

Beginnings Montessori Community Guide

2017-2018

From Strong Beginnings Grow Strong Minds

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Welcome to our Beginnings Montessori Community,

We are proud to welcome you to the only American Montessori Society member school in Western Maryland. Beginnings Montessori is an extraordinary learning environment that will give your child the tools for life-long learning. We offer a quality, authentic Montessori education.

Beginnings Montessori is a community of adults, children, and families working together to meet the needs of each child. We strongly encourage an open dialogue and peace among staff members and parents. Our Board of Directors and teachers are available to listen to your concerns as well as offer counsel and friendship.

We ask that you read this guide carefully to ensure that you are aware of current policy. We hope this guide will answer any questions you may have. This handbook represents the spirit of the positive expectations of everyone in our community. Please feel free to contact me at any time should you have any questions or concerns.

We are looking forward to a great school year filled with learning, laughter, and celebration of community.

Sincerely,

Meagan Mason
Head of School
Beginnings Montessori School

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History of Beginnings Montessori School

Beginnings Montessori was founded in 1978 by a group of interested educators, themselves parents of preschool children. The founders, Mr. and Mrs. John August, Mr. and Mrs. Terry Gaston, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Barry, Mr. Peter Erwin and Mr. W. Larry Brauer, chose to bring the Montessori teaching method of preschool and Kindergarten teaching to Western Maryland and based much of the school curriculum and philosophy for learning on what Maria Montessori discovered. Over the years, we have developed and changed by fully committing to the Montessori teaching method exclusively. To that end, we have taken the necessary step to become an American Montessori Society (AMS) Member school, which means we strictly comply with and follow AMS standards for teacher qualifications and Montessori teaching methods for our students.

Beginnings Montessori primary class operates under the direction of the Allegany Association for Childhood Education, Inc. Our elementary program is accredited by the Maryland State Board of Education through sixth grade. We operate as a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. Funding for the school comes from tuition, fundraising, gifts and donations. Gifts to the school are tax deductible.

Beginnings Montessori is governed by an elected Board of Directors of nine in accordance with the school's by-laws. However, all parents are encouraged to be actively involved in the educational process by attending Board meetings and volunteering in the classroom.

Purpose

Beginnings Montessori strives to meet the needs of our young children, aged 2.5 through 12 years old. Its primary purpose is to provide a warm, caring, nurturing and stimulating environment that promotes mental, social and emotional growth.

The school offers an individualized, child-directed learning program which includes group situations which help the child develop socialization skills and self-esteem. The entire program of learning at Beginnings Montessori is purposefully structured to take advantage of a child's natural curiosity and interests. The classroom promotes problem solving and reasoning, develops logical thinking and encourages the development of self-confidence and independent thinking. Beginnings Montessori admits all students regardless of race, ethnicity, gender, or religion.

Goals and Objectives

The main objective is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which will help children develop the underlying habits, attitudes, skills and ideals that are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

The specific goals for the children who attend Beginnings Montessori are as follows:

- To develop a positive attitude toward school and learning
- To develop a sense of high self-esteem
- To build habits of concentration for lifelong study skills
- To develop and foster an abiding curiosity
- To develop habits of initiative and persistence
- To foster inner discipline and a sense of order
- To develop socially sensory motor skills in order to sharpen the ability to discriminate and judge
- To acquire the basic skills necessary for a life-time of learning
- To help develop each child's innate, ultimate potential through high self-expectations
- To develop socially acceptable behavior

Board of Directors

Beginnings Montessori is governed by a Board of Directors elected by its members. Please find our school's bylaws on our website for more on this process and your membership responsibly. The Board of Directors will meet on a regular basis, typically the second Sunday evening of the month. Advance notice of the meetings will be provided to all parents, ten days prior to the meeting. Parents are encouraged to attend.

President:	Ted Higson
Vice President:	Heather Flesher
Secretary:	Debbie Daniels
Treasurer:	
Director of Fundraising:	Jonna Pendergast
Director of Facilities:	
Director of Growth:	JW Myers
Director of Quality:	Karl Brubaker
Parent Coordinator:	Bobbie Cooper

Association Meetings

In accordance with the bylaws, member meetings will be held during the school year to discuss proposed changes in policy, bylaws, school related issues, elections, etc. Typically meetings are held the second Sunday of the month. An email notice will be sent to families ten days prior to the meeting. All parents are strongly encouraged to attend.

Programs Offered

The following program options are offered for the 2017-2018 school year.

MORNING PRIMARY 8:30am – 11:30am

For children aged 2.5 – 4 years old. The child attends the primary class two, three or five mornings a week.

AFTERNOON PRIMARY 12:00am – 3:00

For children aged 2.5 - 4 years old. The child attends the primary class two, three or five afternoons a week.

FULL DAY PRIMARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm.

For children aged 3 - 4 years old. The child attends the primary class three or five days a week.

KINDERGARTEN 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children who turn 5 years old prior to September 1, 2017. In Montessori, Kindergarten is not the beginnings of elementary, but the graduation of primary. These students are the oldest in our primary classroom.

LOWER ELEMENTARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children aged 6, 7 or 8 years old prior to September 1, 2017. Montessori focusses on age groups, rather than grades. In the traditional school, these would be children in first through third grades.

UPPER ELEMENTARY 8:30 am – 3:00 pm

For children aged 9, 10 or 11 years old prior to September 1, 2017. Montessori focusses on age groups, rather than grades. In the traditional school, these would be children in fourth through sixth grades.

After Care

After Care services are available for additional fees of \$5.00 an hour and billed monthly. Please note that space is limited and available on a first come, first served basis. There is a sign-up sheet in the primary cubby room.

After Care is only available for students of Beginnings Montessori School.

Day Camps / Summer Camps

Occasionally, we offer day camps during the school year on a day when school is not in session. These camps are open to the public, so bring a sibling or friend. Each of these days will be centered on a theme. These days are an additional charge to tuition and must be paid for at the time of service. Please see the academic calendar for a complete list of day camp days available.

Summer camps are available for eight to ten weeks during the summer break. These camps are open to the public, so bring a friend. Families of Beginnings Montessori have a priority registration until such time as it becomes open to the public. Then registration is on a first come, first served basis. More information on summer camps can be found at www.beginningsmontessori.com after March.

Absences

Please call the school to inform them of any absences. This will help the teachers plan for the day more efficiently.

Only ten (10) absences will be tolerated in any given school year for a Kindergarten or elementary student, unless special arrangements have been made with your teacher. After eight (8) absences, a conference will be scheduled with the teacher and parents. After fifteen (15) absences, the family will be reported to the Maryland Board of Education in accordance with Maryland truancy laws.

In accordance with Maryland State law, an excused absence from Kindergarten or elementary school at Beginnings Montessori School is because of:

1. Death in the immediate family.
2. Illness of the student. A parent may submit a note to document the illness of a child for up to and including the tenth (10th) cumulative day of absences for the current school year. The school shall only require a doctor's note from the parent or

guardian if the student accumulates more than ten (10) absences during the current school year.

3. Illness of the student documented by a doctor's note.
4. Court summons.
5. Vacation approved by your child's teacher.
6. Hazardous Weather Conditions. Hazardous weather conditions shall be interpreted to mean weather conditions that would endanger the health or safety of the student when in transit to and from school.
7. Observance of a religious holiday.

Please submit a note to your teacher if your child is absent for any of these reasons. Any absence without an appropriate note will be considered an unexcused absence.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Your child is now forming habits that last a lifetime. Punctuality and respecting the time of others are two qualities that we want to promote for future success in life. If you happen to be running late or stuck somewhere, please be courteous and give us a call.

Please see below for your child's classroom drop-off times.

Morning Primary / Full Day Primary / Kindergarten

Doors open at 8:10 a.m. We require that parents or guardians drop off their children at the door where we will greet you.

8:30 a.m. The teacher or her assistant will lock the door. Anyone arriving after this time will be considered late (See tardy policy). Class promptly begins at 8:30 a.m. and we ask that you make every effort to be here on time to ensure that your child has a full three-hour work cycle. We recommend arriving as early as possible as this will ensure your child has adequate time to transition. We strongly encourage consistency in this process as it will help your child acclimate to the expectations of coming to school. If you arrive after 8:30a.m. you will need to park your car and walk your child to their classroom.

Your child will be considered late after 8:30 a.m.

If you arrive after 8:45 a.m. **and have not called**, you will be asked to try again the next day.

We will accept late arrivals **that have called** until 9:00 a.m. However, any late arrival whether the school is notified or not, will be counted as a tardy. This includes doctor appointments and other pre-scheduled commitments. We realize it is not always possible

but please try to schedule appointments after school hours. Please remember, calling is for emergencies or special circumstances only.

Afternoon Primary

Doors open at 11:45. We require that parents or guardians drop off their children at the door where we will greet you.

12:00 p.m. The teacher or her assistant will lock the door. Anyone arriving after this time will be considered late (See tardy policy). Class promptly begins at 11:45 a.m. and we ask that you make every effort to be here on time to ensure that your child has a full three-hour work cycle. We recommend arriving as early as possible as this will ensure your child has adequate time to transition. We strongly encourage consistency in this process as it will help your child acclimate to the expectations of coming to school.

Your child will be considered late after 12:00 p.m.

If you arrive after 12:00 p.m. **and have not called**, you will be asked to try again the next day.

We will accept late arrivals **that have called** until 12:15 pm (noon). However, any late arrival whether the school is notified or not, will be counted as a tardy. This includes doctor appointments and other pre-scheduled commitments. We realize it is not always possible but please try to schedule appointments after school hours. Please remember, calling is for emergencies or special circumstances only.

Elementary Classrooms

Doors open at 8:10 a.m. We require that parents or guardians drop off their children at the door where we will greet you.

8:30 a.m. The teacher or her assistant will lock the door. Anyone arriving after this time will be considered late (See tardy policy). Class promptly begins at 8:30 a.m. and we ask that you make every effort to be here on time to ensure that your child has a full three-hour work cycle. We recommend arriving as early as possible as this will ensure your child has adequate time to transition. We strongly encourage consistency in this process as it will help your child acclimate to the expectations of coming to school.

Your child will be considered late after 8:30 a.m.

If you arrive after 8:45 a.m. **and have not called**, you will be asked to try again at 12:00pm (noon) or the next day.

We will accept late arrivals **that have called** until 9:00 a.m. However, any late arrival whether the school is notified or not, will be counted as a tardy. This includes doctor

appointments and other pre-scheduled commitments. We realize it is not always possible but please try to schedule appointments after school hours. Please remember, calling is for emergencies or special circumstances only.

Tardy Policy

We understand that sometimes unfortunate circumstances happen and occasional tardy arrivals are unavoidable. However, excessive tardiness makes for a challenging start for both your child and the classroom. Punctuality, like all manners, is taught from the beginning. You are setting the example for your child. Please set a lovely example by arriving to school on time.

At 8:30 a.m. the doors of the Primary and Elementary classrooms will be locked. For Afternoon Primary, doors will be locked at 12:00 p.m.

If you are tardy more than 5 times, the Head of School will be notified and documentation about the tardiness will be made in your child's records. Your child's teacher will notify you and request a conference. In serious case of excessive tardiness you will also be expected to have a conference with the Head of School.

Dismissal Procedure

Children enrolled in the half-day primary program will dismiss at 11:30 a.m. from the front door of the building.

All other children will be dismissed at 3:00 p.m. from the gymnasium to an adult designated by parents/guardians.

Children still in the gymnasium at 3:05 pm will be escorted to the After Care Program and families will be charged fees accordingly. Parents/guardians are required to initial a sign-out sheet for their child at pick-up.

Please note, if you have a change in the person designated to pick up your child you are required to inform teachers or staff. If someone other than the person(s) listed on your release record is to pick up your child, you must first call the school and they will be asked for ID.

Supplies

Primary and Kindergarten: We ask that each family bring in a box of tissues and a container of Clorox wipes at the beginning of each semester of the school year. Other items that can be donated as they are in constant need are Crayola Washable markers, water color paints, paintbrushes, large bottles of white glue, glue sticks, dry erase markers, construction paper, and white copy paper.

All children need a backpack with a seasonally appropriate change of clothing. Acceptable footwear is at the teachers' discretion. Please see below. For those staying for lunch, bring a lunch containing an ice pack.

Kindergarten: Your teacher will send you a specific supply list for additional materials prior to the start of the school year.

Elementary: We ask that each family bring in a box of tissues, a container of Clorox wipes, and a large bottle of white glue at the beginning of each semester of the school year. Other items that can be donated as they are in constant need are Crayola Washable markers, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, glue sticks, dry erase markers, construction paper, and white copy paper.

All children need a backpack with a change of clothes, acceptable shoes, and a lunch with an ice pack. Please see below for complete lunch and shoe requirements. Your teacher will send you a specific supply list for additional materials prior to the start of the school year.

Required on the First Day of School for ALL Students: Updated health record, tuition payments up-to-date, field trip form, photo release form, updates emergency card, and Your Smile!

Celebrations

Birthdays

Birthdays will be celebrated with a special activity in which the child will learn about his/her family background and growth. A special birthday bag with specific instructions will be sent home prior to the birthday celebration. **Parents are welcome to observe their child's birthday celebration.** Summer birthdays will be celebrated during the school year as well. We ask that private parties be held outside of school and school hours. Invitations may be placed in cubbies or folders only when ALL children are invited, otherwise please mail or deliver invitations outside of school. This prevents hurt feelings.

Holiday Celebrations

Beginnings Montessori celebrates two holidays with parties at school, Halloween and Valentine's Day. We commemorate Thanksgiving with Friendship Soup, a vegetable soup that the children prepare together. Children also participate in a winter holiday program.

Graduation

The students are saluted at the end of the year with a graduation exercise. The children put on a small presentation that may include singing, reading, a skit or other activities. Parent participation is greatly appreciated in the planning of the graduation ceremony. To create a legacy of your child's time with Beginnings Montessori School, you may purchase a nest or apple with your child or family name printed on it for permanent display on our school's classroom tree. Please see the Fundraising Chair should you be interested.

Inclement Weather Policy

If Allegany County Schools are closed, Beginnings Montessori is closed.

If Allegany County Schools are on a two-hour delay, Beginnings Montessori opens at 10:30 a.m., morning primary is dismissed at 12:00 p.m. Afternoon primary opens at 12:00 pm (noon) and dismisses along with full day primary at its regular time of 2:45 p.m.

Closure of the Mountain Ridge School does not affect Beginnings Montessori.

Please tune your radio to 106.5 FM or 1270 AM for updated information regarding school closings and delays. Also consider subscribing to School's Out at www.schoolsout.com to sign up for text message notifications of school delays and closures.

Dress Code

Please mark all of your child's clothes, jackets, mittens, hat, etc. with your child's name. When selecting school clothes, help your child choose pants that they can get up and down easily. We will be gardening, painting, and using scissors, so it is best to send children to school in practical work clothes. Children should be dressed appropriately for all weather conditions. All classes play outdoors daily except on extremely cold or rainy days.

Please, NO flip-flops, as they are slippery outside, noisy inside, and dangerous. In addition, we have found that children who wear sandals to school are the ones who fall and skin their knees on the outside concrete. We recommend a sport shoe for school, so that the children can run and play safely.

It is also important for grace and courtesy that hats be removed when entering classrooms.

We request that you refrain from using pull-ups for toddlers in the primary program. All children in the primary program are expected to be toilet trained and therefore wear cloth underwear. Please talk with your teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

Outerwear Policy

Outside play, exercise and fresh air are essential to a child's development. **It is imperative that your child has a jacket, sweater, or other appropriate outerwear at school each day.** In cold weather, mittens should be provided and boots should also be available to make the children as comfortable as possible while outside. To encourage independence, all clothing should be easily manageable by the child. Please avoid overalls or clothing with excessive snaps or buttons.

Change of Clothes Policy

All children must have one complete, labeled change of clothes at Beginnings Montessori. Please send them in a labeled plastic bag. Please remember to update clothing for seasonal changes or when the bag has been sent home after use.

Indoor Shoe Policy

For primary and elementary children we prefer that each child have a pair of soft rubber soled shoes, *like* TOM'S, to keep at school. A shoe-like, rubber soled slipper or a moccasin will also be acceptable. The shoe is expected to be small and soft (no glitter, characters, lights, etc). Household slippers and flip-flops are not acceptable. Please see your teacher if you have any questions or concerns.

Food Policy

Snacks

The children will have a daily mid-morning snack in the classroom. Contributions from families make classroom snacks possible. Each classroom handles its own snack in its own way. Please see your lead teacher about your child's snack policy and how you are to contribute.

Please notify the teachers if your child has any food allergies or other food restrictions.

Lunch

Children who are staying through the day must bring a packed lunch containing an ice pack to school. Carried lunches should contain a drink that is NOT milk. **Maryland law**

prohibits children from bringing milk from home. We request that sweets and artificial dyes be kept to a minimum. We also ask that all lunches be as trash-free as possible.

Communication

Parent/Teacher Notes

A good communication flow with your child's teachers is highly desirable and should be the principal vehicle for any question that may arise. During the school year, please send a note to school with your child for any of the following reasons:

1. When your child returns after an absence, stating the reason, type of illness or travel.
2. When a major change occurs at home, i.e. moving, separation, divorce, death, or a new family member.
3. When your child will be absent from school for more than three days due to illness or travel.

Roles of Children, Parents and Teachers:

The teacher's role in the morning is to greet your child/children. Teachers will greet the children at the classroom doors. The Montessori philosophy is that children are capable and should be responsible to hang their outerwear and to put lunches away without assistance from the staff, with the exception of those with special needs. Parents are asked to allow their children to attend to these tasks on their own. This develops your child's independence and basic skills of inner discipline and a sense of order. Allow this to be a positive time between teacher and student, school and learning. When picking up your child please wait outside of their classrooms.

If someone other than the designated person is planning to pick-up the child, the parent or guardian must send a note. Please tell your pick up person the rules. Telephone notification may only be used for emergency arrangements and the caller will be asked to verify their identification by responding to questions from the staff about personal data on file at Beginnings Montessori. The individual picking up the child will be asked to show identification.

Beginnings Montessori has a voicemail system. Please leave the teacher a message unless the matter requires attention before the end of the school day. Teachers will respond to your voicemail.

Enrollment List

For your convenience in arranging car pools, birthday parties, parent notices, etc., we provide an enrollment list that includes each child's name, address, phone number, email address and parents' names. If for any reason you prefer to be excluded from this list, please inform the teachers. However, this list will be maintained privately for school use only, privacy will be protected.

Conferences

All students receive an evaluation twice a year. There will be an informal conference set up in the Fall and a more formal conference and written progress report in the Spring. However, feel free to schedule a conference with your teacher when needed.

Discipline Policy

At Beginnings Montessori School, we see discipline as helping the children to develop an internal focus and control to enable them to make positive choices. Through the use of the materials, the child develops concentration, and through concentration comes inner discipline. We establish necessary boundaries to give the children methods and techniques to control their own behavior, through consistent modeling and dealing constructively with problems. We strive for a balance of freedom and structure, linked with a high level of responsibility. That balance is individualized based on the needs of the child. Our goal is an internalized level of obedience, wherein the child behaves because it is the right thing to do, whether or not the teacher is in the room. This is the kind of citizen we hope for in the world. Positive discipline is a process that takes time; it begins at birth, and continues through the four planes of development, until around 25 years of age. Discipline to us is not something that is done to the child, but is developed within the child. It may not be as immediate as a rewards/ punishment model, but its outcomes run deeper.

Classroom expectations:

1. Students should respect one another's personal space.
2. Students should speak quietly and peacefully in the classroom.
3. Students should use walking feet throughout the classroom.
4. Students are free to work with all materials displayed, given that they use it respectfully.
5. Students may work at either a work rug or a table; whichever is appropriate to the chosen work.

Deviation from these expectations will be addressed with redirection by the teacher or his/her assistant.

Behavior Policy

The following action will be taken in the case of severely disruptive behavior, which includes but is not limited to: assault, biting, hitting, kicking, fighting, throwing objects, spitting, pushing, pinching, fleeing the environment, name calling or sexual harassment.

1. First offense: The teacher will help to mediate the problem-solving process.
2. Second offense same day: The child will be asked to sit in a watching chair or asked to sit next to the teacher or assistant until the child is ready to work again peacefully.
3. Third offense same day: Child will be removed from the classroom and parent will be called. The child may be sent home.
4. If a child reaches more than 3 offenses in a 2-week period it may be considered a severely disruptive behavior pattern. A conference will be scheduled to devise a behavior modification plan.

Consequences to severely disruptive behavior that continues over a period of time include, but are not limited to:

1. Removal of child from the classroom
2. Parents notified and asked to pick up child from school or event
3. Conference with parents
4. Behavior plan will be developed that may include but is not limited to: recommendations for evaluations, plan of action for when the behavior occurs, journaling of behaviors by parent and teacher, food diary
5. Possible dismissal

The teacher in each classroom gets to interpret the situational context of a behavioral issue. They have the final say as to what is inappropriate behavior and what, if any; recourse should be taken to address it.

Toddler Biting Policy

Biting is part of toddler development. It is usually a result of not enough or ineffective use of language. We will always work to give the words to the child who is biting. Coaching of the appropriate words is the best way to resolve the problem quickly. If a child bites three times in one day, or if the skin is broken, they will be sent home. The parent of the biter and the parent of the child who has been bitten will be talked to by the teacher or assistant if the skin has been bruised or broken. If a child becomes a chronic biter, the parents may be asked to remove their child from the school until the behavior disappears.

Bullying and Disruptive Behavior Policy

Beginnings Montessori is committed to a safe and peaceful educational environment for all students, employees, volunteer and patrons, free from harassment, intimidation or bullying. "Harassment, intimidation or bullying" means any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, when the intentional written, verbal, or physical act:

- Physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or
- Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education; or
- Is severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

Bullying and disruptive behavior of any kind will not be tolerated at Beginnings Montessori. If a child is caught bullying or engaging in disruptive behavior, parents will be called and child sent home for that day.

DEFINITIONS:

Classroom Disruption- Temper tantrums, running, interrupting the work of others, excessive loud noises, screaming, disorderly conduct

Teasing – name-calling, insulting, or other behavior that would hurt others' feelings or make them feel bad about themselves

Exclusion – starting rumors, telling others not to be friends with someone, or other actions that would cause someone to be without friends

Physical Aggression/Bullying – pushing, slapping, grabbing, flicking, poking, pinching, tripping, or other violations of personal space

Severe Physical Bullying – punching, kicking, and similar behavior that could result in injury to others

Threat of serious violence – threats of using a weapon, or other conduct representing a direct physical threat to anyone; may require a report to authorities

Harassment – racial, ethnic, or sexual name-calling or other severe harassment

Thank you for helping to provide a safe environment for our children.

Prevention of Abuse Policy

Beginnings Montessori staff and volunteers will utilize several procedures to help prevent the possibility for abuse.

Visitors: Any visitor to the program or site when the children are present, but do not have direct interaction with the children, will be considered “strangers” and are never left alone with the children.

Toileting: Staff is required to use bathrooms that are separate from the preschool and Kindergarten children’s bathroom. The children’s bathroom is visible from the classroom. Staff does not go into the bathroom with a child unless absolutely necessary and requested by the child. When a staff member does accompany a child into the bathroom, another staff member witnesses the interaction.

Reporting

Beginnings Montessori staff has both a moral and a legal obligation to report any reasonable suspicion or known case of child abuse or neglect to the local law enforcement agency and child protective services unit of the Allegany County Department of Social Services in accordance with state law and Child Care Administration Regulation 07.04.02.70.

Beginnings Montessori staff must immediately report any and all suspected or alleged incidents to the authorities by telephone and follow up in writing within 24 hours. Staff shall cooperate in all investigations of abuse that include parents or children currently or previously enrolled at Beginnings Montessori.

Maryland law states that teachers do not have to prove existence of such abuse and do not have to know who did it. If further investigation indicates that there was no offense, teachers who reported in good faith are protected from any possible prosecution. Teachers who had reasonable knowledge of an incident and did not report it can be prosecuted. Staff should show respect for the privacy of the child and family by only sharing the incident with others who must know. For example, other parents will be informed only if their children come in contact with the offender.

Accusation of Abuse or Neglect by Staff

When a parent, volunteer or visitor notifies the Beginnings Montessori Board President of suspected abuse or neglect that involves a staff person, the staff person will be contacted within 24 hours and given the opportunity to discuss the allegations with the appropriate people. The Board President will contact the local Child Care Administration within 24 hours of notification. The staff person will then be immediately relieved of his/her teaching duties and direct contact with the children at Beginnings Montessori until the Department

of Social Services' investigation is completed and for such further time as the Child Care Administration requires.

Classroom Observations

All parents are welcome to observe the classroom at any time upon notification of the lead teacher of your classroom. Observations are not scheduled until after the first 6-8 weeks of the school. There will not be any cell phones, cameras, or video equipment allowed during observation.

How to Observe a Montessori Classroom

- Note the variety of activities
- Observe the social interaction among the students
- Are students working alone or together?
- How does the mood of the classroom vary from time to time?
- Observe one or two students at a time
- Note the cycle of work from beginning to end
- Is the child concentrating?
- How is order maintained in the classroom?

Plan to spend 30 minutes to an hour if you come to observe the classrooms so you will get a better understanding of the workings of the classroom.

Confidentiality

During your observation you will see a variety of behaviors and maturity levels. Please be aware that we respect each child's place in their individual development and respect our staff's expertise in handling situations that may occur during your observation. Please be respectful of the children their families, and the staff when you share observations with a friend.

Parking

Beginnings Montessori parents will use the parking lot located on N. Smallwood St. Park in an actual spot and walk your child to the door. Under no circumstances should you be blocking the pedestrian pathway or utilizing the handicap spots unless you have a placard on your car.

Facility

Beginnings Montessori utilizes the following facilities at St. Pauls Lutheran Church: Basement Level Classrooms, Parking Lot, Front Lawn, Gymnasium, Kitchen &

Stage. Children are only allowed to use designated equipment that has been approved by a childcare administration representative. All of the equipment and materials found in our facilities are age-appropriate and well supervised when in use.

Student Enrichment Activities

Our students attend a variety of places of interest throughout the school year. Parent volunteers are required to drive. We can usually arrange for extra tickets for parents if we have a week's notice. Please feel free to join your elementary student. Siblings are always welcome on our school trips. We encourage you to help us find resources in this area.

The Role of the Chaperone

The role of the chaperone is to provide a means of transportation for the students. The chaperone ensures that the students carry out the going out activity safely. The decisions of where to go and how to carry out the going out activity are the responsibility of the teachers and students.

While in the vehicle:

- The chaperone will provide seats in the vehicle that have appropriate seat belts.
- The chaperone will expect the children to speak softly, face forward, and keep hands and body to themselves while riding in only the rear of the vehicle.
- The chaperone will make sure cell phones are used for emergency purposes only.
- The chaperone will as much as possible stay with the car caravan while traveling.

On arrival and during the event:

- The chaperone will take frequent head counts of his/her group of children.
- The chaperone will stay with the group at all times.
- The chaperone will ask children to follow the rules if necessary.

Field Trips

Parents will be required to provide the school with a signed authorization form to allow their children to attend walking school field trips. This authorization will be valid for the entire school year.

Parents will be notified of planned field trips off campus and will be required to make travel arrangements for their children. Parents are also asked to participate as drivers and chaperons. Staff members do not transport children. **If you sign up as a chaperone, you are responsible for the children that you transport.**

Emergency cards are taken on all trips. Parents that drive accept responsibility under their own insurance policy and must provide a copy of such coverage upon request. All children must be in a properly approved car seat for all field trips.

Guidelines for student behavior during a field trip

During Transportation

- All children should be in the rear seats of the automobile.
- All children should wear a seat belt at all times while in the vehicle and use appropriate car seats and boosters in accordance with Maryland law.
- The children must face forward.
- The children should speak in soft voices.
- The children must keep their hands to themselves.

During the Activity

- The children must keep their hands to themselves.
- The children must stay with their designated driver or group.
- During the performance, the children will sit quietly in their seats facing forward.
- The children will speak in soft voices.
- If in a restaurant the children will use proper table manners.

If the child is unable to meet the behavior expectations they may be denied future going out privileges.

Health Records

Physical Exam

All children must have an up-to-date record of immunization from their physician in the school files. If your child is newly enrolled, please have his or her doctor fill out the form included in the admissions packet (or available at the school or doctor's office) and mail it to the school before the child begins school. Every child must have a yearly physical examination and the records of such on file at school. Also, please inform the school if your child has a communicable disease so that other parents may be notified. Vision and hearing tests are recommended with physical exams. The Health Department may conduct yearly vision and hearing tests at the school.

Emergencies

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of illness, the staff will not hesitate to seek proper care for a child. The child's individual emergency instructions on file in the school are consulted immediately and the parents are called. All of our teachers and assistants are certified in CPR. If necessary, emergency personnel will be called and the child transported to the hospital. The emergency card that the parent must sign prior to admission to school will accompany the child so that treatment can be given immediately in the absence of the parent. A child may also be isolated from the other children until picked up by the parent.

Medications

It is strongly recommended that no medicine be given to a child during the school day unless deemed necessary by a physician. In such a case, the staff must have written instructions from the prescribing physician, including the date of order, identification of the drug by name, dose, time and circumstances of administration and the length of time the medication is to be continued. This information will be kept on file at the school for future reference. Medication must be in the original container and must be given directly to a staff member. Medicines such as cough drops, etc. should not be sent to school. Beginnings Montessori staff is trained in First Aid and CPR and therefore can respond to minor cuts and scrapes with the first aid kit found at the school. All injuries must be documented and parents informed on the day the injury takes place.

Illnesses

In order to keep all our children, their families and staff members as healthy as possible, we ask that you observe the following:

- If your child has a fever of 99.0 or above keep him or her home for 24 hours after the fever has broken. Viruses are still active within that 24-hour period.
- If your child has a bout of diarrhea or vomiting, please keep him or her home for 24 hours after the last incident. Again, this 24-hour period is a highly contagious one.
- If your child has a runny nose, please be aware of the following:
 - A clear discharge without any other symptoms indicates an allergic reaction. This is not a contagious condition. A clear discharge with fever and or irritability indicates a contagious condition.
 - A discolored discharge indicates an infection and is a contagious condition. A sinus or ear infection may be present, and antibiotics and bed rest may be necessary to clear up the infection. Please keep your child home until the infection is cleared.

Staff members reserve the right to not allow a child they believe has a contagious condition into the classroom. We realize this might create an inconvenience for you. We have the health of our children and their families at heart, and feel a strong responsibility to do what we can to protect the people involved in our school community.

Infectious Disease

Children with infectious disease may be identified through the required physical exam prior to admission into the program. This information is confidential by law and will not be a factor in determining admission. Staff and volunteers will utilize universal precautions when handling bodily fluids of all children and will seek the advice of medical personnel if needed.

Lice Policy

It is expected that school-aged children may get head lice. Lice are not something to be ashamed of as it affects all people regardless of cleanliness or socioeconomic background. Our policy is based on a study from *Pediatrics* – the official journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics.

- If you find live lice or nits on your child, please inform the school. It is likely that if your child has lice that another child will also have lice.
- You should examine your child's head thoroughly, especially behind the ears and at the nape of the neck for nits and lice if your child exhibits symptoms (primarily itching). If nits or live lice are found, all household members should be examined for nits and lice every 2-3 days.
- If head lice is found the school will perform head checks in the classroom where the confirmed case of head lice has been reported.
- If the school finds nits or live lice, you will be called to come and pick up your child from school to treat them.
- We expect you to retreat your child in 7-10 days.
- The CDC does not make a recommendation as to what specific product or products should be used to treat individual cases. You may wish to contact your pediatrician, pharmacist, or health department for information about what product to use to treat lice.

We take head lice very seriously, but please understand that treatment and the eradication of head lice are fully the responsibility of the parent. We will do our best to keep you informed, maintain the classroom, and fully educate the children.

Emergency Procedures

Accident Response

In the event of an accident, staff will respond by handling all medical-related injuries first and then by handling any disciplinary issues. While one staff member is attending to the injured child or children, the other staff member will contact the parent or designated emergency contacts found in the child's file. If necessary, the child or children will be transported to the hospital by ambulance. Staff will provide care within the realm of their authority, but will contact emergency personnel if the injury is more than a minor one. Children's Medical Group is the medical contact for Beginnings Montessori, unless otherwise specified on your Emergency Contact form.

All accidents will be documented on an accident report that describes the circumstances, including who was involved, how staff responded and, where applicable, a diagram of where the incident occurred. Copies of this report will be kept in each of the involved children's files, provided to the school's insurance carrier and given to the involved parents or guardians.

Fire Safety

Beginnings Montessori conducts periodic fire drills in which all children and staff will participate. The drills are held at different times throughout the year. There are smoke detectors and fire extinguishers in the facility. Beginnings Montessori meets fire safety

requirements of the Child Care Administration and is inspected by the Maryland State Fire Marshall regularly.

Enrollment Policy

Admission Procedure

We believe that choosing a school is a process that takes time. We recommend that families do the following:

- a) Request information by mail or pick up information at school
- b) Tour our building and classrooms while classes are in session
- c) Schedule an interview for the child (if in elementary)
- d) Complete enrollment process

Prior to being admitted to our program, all children must be registered by a parent or legal guardian. Registration for children currently enrolled in the program is held during March. Applications for new students are available on our website or can be given after touring the school. Students currently enrolled in Beginnings Montessori shall have preference in enrolling until registration become open to the public. Once registration is open to the public, enrollment is on a first come, first served basis.

The following documents are needed for enrollment:

- a) Application
- b) Non-refundable Registration fee
- c) Current immunization records (if new student)
- d) Financial Contract

The following admission policies and criteria are to maximize the compatibility among selected students, their families, and our school within Montessori philosophy and values. They take into account not only evidence of a student's academic achievement, but the student's and family's long-term commitment to developing the whole child and commitment to a school-family partnership.

1. We practice a policy of non-discrimination relative to race, ethnicity, gender, religion, and national origin regarding the receipt and review of applications for admission.
2. Admissions decisions require, and are made contingent upon receipt or completion of, all requested tests, screening, student records, student and family visits and interviews, and other forms included in our application/admission package.
3. We respect the rights of privacy of all prospective students and families, and honor the confidentiality of all reports, records, interview information, and any other information or materials obtained as part of the admission application process.

4. While embracing the philosophy that each child develops in a unique way and welcoming applications from a wide variety of students, we also recognize our limitations in meeting some highly complex or specialized learning needs. Our admissions procedure will therefore take into account our ability to accommodate particular student's special needs without disruption to our program as one factor when evaluating applicants. Students who have special needs that fall within our ability to address may be accepted on a provisional basis, with additional stipulations (such as a requirement for tutor or therapist assistance.)
5. The classroom teachers will make all admission decisions. Admission decisions are based on the following general criteria:

Primary Students

- Is able to cooperate in a social group
- Shows respect for authority
- Shows respect for other children
- Is independent in toileting skills
- Is able to understand and follow school and classroom rules and guidelines
- Demonstrates an eagerness to learn
- Is developmentally functional in all aspects of daily school routines

Elementary Students

- Is able to cooperate in a social group
- Shows respect for authority
- Shows respect for other children
- Demonstrates an eagerness to learn
- Is capable of working independently
- Is able to understand and follow school and classroom rules and guidelines
- Is developmentally functional in all aspects of daily school routines
- Possesses current academic and life skills at level commensurate with targeted class

Families

- Thorough understanding of and commitment to Beginnings Montessori School philosophy and principles
- Understanding of and commitment to long-term participation in the Montessori education process
- Understanding their role in partnering with the school (e.g. volunteerism, attendance at school meetings and functions, support of school's vision and growth)

Contracts

Enrollment is secured by a binding contractual agreement with the school. We will begin to enroll students for the 2018/2019 school year in March of 2018. To secure your enrollment for the next school year we must have a contract signed by March 30, 2018.

If your circumstances are such that you do not feel comfortable signing a contract, for example, a possible job transfer, please contact the Head of School for more information on how to handle your enrollment.

Eligibility

Primary classrooms are open to all children between the ages of 2.5-6 years, regardless of race, color, religion or creed. To be accepted into the preschool program, all children must be toilet trained. For enrollment details, please refer to our admissions procedures.

Class placement will be determined based on the child's chronological age, maturation level, recommendation from any previous teacher; and parental preference with the consultation of the Head of School and classroom teacher. The needs of the child will be of primary importance in every decision made.

Children with challenges will be accepted into the program upon medical recommendation only if we can provide the necessary services. In such cases, in addition to the completion of the basic required forms, parents or legal guardians will be required to provide medical documentation of any special conditions, including a description of any special care requirements. The Head of School and parents will work closely with the teachers.

Tuition

Tuition is based on our 170-180 day school year. Payment may be made in full or monthly payments can be arranged via automatic bank draft on the first or fifteenth of each month, August through May through FACTS. No reductions are made for illness or absences.

A charge of \$30.00 will be assessed on any returned check or insufficient auto debit.

A one-time enrollment fee is due upon admission and is non-refundable.

When entering our program after September, tuition will be pro-rated at a monthly rate. Tuition rates given are subject to change without notice.

There is a 10% sibling discount.

Tuition and Fees for 2017-18 Academic Year:

Half-Day Primary (Morning or Afternoon)

- 2 days \$1162.18
- 3 days \$1689.98
- 5 days \$2537.50

Full Day Primary

- 2 days \$2111.20
- 3 days \$2639.00
- 5 days \$3593.10

Kindergarten \$3694.60

Lower Elementary \$3958.50

Upper Elementary \$3958.50

Financial Aid

There is currently no financial aid to offer at this time.

Termination of Enrollment

Every effort will be made to avoid terminating a child's enrollment in the school. However, termination of enrollment will be effected under the following circumstances:

- Failure of the parents to cooperate with the school's policies
- Delinquent tuition

- Failure by the parents to provide health forms and other paperwork required for enrollment
- Excessive biting
- Uncontrolled hitting
- Behavioral problems that are disruptive to the classroom atmosphere and other students
- Parent's refusal to seek professional help when suggested as being in the child's best interests
- Inability of the school to meet the apparent needs of the child, as determined by teaching staff consensus
- Parent's disrespectful behavior toward other parents, children, teachers, or any other staff
- Physical or emotional problems that require excessive one-on-one attention

Fundraising

Beginnings Montessori School is working hard to establish a culture of giving. Because tuition and enrollment fees do not cover our operating costs, it is necessary for our community to raise additional money for school operations, materials, growth and enhancement projects.

Each year as a community, we support fundraising events. There will be information sent to you later concerning these campaigns.

Primary Staggered Start

To ensure that each child has a successful beginning of the school year, we have a staggered start. All primary students are rolled in over the course of the first week of school. Primary parents will receive a letter from your teacher indicating which day your child will begin. This allows the teacher to give each child the special attention they need while transitioning from home to back to school

Toys

The children are only in our school for a short time and a toy from home can keep them from their work. Please encourage all "lovies" to stay at home or in the car. Should the child require a transition object from home, that object should remain in the child's cubby, unless otherwise arranged with the child's teacher.

Normalization

Normalization is the first 6 to 8 weeks of school when we are getting to know your children and they are learning the expectations of the classroom. Here is a list of things that you can do to help your child in this process:

1. Make sure your child gets to bed early.
2. Make sure your child has ample time in the morning to prepare for the day.
3. Make sure your child has a healthy diet.
4. Try to eliminate your anxiety and stress about the new situation.
5. Make positive conversation about school with your child.
6. Try to choose clothing the night before and make sure the clothing choice makes toileting free of extra challenges.
7. Make sure your child has some time after school to just be.

Daily Schedule

A formal daily schedule for the primary classroom can be found, framed, hanging on the wall in the primary classrooms. An elementary daily schedule can be requested from the elementary teacher or his/her assistant.

Transitions and Classroom Placements

Our goal is for each student to remain in the same classroom for the three-year cycle of that program. However, this is not always possible. Dr. Montessori discovered three-year cycles of human development with marked changes at the end and beginning of each. As trained teachers, we look for these changes and help guide the child into the next level of development.

The transition from half day to full day usually occurs around age four and a half to five years old. Usually your child will ask to stay all day to do “Big Work.” We usually recommend staying two or three consecutive afternoons a week until your child feels comfortable with the transition. This transition will occur under the advice and communication of the classroom guide and/or Head of School. This transition time does require a fee. You will be billed on a monthly basis.

The transition from primary to elementary classroom occurs around age six. Usually a three year cycle in the same class prepares the child for the next stage of development in the lower elementary. Your child will usually express a desire to leave the comfort of being the oldest in the primary classroom, to the challenge of being the youngest in the elementary classroom.

Please be aware that once your child transitions you will be billed for the additional fees.

New primary students are introduced into the classroom with staggered starts. Their start times are scheduled through mutual agreement between the teacher and parents. The dates will fall after the first day of returning students. This is to ensure your child has a comfortable and successful start to the school year.

Visitors/Volunteers Policy

Any visitor to the program or site when the children are present, but do not have direct interaction with the children, will be considered “strangers” and are never left alone with the children.

Parents have access to their children anytime during school hours. However, the work of the children and the teacher’s and other staff member’s attention should not be disturbed. Parent should walk and speak quietly at all times.

If you wish to speak with your child’s teacher, please call the school to make an appointment. Do not use drop off or pick up time as a time to have a conference with the teacher.

Volunteerism

Each Beginnings Montessori family is expected to give volunteer hours per school year. Please make sure you check in with your teachers or Board members to see how you can best put your talents to use.

There are many opportunities to volunteer at the school throughout the year, including driving on field trips, making materials, helping with fundraisers, running errands, re-shelving the library, helping with special events, having enrichment days, being a classroom speaker, and bringing special treats for celebrations.

Parents are not allowed in the classrooms during class time unless arrangements have been made with the teacher.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Beginnings Montessori has a non-discriminatory policy with respect to student admission and staff employment. We do not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, or national origin.

Statement of Rights

Beginnings Montessori School, Head of School, and the Board of Directors retain the right to change, modify, cancel, suspend or interpret any part of the Community Handbook, policies and practices without advance notice within the sole discretion and without statement of cause for justification. All decisions made will be in the best interest of the children, school and parents. Parents will be notified through email or letter.