \$20 for the first 5 minutes and \$1 per minute thereafter. Late fees will be added to your next month's tuition bill. Recurring problems with late pick up times may result in parents being charged the additional half hour.

## 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.
- 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.

In order to reduce plastic waste, parents are asked to purchase and label **two reusable wet bags** for sending home wet / soiled clothes. 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.<sup>1</sup>

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

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<sup>1</sup> Parents can label items on tags using a sharpie. Smaller items, or items without tags, can be labeled with your child's initials.



child. We strongly discourage clothing with cartoon characters. 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 child with a separate morning snack. LJMS keeps our kitchen stocked with bulk non-perishable items such as crackers, tortilla chips, pretzels, items for baking as well as cheeses that teachers use for snack preparation materials. Each week, families will rotate shopping for supplements to the community snack (fruits, vegetables, flowers). 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. guacamole, making mini pizzas, etc.) Teachers will share the snack menu weekly. Parents who are concerned about their child not eating the snack offered (or not eating enough snack) may supplement with healthy options from home. Please label any item you wish the teachers to offer for snack.

**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.** We need snack items by 9am on Monday morning.

In the primary environment, preparing and taking snack is considered a type of "work" the child does. Dr. Montessori believed that limits and needing to wait help children to build their self-discipline and capacity for self-control. And, just like any other work in the environment, there are limits related to how we take snack:

- At the start of each session, the teachers will review with each child how to take snack and offer a *Grace and Courtesy* lesson in how to tell a teacher if they are hungry or if they are having problems taking snack.
- We ask children to wait to take snack until the other children have prepared it (around 9am).
- We ask children to put away any work before taking snack.
- We ask children to take turns (in twos, threes, fours) to eat snack. They may need to wait for a free space at the snack table.

- When taking snack, we invite children to take a reasonable portion (noted by cards with pictures / quantities).
- We ask children to wait to take a 'second snack' until after all of the other children have had their first snack.
- Teachers check during group time to make sure all children have had an opportunity to take snack before going out to play.

Our teachers work with children to develop self-control when taking turns as well as taking a 'reasonable portion' of snack. With 12+ children in the community, children may have to learn how to keep busy while waiting for a turn to take a snack. Our goal is to support children in learning to take snack independently (serving, eating, and cleaning up) at a designated snack table.

Our teachers do recognize that waiting for snack in the classroom can be difficult and that some children need more snack than others. For this reason, when a teacher notices a child is having difficulty with snack, they may offer the child a photo card to place by their work to 'save it' for clean up after they have eaten snack. This way the children do not have to choose between cleaning up and eating if they are hungry. Alternatively, they may encourage parents to send an additional healthy snack (labeled) in their lunchbox that the child can take at any time.

### 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.

- 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.
- Children learn to set their own plates for lunch. Some brands of food-storage containers are more child-friendly than others. **Please be thoughtful about the containers you send for lunch.** Bento boxes, in particular, are very difficult for the children to independently transfer their lunch to their plate. 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.
  - We cannot serve children under the age of 5 years old whole grapes or grape tomatoes / olives – 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.
  - Similarly, raw carrots as well as hot dogs/sausages represent potential choking hazards to children under the age of 5 years old. Please cut these in half lengthwise (to reduce the diameter).
- Some foods, such as popcorn, represent choking hazards that cannot be served at school.
- Lunch needs 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. If your child does not want to eat breakfast at home it is OK to send them to school with their breakfast.

## Afternoon Work Period / Full Day Option with Rest

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. **Guides prioritize lessons for the Kindergarten children during the afternoon work period;** younger children who received their lessons in the morning are expected to choose 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 who are 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).

We can accommodate three-year-old children who demonstrate the ability to sustain concentration and are able to work independently in the afternoon work period. However, if a three-year old child is not napping and the afternoon work period is not a good fit for the child (i.e. he/she excessively cries or disturbs other children), the Guides will work with parents to find a solution. If the child continues to disturb the afternoon work period, it may be a sign they are not ready for a full-day at school. For their own benefit and that of the other children, LJMS will re-assign him/her to a half-day schedule.

### 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. Children in the Primary program are working towards toilet independence. While we can offer children a pull-up/night underpants to use for napping, we cannot force them to use one. If a child has a wet-event while napping, we will simply help them clean up / change their clothes and send home their soiled nap sheet and blanket.

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 crib-sized sheet and blanket to snuggle. Teachers may play white noise or soft music to help children calm down, and may offer to rub / pat their back gently. If your child needs an additional comfort object, we recommend rotating different objects on a weekly basis. Please label all nap items and your child's nap bag. We are not responsible for unlabeled items. Nap items will be sent home on Fridays to be washed and must be returned by the following Monday. Items that are not sent home on Fridays are washed and will be placed in the lost and found.

It can take a young child several weeks to adapt to resting / sleeping at school. 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.

**We do not provide daily reports for Primary children regarding the amount of rest/sleep.** Again, it is also important to understand that children are not required to sleep (according to State of CA standards). Children who have not fallen asleep after 30 minutes of quiet rest must be permitted to join the afternoon work period. 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 and, if they are not sleeping, demonstrate the ability to join the afternoon work period without disrupting the older children. 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.

### 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 permitting children to bring treasured items from home. 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. Or, because we value taking turns at school, a child may offer a treasured item to a friend who may not want to give it back. Items can also get lost, broken, or may become a distraction to working with the materials in the learning environment. We do not recommend watches for young children until their kindergarten year.

We ask that you help us to avoid these conflicts by leaving all cherished items at home or 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.

In the Primary community, parents may be invited to participate in the birthday celebration (to help tell the child's story). However, some young children (or children newly transitioned into the classroom) may find it difficult to say goodbye to mom and dad after the celebration. If you, or the teachers, are concerned your child will become distressed at the end of the celebration they may invite you to observe from the window or bring your child home at the conclusion. 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 can 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.

During the kindergarten year, we continue to work on important practical life skills such as learning to tie bows, cutting food with a knife. Teachers will have conversations with parents when it is an appropriate time to transition children from shoes with velcro closures to laces. They may also encourage you to stop cutting your children lunch items so that children may practice at school.

We do not recommend wrist watches for children until their kindergarten year. If your child is interested in wearing a watch, we encourage finding them an inexpensive analog watch (with hands and numbers). As your child comes to understand the passage of time, they can naturally transition to a digital watch.

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. It is 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. 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.

**Late arrival and early departure can be disruptive for children and classrooms.** Children need firm consistency and repetition to help them define the boundaries and limits of their home and school environments. Each classroom has a morning routine that involves greeting the children, assisting them to put away their belongings, inviting them to the bathroom (toileting / diaper check), and washing their hands. The teachers wait to begin new lessons until the class has arrived and is settled. Children who are late are more likely to be greeted by support staff (not their teacher).

**Arriving on-time represents a type of parent involvement with our school.** 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. At 9:00am our support staff begin their in-classroom duties. Parents who arrive after 9:00am are required to park and may need to wait until staff are available to greet and receive your child.

### 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. **Please drive slowly when on campus.** Your attention in this matter is greatly appreciated.

We have three active drop-off / pick-up Gates with three spaces available. 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 while teachers are unloading children.** If LJMS staff see that the line is getting backed up, they may pause drop off to allow cars to pass.

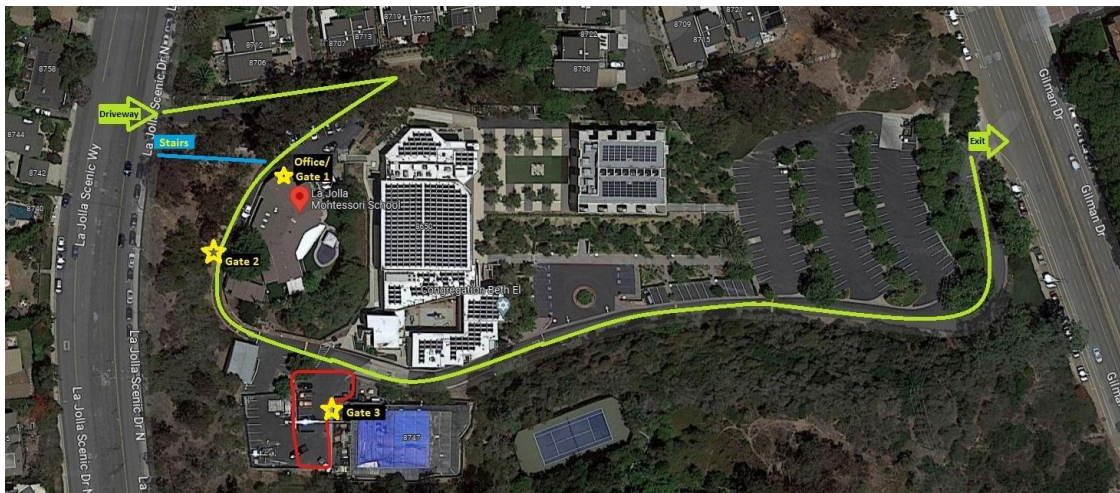
If you drop off by vehicle, pull forward as far as possible. We have enough room to fit three cars at each Gate. **Please remain in your car.** A teacher or staff will approach the car, say good morning, and welcome your child. They will unbuckle your child and help them down from the car. Teachers will 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 step / grass, wait for a friend, or chat until they are ready to walk on their own into their classroom.

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 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.



Starfish & Whale Primary Rooms (Gate 2) and Nautilus Primary Room (Gate 3)

*School starts promptly at 8:00am.*

*Please drop your child off at Gate 2 and Gate 3 between 8:00 and 8:15.*

*The Full-Day Program pick-up at Gate 2 and Gate 3 is between 2:15 and 2:30.*

Sea Turtle Primary Room (Gate 1):

*School starts promptly at 8:15am.*

*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 between 12:30-12:45 from their Drop off Gate.***

Dolphin Toddler Rooms (Gates 1& 2) and Jellyfish & Octopus Toddler Rooms (Gate 3):

*School starts promptly at 8:30am.*

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

*The Half-Day Program Toddler pick-up is between 12:15-12:30 from Gate 2\* and Gate 3.*

*\*Dolphin Dismisses from Gate 1, Otter from the Playground*

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

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.

It is important to note that we conduct health checks upon arrival. **Any child who appears to staff to show signs of fever / illness may be excluded from class and may have to be taken 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. When walking back to your car, **please insist that your child holds your hand.**

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

### Procure 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 Procure automated system.

To use Procure for communication with the teachers, parents must download the Procure App to their phones. Procure 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 Procure 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, the teachers can use their phones as a 'kiosk' for signing the children in / out. To sign your children in/out you or your authorized pick up MUST know your unique four-digit pin number.
  - Teachers will 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 / out.
- If you forget to bring your phone, teachers must ask you to sign out on their device.

We will not allow your child to go home with anyone who is not on your emergency card. **Please notify the school in writing via ProCare if someone other than you will be picking up your child.** Please include a phone number for the individual so we may reach them in the event we need to contact them about your child becoming ill or they arrive late to pick up your child.

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.**

- Teachers at each gate will have a mobile device that can be used as a 'kiosk' for signing children out. Any 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.
  - Alternate caregivers will need to show a form or picture identification to receive your child. At times, we have floating assistant teachers who help with pick-up, they may not know your regular caregiver. Every time someone other than yourself picks up your child, please remind them they could be asked for their identification.

## 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:

<b><u>Symptoms</u></b>	<b><u>Children May Not Return to School Until</u></b>
<b>Fever of 100 or above</b>	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.
<b>Covid / Cold / Flu Symptoms</b>	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.
<b>Diarrhea/Vomiting</b>	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.
<b>Sore Throat / Painful Earache</b>	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.
<b>Red Weepy Eyes /Discharging Eyes</b>	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.
<b>Rash (i.e. Face, Mouth, Hand, Feet)</b>	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.
<b>Head Lice, Scabies</b>	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.

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

### 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 "[\*Germes 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.

## Campus Safety and Security

Our school benefits from many of the security measures put in place by the Congregation Beth El. In addition to gates that restrict vehicle and pedestrian access to campus, both of our buildings are surrounded by 8' security fences that remain closed and locked throughout the school day. We also have an on-site security guard who monitors the 50+ cameras on campus. Nevertheless, because of our proximity to USCD and the UTC commercial area, we do from time to time receive alerts about security issues in the area. In each case our goal is to be as transparent and reassuring as possible with parents about how we are responding to safety and security events. **To balance the need for safety and security with the need to maintain a sense of normalcy and a peaceful environment for the children**, there are three different kinds of alerts you might receive through ProCare:

### **Alert One: "Gates are Closed"**

This alert on ProCare means that we have received an alert from the larger community (which includes downtown La Jolla, UCSD, Gillman shops and UTC Westfield). These alerts can be vague and do not pose any immediate threat to the campus. Nevertheless, if needed, we will send an administrator to supervise the traffic coming on campus from the La Jolla Scenic Gate. Our on-site security guard will then monitor the Gillman gate. *The school will continue with normal operations.* Your child is not likely to know anything unusual happened at school.

"Dear parents,

We have received an alert from the community about a possible security issue in the area. At this time, out of an abundance of caution, we are closing our gates to ensure the safety of all students and staff. If you were on your way to campus, we kindly ask that you wait an additional 30 minutes before coming to pick up your children, or until we receive confirmation that it is safe to reopen the gates. We apologize for the inconvenience and thank you for your understanding and cooperation"

### **Alert Two: "Shelter in Place"**

This alert on ProCare means that we have received a specific alert from the nearby community. These alerts will be very specific about an immediate threat to the campus. For the safety of the children and staff, we must bring everyone indoors. *The school will continue with modified operations; we work as if it is a 'rainy-day, indoor playtime'.*

"Dear parents,

We have received an alert from the community about a threat to our immediate community. At this time, out of an abundance of caution, we are sheltering in place to ensure the safety of all students and staff. Please do not come to campus until we receive an all clear. The children are indoors and we will not be opening the pedestrian or car gates."

These moments can be very scary. But it is important to remember that the safety of the children is our top priority and that our campus is built for security. It is also important to remember that our teachers prioritize the mental well-being of the children. They will be doing the hard work of protecting our children from the anxiety these situations can cause. Your primary age child may know something unusual happened at school if this happens during a time when they usually go out to play. "What we will be telling them is that there is a problem on the playground and it is not safe to play there right now. We have to wait until it is safe." On the other hand, they may be so excited to play with the constructive toys (trains, magnatiles, legos, fuse beads etc.) that they may not be aware.

### **Alert Three: “Threat on Campus”**

We hope and pray that we never have to give this alert. Nevertheless, we live in a time when it is important to prepare for these safety issues. During our summer professional development week, we practice lock-down drills with staff. This alert on ProCare means that we have been told by someone on campus that there is an unsafe individual on campus. For the safety of the children and staff, we must bring the children indoors to the safest area of each classroom where we gather quietly together. *The school and all gates onto campus are closed. Do not come to campus. We must silence our devices until police arrive and secure the campus.*

“Dear parents,  
We have been told there is an unsafe individual on campus. Children and staff are indoors. We must cease all communication until the situation is safe. Please do not come to campus until we receive an all clear.”

### **Fire and Earthquake Preparedness**

The State of California requires that we are prepared to respond to natural disasters such as earthquake and fire safety. Three times of year (Fall, Spring, Summer) we practice fire and earthquake drills with the children. In the event of an earthquake or fire alert in the buildings, we first evacuate the buildings, take attendance, await first responders, and determine the extent to which we can continue with a normal school day. All families are required to prepare an emergency kit that we keep on campus in the event that our buildings are determined to be ‘unsafe’ and we need to await parents coming to campus to pick up their child. **These emergency packs are called our “Hugs from Home” kits.** These kits are meant to provide children with both emotional comfort (a photo of family, loving words in a card, a favorite book etc) and physical comfort (an emergency blanket to keep them warm, snacks to keep them from experiencing hunger). We keep these emergency kits in weather proof bins outside of the buildings along with our emergency water supply.

In the event of a fire emergency near campus, we would first determine the level of threat anticipating it may take parents up to an hour to get back to campus. Fires can move quickly and be unpredictable. So, out of an abundance of caution, we may decide to evacuate campus for the safety and security of all children and staff. Evacuation procedures include:

- Alerting parents via ProCare of the need to evacuate.
- Determining how long we can remain on campus for parents to pick up their child from campus.
- Moving children to a safe on-campus pick up location (either at the top of La Jolla Scenic or the bottom of Gillman Dr.)
- If necessary, moving children in staff vehicles to a safe off-campus pick up location.
- If necessary, moving children in staff vehicles to an evacuation site as determined by SDFD.



## 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.

Conflict between young children is complex. Young children (3-years and under) who react by biting / hitting / scratching, in general, do not understand that they are hurting the other child. Older children who react with these behaviors may not yet have developed strategies to cope with social conflicts with peers. ***As educators, our task is to help develop all children's capacities to resolve conflicts in a peaceful way.***

We consider parents our partners in helping the child learn self-discipline. Because we view helping children learn to regulate their emotions and have positive relationships with their peers as part of our work, our teachers generally handle the majority of disruptive behavior in the classroom without needing to notify parents. However, when behavior escalates, teachers may need to notify parents of challenges with behavior, may ask parents' questions about observations of the behavior at home, with other family members (i.e. siblings), and in other settings (i.e. at the park / birthday parties).

Below is our general approach to responding to conflict and disruptive behavior:

- 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.
  - We 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."
  - We offer language to help children express their needs such as: "Can I have a turn?"
  - We offer strategies to help children solve problems such as: "What would you like to do while you wait for your turn?"
- When children struggle to manage their behavior, we may invite them to observe the class (with teachers' support).
  - We may 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 documenting the frequency of challenging behavior with incident reports and/or 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).
  - Our school does not have the capacity to provide long term shadows for individual children. Should a child require a shadow for more than two-three weeks, parents may be asked to cover the costs associated with additional staffing.
- 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 the other children in the classroom / program. 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). Please review Appendix 3 for how we respond to escalating behaviors.

If the aggression is severe (example: hitting, kicking, punching) your child may be asked to 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. We will work with families who are seeking the support of specialists to meet their child’s needs. However, if we have a child who continues to be unsafe after we have explained our concerns to parents, and parents do not appear to be responding to our concerns, the child may be asked to leave the classroom.

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.
  - There are two different 'chats' available in ProCare. The office chat is only visible to administrators (teachers cannot see posts in the office chat). The classroom chat is visible to parents, teachers, and the office. **Parents should generally use the 'classroom chat' to communicate with the office and teachers.** The office will use the 'office chat' for all school communications.
- Weekly Updates and Snack Menu: Each week, 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.
- Monthly School-Wide Newsletters: 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.
- School Conferences: We conduct Parent-Teacher conferences twice per school year in order to keep you updated on your child's progress. Prior to conferences ***These conferences are required for all parents at La Jolla Montessori School and are crucial to your child's success.***
- Classroom Photo Sharing: Each classroom maintains a photo-sharing website: Google Photos. Only parents in the classroom community have access to the website. Once a month, teachers will upload photos they have taken of children working in the environment.
- 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*).

### 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 after their break, during nap, 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'.

Our teachers have devoted their lives to supporting the development of young children. Our Guides have the equivalent of Master-level training in early childhood development and Montessori pedagogy. They work hard to ensure the safety and well-being of your children each and every day. Parents observed speaking disrespectfully or aggressively to any staff member will be dismissed from campus immediately.

### 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
- Attend Required in-Classroom Observations prior to Parent Conferences
- Attend the Give Your Parents 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".

It is important to note that the State of California protects your rights as a parent to inspect their child's classroom unannounced. A reasonable inspection lasts for 20-30 minutes. If you require a longer observation, we can follow up with scheduling a time to observe and then meet with the teachers.

### A Montessori Perspective on Parent Involvement

At La Jolla Montessori School, parent involvement takes many forms:

- supporting an on-time and upbeat arrival each morning
- sending your child with healthy lunch
- participating in community snacks
- observing your child in the classroom setting (2x a year)
- attending parent conferences
- partnering with your child's teachers to support their adaptation to the classroom
- sharing your expertise or culture during group-time (see below)
- assisting with material preparation
- volunteering with gardening or 'spring cleaning'
- volunteering to help plan and offer Community Events (i.e. Fall Festival, End of Year Celebration).

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).

### 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 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.

### 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.

## Appendices

### **Appendix 1: 2025-2026 Tuition and Fee Schedule**



Date	Tuition and Fees
June 12, 2025	Summer Session 1 Tuition Due
July 18, 2025	Summer Session 2 Tuition Due
August 25, 2025	2nd Tuition Installment Due; Annual Tuition Option Due in order to receive a 5% discount for paying yearly in advance.
September 25, 2025	3rd Tuition Installment Due
October 24, 2025	4th Tuition Installment Due
November 25, 2025	5th Tuition Installment Due. <i>The 'December Tuition' Installment is the same amount, regardless of the length of the school days in the month.</i>
December 19, 2025	6th Tuition Installment Due ( <i>last full school day prior to Winter Break</i> ).
January 23, 2026	7th Tuition Installment Due; \$400 Enrollment & Materials Fee for 2025-2026 Due.
February 25, 2026	8th Tuition Installment Due; \$300 Summer Enrollment Deposit Due for re-enrolling children.
March 25, 2026	9th Tuition Installment Due
April 24, 2026	10th Tuition Installment Tuition Due
May 25, 2026	1st Tuition Installment for June 2026 Tuition (deposit is non-refundable) Due. Reserves your enrollment for September 2026. <i>The 'June Tuition' Installment is the same amount, regardless of the length of the school days in the month.</i>
June 18, 2026	Summer Session 1 Tuition Due (\$300 Summer Deposit is credited)
July 24, 2026	Summer Session 2 Tuition Due
August 25, 2026	2nd Tuition Installment Due; Annual Tuition Option Due in order to receive a 5% discount for paying yearly in advance.



## Frequently Asked Enrollment Questions

### 1: When are the tuition installments due?

Tuition Installments are due on the 25<sup>th</sup> of each previous month. A \$25 late fee will be assessed weekly if La Jolla Montessori School does not receive payment by the 1<sup>st</sup> of the month. Late fee payments are due upon receipt of a statement. Application fees are due with an application.

**Plan A – Annual** – Single payment of complete school year, less 5%. This annual payment is payable any time before August 25<sup>th</sup>.

**Plan B –Monthly Installments** – The annual tuition listed above can be broken into 10 equal installments. Monthly Installments begin August 25<sup>th</sup> and are due on the 25<sup>th</sup> of every month through April 25<sup>th</sup>. **These payments are the same amount each month regardless of the length of each month and are non-refundable. There will be no tuition payment for June 2025 due on May 25, 2025.** Please refer to "2024-2025 Tuition Installment and Fee Schedule" on the last page.

### 2: What discounts does La Jolla Montessori School offer?

LJMS offers a 5% discount for the younger sibling(s) of a child currently enrolled at the school. La Jolla Montessori School offers a 5% discount to Parents that pay the school year in advance. This discount is not offered beyond September 25<sup>th</sup>.

### 3: What if I need to withdraw my child from La Jolla Montessori School during the school year?

In order to terminate the enrollment contract without penalty, parents / guardians must give LJMS a 30-day notice that you will be leaving the school. Parents are responsible for tuition 30-day from the notice to leave. Additionally, the June 2025 deposit is non-refundable.

### 4: What if I prepay the year of tuition and need to withdraw my child?

In order to terminate the enrollment contract without penalty, parents / guardians must give LJMS a 30-day notice that you will be leaving the school. Parents who prepay will receive a prorated tuition refund. The refund will be calculated from 30 days of your withdrawal date to the end of the school year, less the June 2025 installment.

### 5: What if my child does not attend school for any period during the school year?

La Jolla Montessori School's tuition is an annual tuition divided into 10 equal installments regardless of attendance. You are responsible for paying each tuition installment on the due date as per your agreement.

### 6: How does tuition for the Summer Sessions work?

In February, we will open up registration for Summer Session 1 and Summer Session 2. Both sessions are five weeks long. Summer affords our staff an opportunity to take time off and travel. To accommodate staff time off, LJMS reserves the right to limit class size. In order to staff these sessions, parents must reserve a placement for each session with a deposit that goes towards summer tuition. Summer tuition is offered at the same monthly rate as the annual school year. However, parents who enroll their child in a summer session agree to pay for the entire five week session - even if they are not attending for all five weeks. Children who re-enroll for Fall or who have a sibling that is re-enrolling have priority in the summer.

## Appendix 2: 2025-2026 Monthly EDP Rates and Fees (no change)



Extended Day Program Hours & Rates - Monthly (19 and 12 Days avg.) 2024-2025 School Year								
<b>Primary</b>								
Days Per Week	Hours Per Day						AM Day Care (7:30-8:15)	AM & PM 7:30am-5:30pm
	2:30-3:00	2:30-3:30	2:30-4:00	2:30-4:30	2:30-5:00	2:30-5:30		
5 Days	\$105	\$209	\$314	\$418	\$523	\$627	\$157	\$705
3 Days	\$66	\$132	\$198	\$264	\$330	\$396	\$99	\$446
<b>Toddler</b>								
Days Per Week	Hours Per Day						AM Day Care (7:30-8:30)	AM & PM 7:30am-5:30pm
	3:00-3:30	3:00-4:00	3:00-4:30	3:00-5:00	3:00-5:30			
5 Days	-	\$105	\$209	\$314	\$418	\$523	\$209	\$627
3 Days	-	\$66	\$132	\$198	\$264	\$330	\$132	\$396
<p><b>Afternoon EDP is only available for Full-Day children; EDP space is limited and based on availability.</b>  Please fill out the EDP Request Form if you need to change your child's Extended Day care needs.  We will need to receive this form at least 1 week ahead of time or you will be charged for your original program.</p> <p><b>"Drop-in" EDP is on an as-needed/emergency basis only and is subject to availability.</b></p> <p><b>The charge for Drop-in EDP is \$13.00 per hour or any part thereof. Please call to reserve your space in EDP.</b></p> <p><b>Late pick up fees are \$20 for the first 5 minutes and \$1/minute thereafter. We staff according to the parent's needs.</b>  When you arrive late to pick up your child, that may cause us to go over ratio if we haven't planned on having your child in EDP at that time. <b>This rate will go up to \$25 for the first 5 minutes and \$1/minute thereafter at 5:30pm.</b>  If you arrive after 5:30pm your child will be waiting in the office and your account will be charged a fee.</p>								

### **Appendix 3: Behavioral Incidents - Prevention and Response**

1. We try to prevent incidents of biting / hitting / scratching / pushing etc:
  - Most common cause of behavioral incidents is crowding: two or more children having conflict close together. We try to prevent crowding, especially in the play structures with limits on how many children can be in the play structure at a time.
  - The second most common cause of behavioral incidents is overstimulation: one child is overstimulated by the sounds / movements of another child (i.e. loud crying / shouting can be a big trigger). We try to monitor for sounds of dysregulation in the classroom / on the playground.
  - The third most common cause of behavioral incidents happens when children are having difficulties taking / waiting for turns with materials. In addition to giving language for asking for a turn we can use timers to support giving turns to other children.
  - Finally, a common cause of biting in children ages 3 years and younger is speech delay - specifically when a child cannot communicate that they need space, want a turn etc. We monitor the number of behavioral incidents a child is having and their response to intervention.
2. We take a developmental approach to responding to a behavioral incidents:
  - When an incident happens, we separate the children and talk with each of them. Both children need guidance and language.
    - Make a connection: "I see that you wanted....."
    - Set the limit: "Pushing / hitting hurts. You hurt..."
    - Offer language: "We use our words. Next time say..."
    - We emphasize the importance of getting a teacher for help when words are not working.
  - We strive to create opportunities for children to reconcile when both children are calm and ready. Reconciliation can take many forms:
    - Both children will be invited to say how they feel and set limits.
    - Children may be invited to offer an apology or a hug.
    - Children may be invited to get an ice pack (if the incident resulted in hurting another child's body)
    - Children may be invited to get another child's water bottle (or go with them to get a sip of water)
    - Children may be asked to promise not to repeat the behavior again.

*\*Note: It is important to understand that Dr. Montessori did not believe in making children say "I'm sorry." She wanted them to understand what those words meant. We*

*focus in the Primary program on providing opportunities for children to experience reconciliation.*

3. Both sets of parents need to receive a report about the incident. If there is not enough time to write the incident before the parent arrives, parents should be notified verbally at pick up.
  - Incident reports in ProCare will state:
    - When and where the incident happened
    - A description of what was observed / reported by the child
    - How we calmed each child
    - What language we offered each child
    - If there was reconciliation
    - If there is a plan to observe / separate moving forward
4. We recognize behavioral incidents are emotional for parents. Some behavioral incidents, such as biting\*, require a phone call.
  - If it is the first incident, the teacher or Ms. Holly can call.
  - After a second incident happens, Ms. Heather needs to call the family.
    - After repeated incidents, the admin will meet with teachers at the end of the day to formulate a plan.
    - Teachers will follow up, at the end of the day, with a phone call to parents.

*\* Note: While biting is still considered a typical reaction for children ages three and under to deploy when feeling crowded or threatened, it is not an adaptive response. It is our responsibility as a school to do our best to prevent, observe, and respond to biting in a way that teaches children to solve problems in a more adaptive way.*

5. We respond with a series of interventions to repeated behavioral incidents:
  - After the second incident, we need a plan in place to prevent the behavior.
    - Is it a sensory issue? Can we reduce / increase stimulation?
    - Do we need to collect more information via observation?
      - Where and when are the incidents happening?
      - What are the triggers? How can we build capacity?
      - How do we increase adult proximity for blocking?
      - Does it help to have separate areas for play?
    - Do we need to consider whether we need to change the hours in extended care?
  - After a third incident, we will respond by increasing adult presence and asking questions about whether the child needs a referral for specialized support:
    - Speech Therapy / Occupational Therapy
    - *Do we need to talk with parents about a shadow*
    - *Do we need to consider whether we need to change the classroom placement?*

- After a fourth incident (of the same behavior or with the same child) we need consider making a change to the classroom placement:
  - Ask parents to supply or pay for a shadow
  - Talk with each family about placement.

*\*\* Note: We work as a team to review and respond to each incident and each child individually. There can be a lag between identification of challenges and securing additional services for a child who is struggling. During this time, children may be more at-risk for repeat incidents. We will do our best to support families in the process of assessing for learning and developmental delays. Additionally, incidents that are separated by time may not necessarily be related to each other. As children grow and encounter new challenges, they can experience regressions in behavior.*



## **LJMS 2025-2026 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*