



PETOSKEY MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - Part of the Public Schools of Petoskey

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1560 East Mitchell  
Petoskey, Michigan 49770  
231.347-5331

# Parent Handbook

2021-2022

## **STATEMENT OF PHILOSOPHY**

The Petoskey Montessori Children's House is a non-profit corporation founded to promote the development of the whole child, facilitate the growth of inner discipline and cultivate the child's own natural joy of learning. We are dedicated to the Montessori philosophy and method of education. This philosophy respects and embraces the natural world and the panorama of cultures, knowledge and arts. It respects both the individual and the community while providing a well-rounded education emphasizing; intellectual, social, cultural, physical, creative and moral development.

The Montessori education method was developed in the early part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator. From observations made while working with young children, she developed a method that revolutionized teaching concepts and brought to the classroom a sense of joy and accomplishment. The aim is to enable the child to function in the environment independently; the underlying principle is one of freedom within established limits, which permits the child to gain self-esteem and self-reliance.

Montessori takes advantage of each child's unique sensitivities and offers exercises in language, development, sensorimotor development, reading, mathematics, physical and natural sciences, geography and cultural studies, music, art, drama and body movement. Children develop at their own pace in a trusting atmosphere with the aid of the guides. In this environment, education comes through spontaneous exercise of the child's own faculties. Education, according to Maria Montessori, integrates the application of life skills with academics and is not merely a search for intellectual skills.

### ***History***

The Petoskey Montessori Children's House was founded in November 1973 by a small group of dedicated parents. The first classroom of four children met in a rented space. Since that time the school has purchased its own property and has expanded its services to include children two months to 12 years of age. Such growth bears witness to the commitment and the generosity of parents and the dedication of staff.

## **ORGANIZATION AND STRUCTURE**

### ***Affiliation***

The Petoskey Montessori Children's House (PMCH) has been affiliated with the Association Montessori International (AMI) since its inception. AMI is an international organization founded by Dr. Maria Montessori in 1929 to maintain the integrity of her life's work and to ensure that it would be perpetuated after her death. To be accredited, the school must have for each class:

- A set of Montessori materials for the appropriate age group.
- A guide with an AMI diploma for the appropriate age group.

PMCH annually applies for AMI recognition and is evaluated for recertification. In addition, periodic visits by a national consultant provide an important exchange of ideas and ensure the continued quality of Montessori education at PMCH. Regional workshops sponsored by the national branch, AMI-USA and North American Montessori Teacher's Association (NAMTA), provide educational resources for professionals and parents.

### ***Board of Trustees***

Petoskey Montessori Children's House (PMCH) is a non-profit educational corporation guided by a Board of Trustees who serve without compensation. Nominations for membership on the board are solicited from parents of students at the school, alumni and citizens in the community. The board is responsible for the business and financial affairs of the school, its maintenance, and its continued operation. The board also seeks to promote and expand the understanding of the PMCH program among parents of the larger community.

### ***Administration***

The administrator is responsible for the total program of the school, overseeing curriculum implementation and establishing procedures and guidelines. The administrator's primary goal is to keep the needs of the child the focus of the PMCH program.

The administrator seeks to coordinate the energies of staff, parents and board members to best aid the development of each child. The administrator is responsible for the selection and supervision of all staff and contracted employees, parent education programs, preparation of an annual budget with long-range program goals for the board, and facilities management.

### ***Teaching Faculty***

Our teachers are called "guides", an indication of their role in relation to the child. They seek to guide the energies and tendencies of the child, serving as facilitators rather than disseminators of information. All of the Montessori guides possess either AMI or AMS certification and are active in continuing education.

Each guide is responsible for the arrangement and conduct of their class in accordance with the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, the guidelines of AMI and the general policies of the administration. They establish their long-term goals and daily plans for each child and the class as a whole based upon continued observation of the children. They also train and supervise any aides or assistants in the classroom.

Communication with parents is an essential aspect of the guides' work. They are available for questions and comments about Montessori philosophy, the class or your child. They also conduct several scheduled observations and conferences for parents each year.

### ***Support staff***

Classroom aides assist individual teachers and are responsible for various activities as directed by the guide. The assistants do not do specific "teaching"- yet their interactions with the child, whether it be at the door, over the lunch table, or in the yard, reflect the

Montessori principles of respect for each child and the nurturing of independence and self-confidence.

### ***Volunteers***

The Montessori Children's House relies on parent volunteers to provide an extended staff. Parent volunteers are needed as drivers, classroom substitutes, lunchtime assistants, project coordinators and material makers. The talents of many parents who come into the classroom for special projects greatly enrich the experience of the children. We encourage all parents to become a part of the extended staff during the year.

### ***Comprehensive Back Ground Check***

An employee or unsupervised volunteer must pass a comprehensive background check before being in a classroom with children.

## **OUTLINE OF PROGRAMS**

The Montessori program seeks to parallel the developmental cycle of the child at each stage of growth. The curriculum and classroom time varies according to the development level. There are, however, three components in all Montessori classes, from infant elementary levels:

- (1) A prepared environment designed to take advantage of the child's own tendencies and to build upon his/her interests, encouraging self-motivation.
- (2) A trained guide who observes the child and links them to activities and materials according to his/her needs and interests.
- (3) Freedom of choice, which increases as the child's responsibility expands (always balanced by an understanding of personal responsibility within the classroom).

Each classroom has children of mixed ages within the developmental plane. This allows the children to work at their own pace and level, interacting with each other and the adults in a spontaneous and caring atmosphere. From the earliest age, each child experiences him/herself as a respected and contributing member of a group.

### ***Assistants to Infancy Program***

Montessori child development is designed to maximize the development of young children. The specially trained adult conducts carefully planned activities which lead the child to build sensory-motor skills, socialization skills, high self-esteem, inner security, and abiding habits of concentration.

The Montessori Children's House features two child environments: The Nido, or "nest" is for infants 2 to (approximately) 14 months. The children enter the infant community between 14 and 18 months, when they are walking well, until (approximately) 3 years of age. The children are active as community members within multi-age groups, being guided toward the exercise of freedom and independence

The program has been created to give the child a rich, stimulating and inviting environment which allows for the natural development of the child. The carefully chosen materials of the prepared environment will provide the child with control of its mental and physical stimulation. Independence and determination, assets of a strong personality, are developed through work carried out with full concentration. This happens through an activity which completely absorbs each child and fulfills his/her urge to explore the world.

### ***Primary Level (Ages 3-6)***

The young child learns in a special way, having what Montessori termed an “absorbent mind”. Impressions and information about the world are taken in as a whole, providing the indirect preparation for later analysis and classification.

The primary class is designed to respond to the special characteristics of the young child who explores and learns primarily through the senses. Movement is an integral component of all learning at this age, especially the use of the hand for manipulation. As the child uses the rich environment to meet his/her needs or interests, there are several noticeable results: increased power of concentration, love of work, growing independence balanced by self-discipline, more interest in cooperative work with others, and a general “*joi de vivre*”, which manifests in a fascination with all life and the surrounding world.

All primary students attend five days per week, from 8:30 to 11:30. As a child enters the kindergarten year (generally age 5), he/she is usually ready for the extended session which continues into the afternoon. This session accommodates the older child’s burgeoning interests and abilities within an intimate small group setting. The guide determines the child’s readiness for this extended program and consults with parents to plan for the transition.

Parents should understand that Montessori Children’s House is neither a baby-sitting service nor a nursery school that prepares a child for traditional kindergarten. Rather, it is a unique cycle of learning and growth designed to respond to the “absorbent mind” and the sensorial nature of a young child during the first 6 years of life. Each successive development is made possible by the direct and indirect preparation which has preceded it.

### ***Elementary Level (Ages 6-12)***

The child between 6 and 12 no longer has an absorbent mind; they have a reasoning mind, which seeks the “how and why” of the universe. No longer interested only in what can be explored through the senses, the older child uses imagination as the tool of exploration, seeking the relationship among things seen and unseen.

The Montessori curriculum for the elementary child is termed “cosmic education”-presenting grand overviews to spark the imagination and then encouraging the child to explore the ways in which all the particulars of life and culture are interrelated. The various subjects are presented in an integrated fashion to encourage creative synthesis and allow each child to reach his/her own understanding.

The influence of peers is keen during these years. The child reaches out socially beyond his/her family and close friends to explore the way in which the larger society functions. Changing alliances, questions of justice and fairness, and decisions about group responsibilities characterize this age. The elementary classroom, therefore, presents lessons and projects which appeal to this social tendency, encouraging co-operative work, group projects and community extensions.

### **ENROLLMENT**

Through observation, Dr. Montessori saw that, at certain times in a child's early years, he/she shows heightened interest or unusual ability in acquiring particular skills or knowledge. Montessori called these "sensitive periods" and noted that they manifest at the same time in the life of all children, regardless of their cultural heritage. If the child's environment is expanded and prepared so as to "feed" these sensitivities at the proper time, the child can develop these areas in a natural and joyful manner, satisfying his/her own inner urging. Otherwise, it requires more conscious effort to master the same concepts or abilities at a later age.

For this reason, we encourage parents to enroll their children in the primary level between 2 ½ to 3 ½ so that they will be able to take maximum advantage of the sensitive periods in an environment designed to recognize and support them. Children may be enrolled at various times during the school year to ensure that they begin the moment they are ready.

Children with a Montessori primary background are given priority for enrollment in the elementary program. Other children are accepted for enrollment according to available spaces.

### ***Placement***

Children are accepted into each level for the duration of the full development cycle, beginning at the age 2 months in the Nido, approximately 16 months in the infant community and age 2 ½ to 3 ½ in the primary and continuing into the kindergarten year. Children are placed according to available space in the classrooms. We seek to maintain a balance of age and sex in each room.

Children are placed into the elementary level at various times during the year, depending upon their readiness (generally between ages 6 ½ to 7). The timing is determined by the primary class guide in consultation with administrator, elementary class guide and the parents.

### ***Orientation***

Prior to the start of each school year, there is a special orientation for parents of children who will be new students. All new students are then scheduled for an individual visit to the Children's House before the actual classes begin. The purpose of this visit is to introduce the children to the guide and the environment, thereby helping them to feel more secure on their first day of school.

Following individual visits, the new children attend several days of special orientation sessions. These are usually shorter days, allowing the guide to give much individual attention to these new children. It is usual for new children to experience separation anxiety; the major thrust of these orientation days is to help them adapt to a new situation, to demonstrate basic procedures, and generally make them feel more comfortable.

If a child enters the primary class during the school year, the orientation procedure is very similar to the fall schedule. The child first has an individual visit with the guide. He/she then attends class for only part of the morning, gradually lengthening the time in the class over several days until, by the end of the week he/she is attending the full morning session.

Children who enter the elementary class from the primary class have opportunities to make a gradual transition. They begin by making periodic visits to the elementary class, gradually lengthening the time they spend there working on specific projects. By the time a child is ready to enter the elementary classroom on a full-time basis, he/she has established bonds with the other class members and has forged a relationship with the elementary class guide.

## **PARENT INVOLVEMENT**

The opportunities for your child's growth are maximized when the school and the home share common goals and attitudes. This is accomplished through active parent involvement and open, frequent communication.

### ***Parent Meetings***

The staff of the Children's House offers two or three special meetings a year for parents. These meetings focus upon an aspect of child development, Montessori philosophy or curriculum. This is an important way for parents to broaden their understanding of their child's Montessori experience.

### ***Observations and Conferences***

Two periods for parent observations and conferences are scheduled each year, in late fall and spring. Parents have an opportunity to observe their child's class, followed by a conference appointment with the guide. The guide discusses each child's progress, makes available records or other information as applicable, offers recommendations, and solicits parents' insights and ideas.

Parents are welcome to be involved in their child's class at other times during the year. Parents may observe through a one way mirror, so that they do not interrupt the class or distract younger children. Parents observing the extended session or the Elementary class are given a special seat in the classroom.

We encourage parents and other interested adults to observe at any time during the year. We do ask that they respect the tone and the work of the class and refrain from interacting with the children in any way that may interrupt classroom activities. It is best to talk with the guide on the occasion of the first visit to learn his/her specific guidelines for visitors.

Any parent or visitor who does not have a scheduled observation appointment must check in at the office before proceeding to the classroom.

Often parents have questions or concerns about their child during the year. Each guide wants to be available to confer whenever the need arises. You can make arrangements for a conference through a note to the guide or a phone call. We ask you to respect the teacher's personal time by scheduling appointments and avoiding lengthy phone calls to their homes. Likewise, it is important to show respect for the child by not discussing concerns in his/her presence such as during arrival and departure times. Above all, do not think that your question or idea is unimportant or not worth bothering the guide. Quick and clear communication creates the most positive situation for your child- and that is important!

***Communication Channels***

In order to promote and enhance effective communication, it is important to speak to the right person. Second hand information is never as reliable as first hand, so we encourage you to direct your various concerns or questions according to the following channels:

Matter Related To	First Contact	If not Satisfactory	Final Authority
Guide Classroom Aide. Child's Progress Classroom Activity Classroom Procedures	Guide	Joint Conference - Guide & Admin.	Administrator
Business Matters Billing/Accounts Facilities School Finances	Administrator		Board of Trustees, Finance Comm.
Curriculum Policy Academic Policy	Guide	Guide or Administrator	Administrator
Public Relations Fundraising Parent Functions	Board Member	Chairman of Parent & Public Relations	Board of. Trustees

***Concerns***

If there has been some significant change in your child's home life, please let your child's guide know right away. Often we can help with a little added attention, understanding and loving care. Open communication between parents and guides are truly vital. We of course, promise to respect your confidentiality.

If you have a question, concern or suggestion about your child's relationship to the classroom, the guide or other children, please talk to the guide directly and promptly. Questions relating to the Montessori community in general may be directed to the school administrator.

We must, by licensing rules, inform you that we are required to report suspected cases of child neglect or abuse to the County Social Services Department. Families with serious concerns regarding their child's care at school may make a written or verbal report to the Board of Directors and/or the Family Independence Agency.

### ***Written Communication***

The Newsletter is sent home electronically bi-monthly to bring parents information about their children's classes, board decisions, school functions, and Montessori principles. Please make it a daily habit to check with your child about written communications from the school. Notices and reminders are posted at the entry gate and classroom entrance. The school calendar and other important information can be found on the school website [www.petoskeymontessori.org](http://www.petoskeymontessori.org).

We are frequently asked to distribute or post information from various community groups. We are glad to cooperate with these groups, however, this does not indicate that the Montessori Children's House endorses or recommends such events, information or services. Any announcement or service specifically endorsed by the Children's House will be accompanied by a communication using the school's letterhead or the signature of a staff member.

### ***Active Parent Involvement***

An interested parent becomes an active parent and the Children's House relies on parents to sustain and support its program and development. Active participation also creates a sense of Montessori community which enriches each family's experience.

Early in the year you will be given a list of various ways to become involved with the school- the options are varied and elicit a wide array of skills and talents. We ask each parent to volunteer time in at least one area during the year.

All parents are called upon for our annual fund raiser, the Montessori Auction, held in the spring of each school year. Parents new to the school will quickly discover that all hands are needed and there is much fun in the process.

### ***Work Commitment Hours***

**Families are asked to work a minimum of 20 hours per school year.** Work can be accomplished in a myriad of ways:

- **ROOM PARENTS:** help guides to set up car pools; help out with field trips; provide refreshments for special events; coordinate help for guides.

- **EQUIPMENT AND SUPPLIES:** Work with staff on purchasing, making and maintaining equipment; find resources for throw-away materials we can use (flowers, lumber scraps, fabrics, etc.); organize work groups for construction, refinishing, sewing or gardening projects.
- **PUBLICITY:** Help us maintain an up-to-date press list. Make the community aware of our school through newsletters, church bulletins, etc. Help put up posters for special events; maintain a school scrapbook; take pictures; host open houses.
- **COMMUNITY SPIRIT:** Plan gatherings for families so we can get to know one another better; host parents' meetings or provide refreshments; greet new families and show them the ropes; pair new families with old; help with any emergency that arises.
- **LIBRARY:** Pick up and return library books chosen by teachers; handle book club orders; inventory and repair classroom books; maintain and promote parent library.
- **FUNDRAISING/AUCTION COMMITTEE CHAIR/MEMBERS:** Help organize our annual auction in various ways; advertising, recruitment of donations, setting up the site, just to name a few.
- **YARD WORK/LANDSCAPING**
- **MAINTENANCE AND REPAIR OF FACILITIES:** Be on call for emergency repairs. Plan and co-ordinate repair/work days when needed.
- **MATERIALS/LINENS:** Help make materials for the classroom. Seamstresses are needed for making linens.
- **COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

## **FINANCIAL CONTRACTS/BILLING**

### ***How can I afford both Montessori now and college later?***

If you have to make a choice, the money is far better spent at age 3 than at age 18. Much has been written recently to support Dr. Montessori's early discovery that the most important period of an individual's life are the years from birth to 6. In Dr. Benjamin Bloom's studies at the University of Chicago, he found "a child develops approximately 50 percent of his intelligence by the age of four and another 30 percent by the age of eight".

In these early years, the child forms his basic personality structure and his attitude toward learning that he will carry with him/her throughout life. A child who falls in love with learning at an early age and who develops patterns of self-motivation and independence has the strongest foundation on which to build a higher education (formal or informal).

### **Student Admission Policy**

The Montessori Children's House administers its programs and admits students of any race, color, national origin, religion and disability to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students of the school.

#### ***Procedure for Admission of Students***

- (1) Tour and/or observation by parents with Admissions Administrator. The application and/or other forms are provided at this time.
- (2) The application form and the registration deposit of \$50 are returned to the school office.
- (3) If there is an opening for the child, the parents are notified and the child is placed in a classroom. The guide in that classroom will contact the family to meet with the child and parents in order to answer any questions prior to enrollment. All forms must be completed and returned to the office before the child can begin class (i.e. tuition agreement with the non-refundable deposit, health appraisal, questionnaire and child information card).

#### ***Tuition***

The Montessori Children's House is a non-profit school, operated completely upon tuition and donations. The school contracts, in advance, with its faculty and incurs expenses for the year based upon enrollment. The Children's House enrolls students for the full academic year and parents are responsible for the tuition. Parents sign a tuition contract each year that outlines the terms of payment. We offer a sibling discount for families that have more than one tuition-based student at the school. Delinquent accounts will be handled at the discretion of the board of trustees.

The tuition is determined by the board of trustees in the spring for the following school year. Tuition for any student enrolled during the course of the school year is pro-rated for the remaining academic year.

Children are enrolled for an annual session. This agreement is in effect from the date of enrollment. Tuition is due on or before the first of the month and will be considered late after the 10<sup>th</sup>. An administrative late fee of \$25 will be assessed for tuition received after the 10<sup>th</sup> of the month in which classroom services are provided, including latchkey services. Children will be suspended from tuition or fee based programs if their account is over 40 days late. A finance charge of 1½ percent per month may be charged on all balances more than 30 days past due. A returned check fee of \$35 will be assessed.

Tuition is calculated for the school year and split into equal monthly payments. There are no tuition reductions for holidays, absences due to illness, vacations, or weather related closures. Closures and holidays were planned for when the annual tuition was set.

If paying by credit card there will be a processing fee equal to charges incurred to PMCH from the credit card company.

### ***Withdrawal Procedures***

If a parent chooses to withdraw their child before the end of the school year, tuition will be prorated to the date of withdrawal, with the exception of the non-refundable tuition deposit.

The Montessori Children's House reserves the right to dismiss any child for (1) failure to pay fees when due; (2) conduct of the child/children or parent/parents which disturb the peace and order of the school or staff; (3) health or medical reasons that present a risk to the child or others in the school in accordance with state and federal law; (4) a determination by the Montessori Children's House that the child is not benefiting from the program.

### ***Petoskey Montessori Elementary School***

In the spring of 1997, the Public Schools of Petoskey accepted a proposal and signed an agreement with the Petoskey Montessori Children's House Elementary class stating that children from first level (grade) through sixth level are to become part of the public school system. Thus the Petoskey Montessori Elementary School was created. Extended Day/KD is now included in this agreement. This change, from a tuition based private school to a state funded public education alternative, does not change the methodology, philosophy or pedagogy of the Montessori program we have maintained over the past two decades. The public school contracted with the Children's House to provide a pure and viable Montessori elementary program with very few interruptions or deviations from our original program. The facilities, materials, equipment and grounds continue to be owned and maintained by the parent corporation known as the Petoskey Montessori Children's House (a 501(c)(3) non-profit corporation).

The PMES scholastic calendar coincides with the Public Schools of Petoskey calendar, with minor changes. This similarity will allow students to utilize the public school buses and give continuity of breaks for siblings. PMES must adhere to the number of state mandated hours of instruction. This is achieved through the number of days and length of each day during the school year. The school day will start at 8:20 a.m. and go until 3:05 p.m. .

### ***Donations***

Many parents and grandparents choose to support the school's program through additional donations. Over the years generous donations have helped build a fence, establish a fund for professional education, purchase a copier and set of encyclopedias, along with other projects that add to the total quality of the school's program and operation. PMCH also participates in the Annual Giving Drive each December which helps to offset the cost of operations throughout the year.

**All donations to the Montessori Children's House are tax deductible.** We encourage you to consider making a special contribution to our program and to recommend the school to relatives and friends who give donations to chosen organizations.

## **ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES**

### ***Daily Schedule***

The daily schedule will have slight variations for each program level. Each program has an uninterrupted morning work cycle, lunch, snack, recess and afternoon quiet/nap time in accordance with Child Day Licensing requirements. The morning work cycle period is two-three hours dependent upon the child's age. The work cycle is composed of a few key concepts; child initiated work and an opportunity for a prolonged period of work without adult interruptions. Work that is chosen by the child's enthusiasm and desire to learn has a tendency to be more meaningful and fulfilling.

A typical Primary Class day is as follows:

07:30 – 08:30 Early morning arrival

08:30 – 11:30 Work cycle & morning snack

11:30 – 12:00 Lunch

12:00 – 12:30 Recess/Pick-Up

12:30 – 01:00 Clean Up/Reading

01:00 – 03:00 Quiet/nap time for younger children or extended day (work cycle)

03:00 – 05:30 Afternoon snack, indoor/outdoor free time

### ***Procedures for Arrival and Pick Up***

The car line is between 8:05 and 8:30 in the morning and between 3:00 and 3:15 in the afternoon. Children arriving before 8:05 or after 8:30 a.m. should be walked to the door each morning by their parents. After 3:15 p.m., parents should pick up their children in the classroom or in latchkey. Elementary school pick up is between 3:15 and 3:30. ***It is important that children arrive on time to assure the 3-hour work period in the morning.***

Montessori students bid farewell to their parents at the gate and walk to their classes. At dismissal, the children will also meet their parents at the gate. On rainy days, Montessori students will wait for their parents at the entrance.

All cars should enter the driveway on the west side and exit on the east side. Do not allow your child to get out of the car and walk up the driveway past waiting vehicles. If you wish to talk with the guide or another parent at arrival or dismissal, please park your car in the staff/visitors lot so as not to block the driveway.

### ***Please be on time...***

Children are very sensitive about being picked up late. If you are unavoidably detained, please call us right away. When a child is picked up after 5:30, you are billed an overtime fee of \$10 for the first five minutes, then \$1 per minute thereafter until pickup.

### ***Pick Up Policy***

Children are permitted to leave school only with parents except when another person has been designated, in writing, on the child information card.

If for any reason you are unable to pick up your child at the end of the day, please notify the office of the name and driver's license number of the person authorized to pick up your child.

Children will not be released to anyone other than the parent without authorization. Please follow this procedure even if the person you are authorizing to pick up your child has been named on your emergency card. In this case the office only needs the person's name.

If your child will be going home to visit with another child on a given day, please send a written note to the guide clearly stating the plan for the day.

Remember that all children under the age of 4 belong in a car seat in the back seat; booster seats are required until the age of 8 or a child reaches 57 inches in height. A child will not be released to a vehicle not properly equipped.

### ***Getting a Good Start***

Mornings are often hectic times for many families. Try to be aware of your child's needs in the morning and do as much as possible to set a calm, unhurried atmosphere. For younger children, try setting an early bedtime so that they can awake early enough to carry out morning preparations in a relaxed manner. Consider doing certain preparations the night before, such as choosing clothing. And, of course, a good breakfast is important for the morning's work!

Every child has occasional days when he/she doesn't want to get up or go to school. Sometimes this can escalate into a power struggle between parent and child. The most helpful approach is to be matter-of-fact and positive. If your child is in tears give a goodbye hug and then leave; children are usually fine once the parent has departed. If you have concerns about your child's behavior or your own response, please talk with your child's guide and together work out a positive approach.

During arrival, the staff wishes to give full attention to your children, welcoming each one and giving special attention to their comments, requests and needs.

### ***Carpools***

If your child is involved in a carpool, it is helpful for the parents to meet and set basic safety and behavior policies which will be consistent in all cars. Periodic discussions among carpool parents can help ensure the children are arriving at school cheerful, eager and calm.

If your child is in a carpool, be sure the drivers are listed on your child's emergency care, and give us a note describing your arrangements, to keep in your child's file.

### ***Special Arrangements***

If your child will regularly walk home or ride the bus, please inform the child's guide, in writing, at the beginning of the year. Also, please send written notes concerning any

changes in dismissal plans. If someone other than those designated on your emergency card will be picking up your child, you must send a note giving that information.

As children get older, they enjoy visiting with each other. We find it less confusing if these arrangements are made by you or your child beforehand. A written note lets the guide know that the parent consents to the arrangement.

### ***What to Bring – What to Leave at Home***

Children should carry a tote bag or backpack which they bring and take home each day. Inside the bag should be extra clothes as necessary, and any notes or other papers for the staff. Wet clothes, children's artwork, newsletters and notices will be put in these bags to go home with the children.

Parents should provide children with sunscreen and insect repellent to be applied as needed. Please label with your child's first and last name.

Children enjoy bringing items which relate to the work of the class and we encourage such occasional contributions. Natural objects, artifacts, handcrafts related to a certain country – even the occasional animal visitor – all contribute to the children's experience. Children often bring a book to place on the library shelf for a few days. Please limit these to quality books dealing with the real world or classic fiction. (No comic books or books featuring TV characters.) Make certain that your child's name is written inside the book.

Please do not send any toys, gum, candy, blankets or stuffed animals; it is best to leave these at home. Children who stay for the afternoon may bring a blanket or cuddly toy in their tote bag for use at nap time if they desire.

### ***Naps***

The younger primary and IC students who stay for the afternoon have a rest period each day after lunch; this nap time is in accordance with the Child Day Care Licensing Bureau requirements.

Each napping child should have his/her own blanket or quilt. Some also like to have a small pillow, which remains at the school for nap time. These items will be stored in a plastic, zippered pillowcase and will be sent home periodically to be laundered.

### ***Snow Days and Emergency Closings***

The Montessori Children's House classes will be closed for snow days whenever the Petoskey Public Schools are closed. Teachers will not be in attendance on snow days. Such closings will be announced before 7:30 a.m. on local TV and radio stations. Child care will be in session between **8:30** and 5:30 for those children signed up for care unless we call concerning closing. In case of an emergency closing, parents will be notified at the earliest possible time.

## **MEDICAL POLICIES**

### ***Health Forms***

The State of Michigan requires a health form for all children enrolled in the Montessori Children's House. This form includes a record of immunizations. Parents need to update this form yearly for IC/Nido students, every two years for Primary students, or when a new health condition occurs.

- ***Immunizations are required unless there is a medical waiver signed by a doctor or immunizations have started with a plan in place signed by the doctor.***

### ***Illness/Incident/Injury***

Parents will be called and their child must be picked up as soon as possible if:

- Child has a temperature of 100.4 degrees Fahrenheit or over
- Three or more cases of diarrhea in one day
- Vomiting
- Signs of infection or contagious disease (i.e. yellow mucous with cold symptoms, chicken pox/measles blisters, etc.)
- Injury or incident is more serious than staff is trained to handle (i.e. bloody nose over 15 minutes in length, loss of consciousness, seriously injured extremities).

When your child returns, we strongly recommend full participation in the day – including playing outdoors. Fresh air is wonderful!

A child will be asked to leave for health or medical reasons that present risks to the child or other children in the program.

### ***Documentation***

*From Parents –*

- Doctor's note stating non-contagious status if symptoms appear suspicious
- Signed and dated note from parents to PMCH, with specific instructions for administering doctor requested medication, if needed, during child care hours
- Verbal or written message to PMCH staff verifying child has been **fever or vomit free for no less than 24 hours**, without any type of analgesic or medicine
- Any contagious disease or sickness must be reported to PMCH as soon as possible per Public Health Department policy

*From PMCH Staff –*

- Any medication given will have time recorded and initials of person administering the medication as well as a witness on class medication chart(child's individual chart in IC/Nido as well) All medication must be in original packaging and labeled with child's first and last name.

- Potty Charts for IC/Nido classes will be posted, recorded and checked often. Proper hygiene adhered to at all times to prevent further transmittal of sickness
- Incident Reports will be used for any mishap or injury incurred during school hours, a copy will be sent home with your child

The Public Health Department and Licensing Office will be notified when any of the following illnesses occur and have been diagnosed by a licensed physician:

- Bacterial Meningitis
- Chicken Pox
- Diarrhea Diseases
- Diphtheria
- Hepatitis A
- Measles
- Mumps
- Pertussis
- Pneumonia
- Rubella

### ***Reporting Illness***

The Montessori Children's House must report absences due to illness to the local Department of Public Health. Please report your child's illness by calling the office after 9:30 a.m.

In case of communicable disease other than a cold or flu, please notify the school promptly so that a notice can be posted to alert all parents.

### ***Medication***

- The Montessori Children's House will only be responsible for administering medication to a child after receiving written instructions from a physician. Medication may be given by a staff member in accordance to instructions and in the presence of another adult. All medication must be in original packaging and labeled with child's first and last name.

**Do not send any medicine to school with your child or in your child's backpack.** This includes non-prescription items such as vitamins, cough medicine and aspirin. If you have any questions regarding medication, please talk with your child's guide.

### ***Emergencies***

In case of minor accidents on the school grounds, staff members are trained and equipped to respond with first aid, if needed. In the case of something more serious, paramedics are called and parents are immediately notified. A staff member will accompany your child. Your child's medical statement and emergency card go along as well. Time may be saved by meeting parents at the hospital. Please check with your insurance company to be sure your coverage includes 911 emergency procedures.

We have special, practiced procedures for events such as tornado warnings and fire, posted in each classroom.

### ***Support for Families and Staff***

The Montessori Children's House is dedicated to supporting the families of its children and staff. The following policies relate to this support:

- 1. Using staff members as personal babysitters is allowed only during hours PMCH is closed.**
- 2. School will be closed two to three days near Labor Day weekend each year.** Staff uses this time to refurbish their environment, plan for the implementation of annual goals, attend the staff retreat to coordinate efforts and positive attitudes, and to complete annual staff training requirements, such as First Aid, CPR, etc.

### **DISCIPLINE**

A major goal of the Montessori experience is to provide an atmosphere which encourages the development of self-discipline. From their earliest days in the class, children are encouraged to make choices based upon their knowledge of the activities available. They are also given clear guidelines for acceptable behavior which are positively and consistently reinforced.

As a Montessori guide, her/his interventions are expected to be formulated based on 1) respect for the child, 2) knowledge and understanding of the developmental needs and characteristics of the child, as well as the needs of the group and 3) the understanding that appropriate behavior must be carefully taught and modeled. The goal of each intervention is to assist the children to develop self-control and self-discipline. The manner in which each intervention is made is expected to reflect a patient attitude and to consist only of verbal, and when appropriate with a younger child, gentle physical assistance. This translates into several basic rules:

- Each person takes responsibility for care of the environment and may not damage or misuse it
- A child may not disturb the work of another child
- No child or adult may strike or verbally abuse another person
- Restraint will not be used with the children unless to keep them from harm to themselves or to others around them

All other procedures and guidelines relate to these basic ground rules and are clearly demonstrated and discussed with the children. As a child's responsibility increases, so do

his/her opportunities for choice. Therefore, a child's freedom of activity in the class continues to expand, tempered by the willingness to be responsible for his/her own actions.

To internalize control and grow in self-discipline, a child must experience the natural or logical consequences of his/her behavior within the practical limitations of a given situation. A natural consequence follows immediately upon a chosen action. For example, a child who runs across the room with a full bucket of water finds him/herself in a puddle of water with wet clothing. The logical consequence of that scenario is for the child to mop the floor and change his/her clothing.

A logical consequence is frequently applied by an adult, following the behavior as immediately as possible and as a direct and expected result of the child's action rather than an arbitrary "punishment". For example, if a child is hitting others nearby, a logical consequence would be to immediately intervene and have the child stay with the teacher or work in an area isolated from the others. The message is clear – "Since you are choosing to hurt the other children, you do not have the freedom to be with them right now." An illogical consequence in the form of an arbitrary punishment would be to tell the child that because he/she is hitting, he/she cannot have a snack that afternoon.

When children are allowed to directly experience the consequences of their choices and are encouraged to continue choosing, they grow in their willingness to take responsibility for themselves. The resulting individual is secure, creative and "disciplined."

If either parent or guide has concerns about a child's behavior, it is important that they work together to outline an approach which will be consistent for the child. Agreement and cooperation among the important adults in a child's life encourages the child to more confidently choose what is appropriate and positive.

## **NUTRITION**

### ***Snacks***

A snack is available for the children in the Infant Community and Nido classes as well as the Primary classes. Having a snack is a popular activity which offers the children many opportunities to practice skills and grow in independence. The children set the table, arrange or prepare servings, clean the dishes and table, and finally sweep the floor. It is quite a complex series of activities; the process itself is as enticing to the children as the food.

The following are some of the guidelines that the staff uses to plan snacks for the students:

- Parents provide snacks on a rotating basis. We suggest items that have not been over-prepared as the children enjoy slicing cheese, peeling fruits, chopping vegetables, sprinkling raisins, etc. Ethnic specialties are always welcome.

- We try not to serve items which contain sugar or artificial coloring as some children are highly sensitive to such ingredients. This includes so called “health food” items such as granola bars or fruit roll-ups which have high sugar content. Here are some examples of suggested snack items:

Raw vegetables with a dip  
Celery and peanut butter  
Cheese with whole grain crackers  
Whole grain muffins  
Rice cakes  
Whole grain breads w/butter, fruit spread, peanut butter  
Cherry tomatoes or mushrooms to stuff w/cottage cheese  
Fresh fruits  
Celery and cream cheese  
Hard boiled eggs  
Sesame sticks with hummus or tahini  
String cheese  
Yogurt with fruit or toppings

### ***Lunches***

Lunch time is an enjoyable social and educational experience as well as a time to refuel the body. The children help to set the tables, arrange their own food and clean up after the meal. During lunch they enjoy conversation with their friends and practice courteous table manners.

Good nutrition directly affects a child’s health, concentration and behavior. In their classes, the children discuss the components of a balanced meal and learn how to construct a meal having at least one item from each of the four major food groups.

Friday, the Primary and Elementary classes have pizza. All other day’s students need to bring a lunch from home. All lunches for IC/Nido will be brought from home.

### ***Food Allergies/Special Diets***

If your child is allergic to specific foods, please talk with his/her guide. If special foods need to be substituted for the regular snacks, the guide will be glad to work out a procedure which will still allow the child some independence in preparing his/her own snack. The need for special diets, such as lactose free, meat/poultry free, etc. are respected here at PMCH. Please discuss the specifics with your child’s guide.

The food program for the Nido class students differs dramatically due to age/developmentally appropriate foods for each child. We rely on input from parents for specific needs and concerns. A written policy on the Nido class food program can be attained from the Nido class guide.

## **MISCELLANEOUS INFORMATION**

### ***Dress***

There is no formal dress code at the Montessori Children's House. Children should wear comfortable clothing which permits them to be active indoors and outdoors. In the course of a day, clothing may become dirty, paint spattered, or wet. Do not send children in clothing which would prevent them from entering freely into activities for fear of getting their clothes dirty.

Primary children are developing personal independence which includes dressing skills. You can help them by choosing clothes which they can easily manage themselves. For example, elasticized pants instead of overalls, Velcro or large buttons, boots which pull on easily and hats without ties. The children wear comfortable slippers indoors; these should be a simple slip on style, such as a moccasin. Elementary class children keep a pair of indoor shoes at school to wear inside the classroom.

Children have occasional accidents or spills which require a change of clothes. Each child keeps a complete change of clothes at school which should be labeled with the child's name. Wet or soiled clothing is sent home and a fresh supply should be sent back with the child the following day. Each child is provided with his/her own bin at school in which to store the slippers and change of clothes.

Outdoor activity is a part of the daily routine. Children need to arrive at school dressed appropriately for the weather. During the winter, all children must wear snow pants or a snowsuit and an extra pair of mittens is also a good idea. Some children who play soccer keep a pair of shin pads at school during soccer season.

It is very important for children to wear comfortable and manageable clothes. In general, when choosing clothes with your child look for front openings and simple fastenings (try them out before you buy). Children take pride in being able to dress without help. Clothes that are simple and functional allow the child to move and work freely. Natural fibers clean more easily and breathe better.

Children learning to walk, or to perfect the way they move and walk, can succeed best in simple, flexible, non-skid shoes.

### ***Birthdays***

The birth of each new being is indeed something to celebrate! Children eagerly anticipate their own birthday and receive affirmation of their uniqueness and special worth through celebrating the event with others.

Each guide incorporates birthday celebrations within the life of the class. Talk with your child's guide ahead of time to plan which day your child will celebrate the birthday at school. You will also learn of any special rituals or materials used to celebrate birthdays in your child's class.

Many children like to bring a special birthday treat to share with their friends. You will want to check with the guide so as to accommodate any special food allergies of children in that class. There are many creative ways to make foods appear “special” – beautiful garnishes, fancy serving trays, colorful napkins or plates, etc.

On your child’s birthday he/she is often showered with gifts. This attention can turn many children inward. One way for your child to turn outward to express love and thankfulness on this special day is to offer a gift for the class. Something as simple as a lovely flower can be joyously presented as a gift of self. Small items given over the years (books, vases, wooden boxes, trays, pitchers) provide each room with reminders of many different children who contribute to its life.

### ***Holidays and Celebrations***

An important attribute of the human spirit is the sharing of joyful moments or commemoration of significant events. In our hurried modern world we frequently substitute the trappings for the real experience of shared ritual and communal celebration. In the Children’s House, holidays and other events are celebrated as an outgrowth of the children’s own culture or within the context of cross-cultural study. As a non-sectarian school, the Children’s House does not promote any particular religion or denomination. Rather, holidays and traditions are explored in a non-judgmental manner as manifestations of specific cultures or historical experience.

In the Elementary class the emphasis is placed upon the meaning of a celebration and the children are then encouraged to create their own expressions and rituals. A simple celebration planned and executed by the children is more meaningful than a party planned only by adults for the children’s entertainment. We encourage you to discuss any questions or ideas regarding holidays and special events with your child’s guide.

### ***Written Work***

The children’s daily written work is kept at school. Periodically, the children bring their collection of work home; we hope that you will take time to review the work with your child.

During the early years of the child’s development, there is little written evidence of the work the children are accomplishing. Even artwork may consist of page after page of repetitious circles as the child repeats to perfect a skill. We want to do all we can to encourage the child to choose work from his/her own inner motivation – and to lengthen the periods on concentration. The process and activity itself is of greatest importance – not the product. The young child works to satisfy his/her own needs and to perfect the self; the motivation and choice of work should not be to please the adult.

As a child grows older and enters the extended session, the volume of written work increases. Beginning in the extended session and continuing through the Elementary program, each child keeps all of his/her work in individual files. Before work is sent home, the guide reviews the work with the child, using that occasion to assess with the child his/her accomplishments and to structure follow up review when necessary. The ultimate

purpose of this individual tutorial is to help the child become increasingly responsible for his/her own education, formulating personal disciplines.

### ***Field Trips and Excursions***

From time to time a class may decide to venture out on a field trip (requiring parent volunteer drivers) or an excursion (walking to a place close by). You will receive detailed advance information (date, time span, drivers, destination), and an itinerary will be left in the school office. Field trips require an authorization signature from you. If your child requires a car seat, remember to leave it behind on that day; we will make sure children are properly belted when cars are running.

You are asked to help drive (we need to see your driver's license, registration and proof of insurance) and to help shepherd children under the guide's guidance. We travel in caravan for mutual protection and stick together throughout a trip. Extended Day/Kd will follow the Public School of Petoskey field trip guidelines.

If a child arrives late for a field trip departure, you may choose to drive to the destination yourself, to check with the office to see if the child may visit another class, or return home. Be on time!

### ***Lost or Damaged Materials***

Each pupil or their parent or guardian shall be responsible to the guide for all books or materials damaged or not returned by the pupil. The cost of the materials will be added to the tuition due the school.

### ***Toileting***

In the Infant Community, we follow a process that we find is most beneficial to the child; we use training pants or pull-ups rather than diapers. Because the pants are less bulky, we find that the children have more freedom of movement and as they begin to stand and walk, they are able to stand straighter, with better balance and grace.

Formal toileting is initiated by the child. But we find that it happens rather easily, because in training pants the child is more aware of urinating or having a bowel movement. The theory behind our approach is that it is the normal human condition to be clean and dry. Therefore, it is very important that we help the child change into clean, dry pants promptly (though we are careful never to say "dirty" or "yucky" about a perfectly natural act). Training pants also give children the possibility of helping to dress themselves at an early age, adding to their self-confidence and independence. In both the Nido and the Infant Community, a diaper or training pant and a T-shirt are sufficient in warm weather, making it as easy as possible for children to succeed in personal care.

Please understand that this is an approach that we use successfully to help the child acquire useful information and skills that will make toileting come easily and naturally when the child is ready. This is not early or pressured toilet training.

Parents provide training pants for all children not yet toilet trained in the school. IC/Nido parents provide either cloth or paper. Please check often to insure proper amount of pants are on hand at school.

Children will be allowed to enter the Primary class after toilet learning is complete and entirely in use. All Primary students wear cotton pants and full clothing with inside shoes (slippers) to class.

### ***Smoking***

Montessori Children's House is a tobacco free environment.

### ***Referrals***

The school keeps a list of various special services available locally and will share our knowledge of these organizations with you whenever you wish.

### ***Licensing Notebook***

A licensing notebook is kept in the office.

### ***If you are reported to Children's Protective Services***

#### ***Please Remember...***

- Any person who works with a child, in a home, in the doctors' office, in a day care, in a school etc. must report any signs or suspicion that a child is in danger or has been hurt (abuse & neglect). **This is the Law.**
- It is the law. Employees who work with children **Can Go To Jail For Not** reporting their suspicions period.
- A report is not an accusation; it is a request for an investigation. You don't want a person who does not know how to investigate abuse to investigate your situation.
- The best parents/professionals have been reported for circumstances that did not make sense or were suspicious (example: a medically fragile child has an injury that looks like abuse, but is caused by the medical condition).
- If Children's Protective Service is called; **Cooperate.** Their priority is to keep children safe and the family together, not to take children away. If you are under stress or need help they can provide services.



PETOSKEY MONTESSORI ELEMENTARY SCHOOL - Part of the Public Schools of Petoskey

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1560 East Mitchell  
Petoskey, Michigan 49770  
231.347-5331

I, \_\_\_\_\_, acknowledge that I have received the Parent Handbook from Petoskey Montessori Children's House and Elementary school. I agree to adhere to the policies and procedures outlined in the Parent Handbook.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parent signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date