

Family Handbook 2023-2024



**Fernwood
Montessori School**

LEARNING FOR LIFE

10100 Old Georgetown Road
Bethesda, MD 20814
Phone: (301) 469-4888

Fernwood Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, national and/or ethnic origin, religion, family structure, sexual orientation, gender identity or disability in the admission of students, the employment of staff or in the administration of its policies.

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WELCOME

Welcome to Fernwood Montessori School! This handbook is designed to answer your questions concerning our school and its programs. Please read it carefully and keep it available for reference.

Fernwood Montessori School offers an outstanding learning environment for children ages 2 through 12. Our YCC and Primary levels are AMI-recognized programs. Our campus in Bethesda, Maryland serves the Greater Washington, D.C. area.

Visitors to our school are often amazed by the concentration, excitement, and zest for learning exhibited by our students. Working according to the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori, beneath two globally recognized organizations, our AMI- and AMS-trained guides prepare warm, nurturing classroom environments tailored to the children and their unique developmental needs. We believe that the principles of Montessori enable us to provide a space in which children's natural curiosity and joy in learning are allowed to unfold.

At Fernwood, children are nurtured intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally. Socially the younger children in our mixed-age classrooms benefit from the model provided by their older peers and the older children gain self-assurance and confidence as they provide leadership and master materials. The Montessori materials provide for a hands-on approach to learning, extensively covering the subject areas of language, math, geography, and science. Students are also instructed in art, music, cultural studies, physical education, in addition to special enrichment opportunities.

We strive to foster a strong, vibrant community between Fernwood staff, families, and students. We look forward to welcoming you personally to Fernwood and sharing more of the wonderful opportunities that our school has to offer.

Sincerely,

Administrative Team
Fernwood Montessori School

ACCREDITATION AND MEMBERSHIPS

Fernwood Montessori School's YCC and Primary programs are accredited by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), the organization founded by Dr. Maria Montessori. This organization represents the most exacting standards of excellence for Montessori schools. Every three years, AMI consultants visit the YCC and Primary classrooms as part of the formal accreditation renewal process. AMI accreditation ensures that member schools meet its rigorous standards.

We actively participate in the international, national and local Montessori community through our association with Metro Montessori, a group of independent Montessori schools, Montessori training programs and related educational services, as well as our membership in AMI-USA, American Montessori Society (AMS), and the Montessori Administrators Association. Our teachers maintain membership in either AMI-USA or AMS.

All of our Montessori guides have post-graduate diplomas from an accredited AMI or AMS teacher-training center. Our school fosters a culture of professional growth for all our staff, including attendance at national Montessori conferences, in-service education programs, and other professional development opportunities.

Our classes, including before care and after care programs, are fully licensed by Maryland's Office of Child Care. We are inspected annually to ensure we meet the standards required by the State of Maryland. Our kindergarten and Elementary programs are also approved by the Maryland State Department of Education.

OUR PHILOSOPHY

At Fernwood Montessori, each child is educated at his or her own rate of development. Following the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, we believe that within each child is the seed of unlimited potential that guides the child into adulthood. Our focus is to help every child self-construct through an enriched environment with activities that promote experimentation at every developmental level. We also actively foster the innate desire to be independent through everyday activities in our classroom.

The Montessori child develops their individual gifts by choosing their own work after receiving quality lessons. The children have the freedom to shape it and follow it to completion. Defined limits and expectations are set through curriculum standards as well as through student codes of conduct and discipline. We treat each child with dignity and respect and expect that they will treat others with the same respect. In our classrooms, each child learns to balance personal freedom with a sense of responsibility to themselves, to others and to the community. These concepts are at the core of Dr. Montessori's philosophy of education.

To support the personalized education of the child, Dr. Montessori emphasized mixed-age groups. Within our classrooms, the child can be enriched both cognitively and socially at the level that is appropriate for their own stage of development. Classrooms are divided into three communities:

- Young Children's Community (2-3 year olds)
- Primary (3-6 year olds)
- Elementary (6-12 year olds)

Each community has its own physical, social, psychological and cognitive goals. These goals overlap because human development does not completely follow a sequential pattern, nor does it proceed at the same rate for each child. A child may well move into the next foundation level during a school year and the necessary curriculum changes will be met. One of the hallmarks of a Montessori education is that it naturally accommodates the changing academic, social and emotional needs of the child, rather than forcing the child to adapt to a fixed system.

MISSION

Fernwood Montessori School adheres to the Montessori principles and provides children with individualized opportunities to foster a love of learning through specially prepared environments of mix-aged groups which encourages the development of independent and confident future citizens. At Fernwood, we guide children to discover their potential by nurturing social, emotional, and intellectual security within our diverse community.

VISION

Inspired and guided by Montessori principles, at Fernwood, we strive to guide children's growth as unique human beings through careful observation, persistent collaboration, and organized child-specific work within our inclusive and diverse community.

HISTORY

Fernwood Montessori School was originally founded as Lone Oak Montessori by Pat Swann in 1981. Since its inception, the school has been a place where children have been nurtured intellectually, socially, physically, and emotionally. Lone Oak Montessori School officially became Fernwood Montessori School in 2017 and has since

then continued to thrive. Fernwood Montessori School is one of six sister schools in the Metro Montessori network of schools and is currently the only school with an elementary program.

Fernwood continues to work to meet the needs of all children and strives to foster a greater love of nature through planning the eventual creation of a natural playscape. Through community building, we look forward to welcoming you personally to Fernwood, and sharing more of the wonderful opportunities that our school has to offer.

FERNWOOD CONTACT INFORMATION

SCHOOL ADDRESS & PHONE NUMBERS

Physical Address	Phone Numbers	
10100 Old Georgetown Road	(301) 469-4888	Main Office
Bethesda, MD, 20814	(301) 897-5300	Extended Care

EMAIL CONTACTS

Name	Role	email
Kim Torres	Head of School	director@fernwoodmontessori.com
Shaheen Somji	Assistant Head of School	admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com
Marjorie Arriola	Lead Guide- YCC	ycc@fernwoodmontessori.com
Walaa Agha	Lead Guide- Primary 1	primary1@fernwoodmontessori.com
Anne Simon	Lead Guide- Primary 2	primary2@fernwoodmontessori.com
Lisa Ruas	Lead Guide- Elementary	elementary@fernwoodmontessori.com

SOCIAL MEDIA

Social media is a great tool for sharing events at school and in our community. Join us on social media and help us broaden our online community.

- Website: www.fernwoodmontessori.com
- Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/fernwoodmontessorimd>
- LinkedIn: <https://www.linkedin.com/company/fernwood-montessori-school/>
- Great Schools: <https://www.greatschools.org/maryland/bethesda/4154-Fernwood-Montessori-School/>

WHOM DO I CONTACT?

Please call the office at (301) 469-4888 or email the Assistant Head of School, admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com, for any of the following reasons:

- If your child will be absent
- If there is any change in the person who will be picking up your child
- Enrollment or tuition questions
- Changes to your child's schedule, including requests for drop-in before or after care (these requests must be made with at least 24-hour notice and are accommodated when there is space)

If you have any questions related to your child's day, the classroom environment or Montessori pedagogy, your child's teacher should be your first point of contact. Please understand that our teachers are with their students for most of the day and are unable to respond immediately. Please give them 48 hours to respond to an email or return a phone call. For issues or concerns that need to be addressed immediately, please call the Head of School.

At any point, you should feel free to approach the Head of School, with any feedback, questions, or concerns, or if you believe that an issue has not been sufficiently addressed by your child's teacher. The Head of School can be reached via email at director@fernwoodmontessori.com or by calling the office at (301) 469-4888.

GRIEVANCE POLICY

Should any parent disagree with a policy, action or decision made by Fernwood Montessori School, a conference may be arranged with the Head of School and/or appropriate staff member to discuss the nature of the disagreement. Every reasonable attempt will be made in a timely manner to reach a satisfactory solution for all parties involved.

MEANS OF COMMUNICATION

Arrival and dismissal are not a good time to share important updates about your child, or to ask your child's guide questions. The guides, assistants, and administrators are supervising or working with the children at this point and need to keep their focus on the children in their care.

Family Communication

You may contact the guides by leaving a written note, calling the office at (301) 469-4888 during normal school hours, or sending an email, either directly to the guide or through the office. Guides are typically able to return calls between 8:00am and 8:30am and between 3:15pm and 4:00pm.

Normally, if you leave a message for your child's guide, they will be back in touch with you within 48 hours. Guides are in the classroom all day long, and are not able to check email, or typically able to return calls during the school day, unless in an emergency. Please contact the Head of School with any emergency that needs to be immediately addressed.

Annual Conferences & Progress Reports

Formal conferences will be held in the fall and spring. Please feel free to schedule a meeting with your child's guide between conferences if you'd like more information about what your child has been experiencing at school. You can schedule a meeting by contacting the school at (301) 469-4888 or email your guide directly.

Families will receive progress reports in the fall, spring, and end of year cumulative reports. Each set of reports will be accessible via Transparent Classroom for easy, digital access, and in your child's physical permanent file.

Classroom observations

Observations are highly encouraged once or twice a year in both the Primary and Elementary programs. This is an opportunity to come and observe a dynamic picture of what your child's experience is like in their Montessori "home." Please observe the appropriate guidelines as expected. The Head of School or Assistant Head of School can provide you with a parent observation form to guide what to look for in the classroom.

Updates from the School

You will be receiving messages and updates from the school administration and teaching staff on a regular basis. Please make sure to read the messages that we send out -- they often contain important scheduling information about upcoming events, classroom happenings and school closures.

Take Home Folders

Each child may receive a plastic envelope at the beginning of the school year. Official information from the school or your child's guide will be sent home in these envelopes. Please return the envelope to school promptly the following day.

Parent Education Events

Here at Fernwood Montessori, we want parents to understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing parent education events throughout the school year.

In addition to formal events, parents are encouraged to reach out to their child's guide or to the Head of School for additional support material. Here are just a few resources we recommend:

- ["What Your Child's Teachers Would Like You to Know."](#) AMS *Montessori Life*, Spring 2019
- *The Montessori Toddler* by Simone Davies
- *The Absorbent Mind* by Maria Montessori
- *Montessori from the Start* by Paula Polk Lillard and Lyn Lillard Jessen
- *Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom* by Jane Nelsen and Chip DeLorenzo
- ["Your Child's Development"](#) by AMI-USA (a description of the four planes of development)
- ["AMI/USA JEDI Series: Neurodiversity and Disability through the Montessori Lens"](#) by AMI-USA

PROGRAM DESCRIPTIONS

YCC

The Young Children's Community (YCC) is a nurturing environment specifically designed for children between 24 and 36 months and builds a foundation for independence in areas such as the Care of the Self, Care of the Indoor and Outdoor Environment, as well as Grace and Courtesy. The space is carefully prepared to encourage success; the materials presented allow the children to continue working towards autonomy through guidance from the adults. Our goal is to work together to explore Montessori principles as it applies to this journey of self-discovery.

Practical Life

The YCC children participate in activities of Practical Life to promote autonomy by caring for the indoor and outdoor environment, with a great emphasis on self-care and grace and courtesy. The materials presented cultivate the development and refinement of motor skills, enhancing eye-hand coordination as well as concentration through repetition of purposeful work.

Language

Language is acquired in all areas of work and there is also a designated language area filled with objects, nomenclature cards, and books. The YCC applies the three-period lesson which consists of introducing the objects, recognizing the object, and finally naming the object.

Dressing and Undressing

Your child will participate in dressing and undressing himself/herself as independently as possible. All children will always be helped as needed; young children are capable and love to care for themselves. You can help your child be successful in this by offering two sets of clothing and allowing him/her to make the final decision on what he/she would like to wear.

Typical Daily YCC Schedule

Below is an approximate schedule for the YCC environment:

8:30am	Arrival
8:45am	Morning work cycle begins
10:30am	Snack
11:00am	Playground
12:00pm	Lunch for full-day children; half-day dismissal
12:30pm	Lunch clean up and nap begins.
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

PRIMARY

The Primary Montessori classroom is designed for children between the ages of 3 and 6 years old. Children of this age are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and a love of knowledge. The goal of the Primary program is to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

Each child in these multi-age classrooms follows a unique education plan, tailored to meet his individual needs. The classroom is a vibrant social community, with younger children benefiting from the experience of the older children. The older children grow socially and intellectually while developing leadership skills and reinforcing what they have already mastered by sharing their knowledge. Children must be 5 by September 1st to be considered for our kindergarten program.

There are five distinct areas in a Montessori Primary classroom that allow the child to develop their character as well as academic interests:

Practical Life

This is the first area of the classroom presented to and explored by the child as they enter the Primary environment. These activities, including table washing, material polishing, hand washing, plant watering, and food preparation, enable the child to care for himself and his environment. The young child is drawn to the ordered, purposeful presentations of these lessons, and repeat the work frequently, leading to increased concentration.

Sensorial

Students are introduced to the Sensorial materials concurrently with the Practical Life exercises. This area, featuring materials designed to isolate concepts of size, color, shape, temperature, smell, sound, and touch, helps children begin to classify the world around them. These materials, which are scientifically and mathematically accurate, allow for countless opportunities for exploration and manipulation by the children.

Language

The Primary classroom is bursting with language, from stories told by the guide to lessons in scientific vocabulary. Children are introduced to the phonetic sounds of the alphabet through materials such as the Sound Game and the sandpaper letters. Once the child has learned and explored all the phonetic sounds, the child is introduced to the concept of writing as a means of self-expression. Through the use of the Montessori language materials, children later begin to read, noticing that reading is a new way to explore and pose their inquiries about their world.

Mathematics

The math area of the Primary classroom is full of “hands-on” materials designed to give the young child a sensory experience of mathematical concepts before they begin developing an understanding of abstract concepts. Children use the math materials to explore quantities, mathematical operations, and squaring and cubing numbers.

Cultural

This area of exploration includes world geography, physical science, zoology, biology, botany, history, art, and music studies.

Typical Daily Primary Schedule

8:30am-8:45am	Arrival
8:45am-12:00pm	Morning Work cycle
12:00pm-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30pm-1:15pm	Recess
1:15pm-3:00pm	Afternoon Work Period
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

ELEMENTARY

Maria Montessori viewed the education of children between the ages of 6 and 12 as “education for life.” During this point in a child’s life, they have become conscious of their own learning process and desire a variety of learning experiences. Our Elementary program inspires academic excellence and encourages each child’s curiosity and creativity. Elementary aged children use reason and imagination to visualize the interconnections of life. They use their imagination to explore and construct the abstract world. The Elementary student has the mark of a philosopher; wonder and excitement is intrinsic to their learning. They are taught to do research, analyze what they have found, and come to conclusions based on what they discover.

Children of this age are social beings, desiring to be with their friends as much as possible. The Elementary classroom provides countless opportunities for collaboration among students. Under the guidance of their AMS-trained teacher, students work together to establish the core values, expectations, and rules for their classroom community. In this

mixed-age classroom, older students are given leadership opportunities, as they serve as role models for their younger classmates.

The Elementary curriculum provides instruction in all traditional subjects: reading, writing, language studies, math, geometry, history, geography, art, and environmental studies. The children are also encouraged to care for their environment and practice their practical life skills.

Typical Daily Elementary Schedule

8:30am-8:45am	Arrival
8:45am-12:00pm	Morning Work cycle
12:00pm-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30pm-1:15pm	Recess
1:15pm-3:00pm	Afternoon Work Period
3:00pm	Afternoon dismissal

EXTENDED CARE

Students enrolled in extended care (before and/or after school) will have age and developmentally appropriate activities planned for each day. The extended care staff may not be able to answer questions about the child's day during classroom hours as the staff are not assigned to specific classrooms. However, if they have noticed something positive or have information to provide you, they will be sure to relay that information promptly. Any information that occurred outside of their care (i.e., during the school day when they were not supervising your child), will need to be received from your child's classroom teacher.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS

Fernwood Montessori offers a few programs after school for enrichment opportunities. In the past, we have offered programs through experienced vendors for activities such as soccer, JumpBunch, Zumba, Spanish, and music. However, each year is dependent on student and family interest and availability from our local vendors. The administrative team will communicate all after-school enrichment opportunities via email or flyers sent home with the children.

ENROLLMENT POLICIES

ANNUAL NON-REFUNDABLE FEE

At the time of acceptance or re-enrollment, the non-refundable Annual Enrollment Fee is due to reserve your child's place. If you choose to remove your child from our program, either before the start of school, or during school, this fee is non-refundable.

TUITION PAYMENTS

New students pay a non-refundable tuition deposit of \$1,200. This is applied to the tuition payments. Tuition payments are paid in monthly installments through FACTS, our tuition management vendor.

NOTICE OF CANCELLATION

The space for your child is reserved for the entire year. Therefore, a tuition refund cannot be given, nor tuition credits given for absences due to illness, vacations or other personal plans. You agree to assume full responsibility for the tuition due unless written cancellation of the enrollment contract is received by Fernwood Montessori School's office within two weeks of signing the enrollment contract. You also understand that, in the event of cancellation, the Annual Enrollment/Re-enrollment Fee will not be refunded. Paid tuition will only be refunded as per our withdrawal policy.

PERIOD OF ENROLLMENT

The signed enrollment contract is a request that the school reserve a place for your child for the next school year. Upon acceptance of the Enrollment Contract by Fernwood Montessori School, you understand that your obligation to pay the tuition and fees for the program selected is unconditional and that no portion of tuition or fees paid will be refunded or canceled in the event of absence, illness, or failure to attend the school. School records will not be released until all financial obligations have been met.

WITHDRAWAL POLICY

In consideration for the timely payment of the annual tuition, all fees, and compliance with the policies of Fernwood Montessori School as explained in the school handbook, the student may withdraw from school and terminate this agreement under the following conditions:

1. A written letter of intent to withdraw is submitted to Fernwood Montessori School accompanied by a non-refundable withdrawal fee of \$500. The letter shall be effective on the first day of the calendar month following the date of submission ("the Effective Date").
2. Sixty (60) days from the Effective Date, the student shall be considered to have voluntarily withdrawn from Fernwood Montessori School ("the Withdrawal Date").
3. Any payments due after the Withdrawal Date shall be canceled, except any outstanding balances accrued up to the Withdrawal Date.
4. After the Withdrawal Date, annual, semester and installment payments as well as any prepayments shall be refunded to the extent they exceed any tuition due under this contract.
5. All fees, including the annual student fees are non-refundable.

MANDATORY WITHDRAWAL POLICY

Fernwood Montessori School may temporarily exclude or permanently terminate a child's enrollment as follows:

Withdrawal with two weeks' notice may result for the following reasons:

- Parental failure to abide by school policies and Enrollment Contract
- School's program is not meeting developmental or special needs of the child as determined by the Head of School

Immediate withdrawal without prior warning may result for the following reasons:

- Conduct of parent, guardian or child that the school administration or owner of the school, in his or her sole and absolute discretion, determines is threatening to the well-being, safety or stability of the children or staff
- An account that is past due for fifteen days and/or disregard of tuition policies
- A pattern of late pick-up as determined by the administration

- Health or behavioral reasons on the part of the child

LATE PAYMENTS

A \$25 late payment fee will be posted to your account after any payment is five days past due. In the event that any payment shall be more than fifteen days late, Fernwood Montessori School has the right to withhold any and all services for the child and/or parent. Fernwood Montessori School will require immediate payment of the full amount of the tuition and any other costs which have not been paid, including accelerating any payment plans selected in this contract. You agree to reimburse Fernwood Montessori School for all costs and expenses incurred enforcing this contract. You agree to be responsible for all fees if this matter is turned over to any collection agency or attorney.

PROGRAM CHANGE REQUESTS

Requests to change your child's schedule are considered on a space available basis. Program changes will be confirmed in writing. There is a \$40 fee to change calendar and/or hours. Payment is due at the time of the change.

TUITION DISCOUNTS

Fernwood Montessori offers a sibling discount to families when two or more siblings are enrolled concurrently. The sibling with the least expensive program receives a discount of 5%. Annual student fees are not subject to discount.

POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

SCHOOL HOURS

Before Care:	7:30am – 8:30am
Half Day:	8:30am – 12:00pm
Full Day*:	8:30am – 3:00pm
After Care:	3:00pm – 6:00pm

*Children under age 4 nap in the afternoon.

*Kindergarten and Elementary children must select the full day Montessori program.

Morning arrival begins at 8:30am. Classroom instruction for all programs begins promptly at 8:45am every morning. We strongly encourage all children to arrive as close to their arrival time as possible, so they have time to hang up their belongings, change their shoes, and socialize briefly before getting settled in the classroom at 8:45am.

The arrival window closes at 8:45am, and staff is needed in the classrooms at that time. If you arrive late, please ring the bell at the far entrance by the Fernwood Sign and someone will come to escort your child to class.

For your child to get the most benefit from our program, prompt and regular attendance is essential. If your child will be absent, please call the office, or send an email to admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com by 9:15am.

DROP-IN EXTENDED CARE PROCEDURES

Drop-in Extended Care is available if space permits, in after-care 3:00pm to 6:00pm. The fee is \$15.00 per hour or any portion of an hour. Extra hours are billed through FACTS and payment is due upon receipt. Please call or email the office *at least 24 hours before the desired drop-in date*. If you do not contact us ahead of time, you may not be able to leave your child; please be aware that due to high demand, extended care is often full.

LATE PICK-UP FEES

Fernwood Montessori School is only licensed between the hours of 7:30am and 6:00pm and so closes promptly at 6:00pm. There is a substantial late fee for tardy pick-up after 6:00pm. There is a grace period of 15 minutes for the 12:00pm and 3:00pm dismissal times. Late fees incur starting at 12:15pm and 3:15pm. The late fees are as follows:

- \$5 for the first five minutes
- \$2 for each additional minute

Excessive incidence of late pick-up can be grounds for termination of your child's enrollment.

PARKING LOT SAFETY AND CARPOOL LANE PROCEDURES

There is nothing more important than the safety of our students, parents, and staff. Please make sure to drive slowly and carefully in our parking lot. For our families' convenience, we offer a carpool drop-off and pick-up during morning arrivals (8:30-8:45) and afternoon dismissal (3:00-3:15) for all students.

If you choose to use the carpool lane, you will pull up to the entrance closest to the large playground, following the direction of traffic, and a staff member will take your child from the car. Please remain in your car, and don't let your children hop out on their own, even if you are in a rush. This is for the safety of your children. Additional staff members will be waiting inside the lobby to aid the children in going downstairs to the classrooms.

At all other times (before care, mid-day pickups, late arrivals and after care) please park in the parking spots. DO NOT PARK IN THE CARPOOL LANE or leave your vehicle unattended along the yellow painted curb. Police officers patrol the area and will hand out tickets, as it is a fire lane. Additionally, parking along the sidewalk blocks the cars of other parents when they are picking up their children.

DROP-OFF PROCEDURES

Part of a child's journey toward independence begins at the door of a Montessori classroom. This may include: hanging up one's coat, putting away a lunch box or extra clothes, and putting on a coat and gathering belongings at the end of the day. As much as possible, allow your child to do these tasks on their own (for example, allow them to change their own shoes, no matter how long it takes!). Parents typically do not enter the classroom environment during school hours, unless a visit is scheduled. In order to support the efforts of our students, we ask that you remain outside the classroom during these transitions.

It is common for children to experience anxiety when it is time to part with you in the morning. Establish a brief ritual for saying goodbye and be consistent. It is important to help children get quickly engaged in work, allowing them to settle and become oriented.

- Before Care arrivals (7:30am-8:30am) Please come to far entrance of Johnson Hall, closest to the end of the building.
- School Day arrivals (8:30am-8:45am) Class begins promptly at 8:45am. We encourage all children to arrive as close to 8:30am as possible, so they have time to hang up their belongings, change their shoes, and socialize briefly before getting settled in the classroom at 8:45am.
 - All Primary and Elementary students arriving at 8:30am are encouraged to use the carpool drop-off. Alternatively, you may park in the spaces near the playground, and walk your children to the carpool arrivals door. Staff members will supervise and assist students in their classrooms. YCC parents are encouraged to park and escort your child to the arrival door (you may use the handicap parking spots so you are closer to the sidewalk).
- Late arrivals (after 8:45am) If your child arrives late, you will need to call the main office number to let us know you have arrived and bring your child to the far door (closest to Lone Oak where you see the Fernwood sign). If your child will be late or absent, please call the office or email admissions@fernmwoodmontessori.com by 8:15am.

PICK-UP PROCEDURES

For safety and security reasons, children can only be dismissed into the care of those designated on the pick-up and emergency lists (i.e., caregiver, foster parent, biological parent, grandparent). When a child is going home with a friend or another adult, please inform the school in advance and send written permission for them to do so. Staff members will request a photo ID to verify identification before releasing the child. If an unauthorized adult comes to the school to pick up your child, they will not be allowed to pick up your child until your written or verbal permission is given to an administrator.

YCC

- Half-day YCC students are dismissed at 12:00pm. A staff member brings the children up to the arrivals/dismissal door. After 12:15, there is a late fee.
- Full-day YCC students are dismissed at 3:00pm. A staff member brings the children up to the arrivals/dismissal door. After 3:15pm, your child will be brought to join After Care. After 3:15, there is a late fee. If you know that you are going to be late, please alert the office.

Primary & Elementary

- Half-day Primary students are dismissed at 12:00pm. A staff member brings the children up to the arrivals/dismissal door. After 12:15, there is a late fee.
- Full-day Primary and Elementary students are dismissed at 3:00pm from the carpool lane door. You may either use the carpool lane service, or you may park in the parking lot and walk to the door to receive your child from a staff member. If you use the carpool lane, please follow the traffic flow and stay in the car. A staff member will bring your child to the car; due to legal restrictions, staff members are not permitted to buckle your child into the car. If your child is unable to buckle their own seatbelt/car seat, please make sure to do so after you have pulled out of the carpool lane.

After 3:15pm, your child will be brought to join After Care. After 3:15, there is a late fee. If you know that you are going to be late, please alert the office.

- After care dismissal (3:00pm-6:00pm) To pick your child up from After Care, please come to the playground gate that leads to the Primary 2 classroom. A staff member will bring your child to you. If it is dark already when you come to pick up your child or if there is inclement weather, please call our **Aftercare number (301) 897-5300** and someone will bring your child to the far door closest to Lone Oak Rd (also called the elementary door). Please pick your child up no later than 6:00pm, as we are not licensed to operate past 6:00pm. There is a significant late fee for any child picked up later than 6:00pm.

Please call the office at (301) 469-4888 during school hours to inform us of a change in pick-up.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

Dr. Montessori did not believe in punishments or rewards for children. Positive reinforcement and logical consequences are the methods of behavior modification and discipline used at our school. We DO NOT use “time out” as punishment.

Appropriate behavior is elicited in a positive and kind manner. We do not use corporal punishment or punitive measures that instill fear.

A child who demonstrates inappropriate behavior is gently reminded how to behave. Sometimes, this means that the child simply stays by the guide’s side for a little while, until the child has regained control of him/herself. If the inappropriate behavior continues, the child is removed from the group to a nearby area from which the child can observe all activities in the room but can no longer participate. After a short period, the child is asked if he is ready to return to the group.

Should discipline continue to be a problem for any child, parents may be asked to come to school for an observation period, which is followed by a conference with the child’s guide.

Fernwood Montessori will follow the positive discipline strategies for all behavioral concerns. For more information about positive discipline in the Montessori environment, we highly recommend Jane Nelson and Chip Delorenzo’s book, *Positive Discipline in the Montessori Classroom*. The goal of positive discipline remains that it is a “well-thought-out, researched, and practiced approach to discipline rooted in the fundamental idea that children should be treated with dignity and respect,” (Nelson and Delorenzo, p. 11) and that there are roots of misbehavior, and often behaviors have one of four mistaken goals. Here is the mistaken goals chart that explains children’s behavior and how to respond: <https://www.positivediscipline.com/sites/default/files/mistakengoalchart.pdf>.

MISCHIEF OR MISCONDUCT

Learning appropriate behavior and self-control is an important aspect of our program. This process is varied and gradual; positive reinforcement of desirable behavior is most successful. When mischief becomes misconduct, a child demonstrating inappropriate behavior is gently and consistently reminded how to behave. Montessori methods also use Grace and Courtesy lessons as a way to ensure children know how to behave in situations before those situations even arise.

When actions warrant a consequence, the staff makes sure that those consequences are logical. In this way, unacceptable behavior is used as an opportunity to instruct rather than punish. If a child continues to have difficulty behaving or suddenly exhibits a change in behavior, a telephone call to a parent is usually made. This ensures that both parents and staff are aware of the situation and working jointly toward correcting or modifying the inappropriate behavior.

Should we at Fernwood Montessori School determine for any reason at our sole discretion that a child should be withdrawn, the parent will be given a minimum of a two-week notice.

SCREEN TIME POLICY

Because we care about the health and well-being of the children in our care, we follow the American Academy of Pediatrics' Recommendations on screen time during school hours:

- Children under 2 should have no screen time
- Children ages 2 and over should watch less than 30 minutes per week at childcare, and less than 2 hours per day total.

Fernwood Montessori understands that TV and other electronic media can get in the way of exploring, playing, and interacting with others, which encourages learning and healthy physical and social development. Therefore, we will restrict screen time by:

- Allowing a maximum of 30 minutes total per week of educational and age-appropriate screen time (television, video, and DVD).
- Allowing no more than 15 minutes of educational computer time per day.
- Not allowing any screen time during meals and snacks.
- Having zero screen time (TV, video, and computer) for children under the age of two.

However, Fernwood recognizes that students at the elementary level will need to learn important technological skills. Elementary students may use a computer to type reports, learn typing on a designated program, or learn digital citizenship at the discretion of their Elementary Guide. Technology is a large part of our society and students will be learning to use it properly.

ACCIDENT AND INCIDENT REPORTS

Occasionally accidents occur at school. Outlined below is our procedure for handling accidents:

- Each time an accident occurs, parents receive an accident report. We make one copy for the injured child's parents and one for the office. Sometimes the accident seems very small, but it is our policy to be cautious.
- If the injury is to the neck, head or face, or any kind of bite, the parents will be immediately notified via phone call. A voice mail will be left if the parent is not available to answer.
- Fernwood Montessori School will not mention the name of any child who hits, pushes or bites. While a child may, the guides will not.
- If another child causes the accident/incident, we notify the parents of both children involved. We document the name of the child who hit, bit, or pushed, for our records.

- We keep track of the aggressor to enable us to take the necessary steps and precautions in ensuring the safety of all children in our care.
- If there is a pattern of aggressive behavior, the Head of School will initiate a meeting with the parents of the child exhibiting such behavior.
- If the behavior continues, recommendations might be made to seek assistance from an outside professional to help the child to deal with the specific behavior. We will follow up with parents personally.

HEALTH POLICY

Please remember that school days are very busy and full of activities that require energy and concentration. If your child is overtired, lethargic, or just not feeling well, a busy day at school may not be in your child's best interest. Please support our policy – and us – by making the healthiest decision for your child. If your child is well enough to attend school, the child must be prepared to participate in all scheduled indoor and outdoor activities.

Please let us know if your child is sick. It is important you notify the school of communicable diseases such as strep throat, head lice, chicken pox or conjunctivitis (pink eye). Should your child show symptoms of a known or suspected communicable disease, please notify us within 24 hours so that we can alert our staff members and parents. The name of the child and family are kept confidential.

Parents will be called to come pick up their child if they are suffering from any of the following:

- A fever of 100.4° F or higher
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Head or body lice
- Vomiting or Diarrhea (2 loose stools in 3 hours)
- Open sores from a contagious disease (such as Chicken Pox)
- Unexplained rash (can be a sign of a potentially contagious disease such as Fifth's Disease, Hand, Foot and Mouth Disease or Scarlet Fever)

Your child may return to school 24 hours **after** symptoms have subsided, or you must provide a doctor's note verifying that the symptoms are not contagious. This means that if your child is sent home from school with a fever, for example, they may not return to school for at least one full school day. They must be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school.

COVID-19 POLICY

On May 5, 2023, the World Health Organization determined that "COVID-19 is now an established and ongoing health issue which no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern." The Maryland Department of Health and State Department of Education have provided guidance on COVID-19 and other respiratory illnesses in K-12 schools and childcare. Fernwood will continue to follow MDH and MSDE recommendations and guidelines.

Vaccination: In another huge step in the fight against COVID-19, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) now recommends the following COVID-19 vaccines for young children:

- Pfizer: 3 doses for children 6 months to 4 years old. The second dose should be given 3 weeks after the first, and the third dose should be given at least 8 weeks after the second.
- Moderna: 2 doses for children 6 months to 17 years old. The second dose should be given 1 month after the first.

At Fernwood Montessori we strongly encourage all students and staff to be vaccinated.

Quarantine and Isolation: Individuals who test positive for Covid-19 or are a close contact of a person testing positive are required to follow the latest guidelines from the CDC.

Masks: Fernwood Montessori is a mask-optional school. If community transmission in Montgomery County reaches “high,” or local mask mandates go into effect, Fernwood will amend its policy accordingly.

Prevention: With the health and safety of our community in mind, we ask all families and staff to monitor themselves and their children for symptoms of Covid-19, and test when appropriate (including testing after travel or attendance at large gatherings). We require submission of 2 negative test results, 24 hours apart, to return to school after travel and school breaks. Results should be emailed to admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com by 8am.

INCLEMENT WEATHER POLICY

In the event of weather-related delayed openings and school closings, Fernwood Montessori School follows decisions of Montgomery County Public Schools. We reserve the right to make our own decisions in instances when MCPS calls for early release. You will receive an email from Fernwood alerting you of closures or delays by 6:00am in the morning.

If we have a delayed opening, school opens at 10:30am; arrivals begin at 10:30am with classes starting at 10:45am. There is no before care in the event of a delayed opening.

The decision to follow MCPS can be frustrating at times, particularly when the roads around our school seem safe. However, many of our staff and students come from farther away, and we do not want to put anyone at risk with potentially treacherous road conditions. In an effort to protect the safety of everyone, we rely on the judgement of the experts at MCPS’ disposal.

STUDENT DIRECTORY POLICY

We ask that you respect the privacy of the parents listed in the Student Directory and use these numbers only for school-related purposes, children’s social events and carpool arrangements. Names, addresses, email addresses and telephone numbers of students and their parents may not be released for commercial purposes and must remain confidential to the school.

CLASSROOM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES

FOOD

Healthy, balanced breakfasts, snacks, and lunches help to ensure that the children will have consistent energy throughout the day. When children are hungry, they have a harder time concentrating.

Allergy Statement: Femwood Montessori School is a nut-free school, so please do not send in any food items that contain nuts; some of our students have life-threatening nut allergies. This includes peanut and almond butters. This applies to snack, lunch, and any celebrations.

If your child has any other food allergies, please make sure to let us know (and fill out the appropriate Allergy Action Plan). You may need to send in a special snack for your child, if we are not already providing an alternative.

- **Snack:** All students can bring a healthy snack to school on a daily basis, to be eaten at a time of their own choosing prior to lunch.
- **Lunch:** Children who stay all day will be eating lunch in their classrooms. Packing lunches with small portions of a few choices is great for the children. Fruits, vegetables and protein are recommended. Please leave food with high sugar and fat content such as chips, cookies, candy, soda, etc. as a treat for home. The presence of these items makes it more difficult for your child to make healthy eating choices on their own.

When you are packing lunches for your child, please keep the following in mind:

- Please send reusable containers that are easy for your child to open on their own; lunch is a wonderful time for independence building.
- Children will be asked to return uneaten food to their lunch boxes, so you have an idea about how much they're eating, or if there are items they are no longer enjoying.
- Please pack silverware for your child along with a cloth napkin
- Please do not send "go-gurts" (yogurt in a tube), juice boxes, or candy.
- Choose food that does not require the use of a microwave oven. We do not have the facilities to heat food for your child at school. Please pack food in a thermos or other temperature regulated container. You may pack an ice pack in your child's lunch box to keep certain things cool.
- Filtered water will be available for your child to have with his or her lunch each day. Please do not send in juice with your child.
- Please send in a filled water bottle with your child. If needed, the children have ready access to water throughout the day.

TOILETING

YCC

The work towards toilet independence begins from the moment the child enters the Young Children's Community. The children quickly become accustomed to the daily routine of changing into training pants upon arrival. They will be invited to use the bathroom throughout the day to promote success. You can support the toilet learning experience at home by continuing the process of independently dressing and undressing. Utilizing thick cotton underwear rather than diapers or pull-ups during the day will allow your child to feel when they are wet, and this will encourage the use of the toilet. It is also beneficial to change soiled underwear or pull-ups standing up. Furthermore, by arranging an area in the bathroom for dirty and clean underwear, your child will learn that they can further do for themselves.

It is important to remember that accidents are a part of the toileting process; remain calm and neutral when there is urine on the floor and reiterate that the urine must be cleaned. Do not reproach your child for wetting themselves. Participate in your child's joy after using the toilet; avoid rewarding your child for success, whether that is to sit on the toilet or urinate in the toilet.

Thus said, make sitting on the toilet part of your daily routine. For instance, invite your child to sit on the toilet as soon as they wake up, before bedtime, before all meals and snacks, and periodically throughout the day.

Primary

We expect that all Primary children use the bathroom independently. However, we realize that some of our very youngest students may still need occasional assistance with toileting at the start of the school year. Please let your guide know of any struggles your child might have with toileting so we may support them in their efforts. Multiple sets of extra clothes may be needed by the younger children as they adjust to the first few weeks of school.

NAP

All 2- and 3-year-olds are required to nap if they stay full day. Once a child is four and has the stamina and interest to participate in the afternoon Montessori work, they may remain in the classroom environment. This is at the discretion of the Montessori guide, keeping the child's best interest in mind.

On your child's first day of school, please send in a bag with a standard crib-sized sheet to go over our cots, a small pillow and small blanket. Make sure to label everything, including the bag, with your child's name. Please do not send any toys or stuffed animals that make noise as they can be disruptive during nap. Your nap items will be sent home with your child every Friday to be washed.

Children, depending on their comfort with underwear, will either nap in pull-ups or remain in underwear.

BIRTHDAY CELEBRATIONS AND BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS

Birthdays are important events. Please contact your child's teacher directly to learn how they celebrate birthdays in class. Birthdays should be fun occasions! In fairness to all, and to help ensure that there are no hurt feelings, please do not send invitations, gifts or thank you notes to school. Inevitably, one child accidentally gets left off the list, and it causes great stress and upset among the children.

PLAYDATES

Please be sure to include a written note if you would like your child to ride home with an adult not on your authorized pickup list. You can also send an email to admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com or call the office at (301) 469-4888 to let us know. Otherwise, we cannot release your child to anyone not on their authorized pickup list.

OUTDOOR PLAY

The children go outside daily, with the exception of heavy rain or extreme weather. The clean, fresh air is wonderful after a morning of being inside. If a child is well enough to go to school, then they are well enough to go outside.

Please ensure that your child is prepared for all weather conditions as we go outside in rain or shine, except in extreme inclement weather.

CLASSROOM AMBASSADORS

Classroom ambassadors (or room parents) are adult volunteers who serve as a liaison between the classroom and other families. This interaction allows everyone to remain connected to the classroom through active participation in all planned events. In fact, you (or other family members) may have skills that we would find especially useful, including sewing for material making, gardening, and shopping.

Duties include:

- Occasionally communicating information about key events from your child's classroom
- Recruiting volunteers for school events
- Acting as resource for families new to the school or the class
- Assist in planning future events
- Coordinate classroom gifts

ITEMS TO LEAVE AT HOME

Nothing treasured should be sent to school with your child. Toys, stuffed animals, and umbrellas should be left at home. It's natural that sometimes a special toy or other item may accompany your child on the way to school. However, it's best if these things wait patiently in the car for your child's return, rather than coming into the classroom, where they can be a distraction or may get lost. Items found at school will be kept discreetly in a safe place until the end of the day when they can go home with the child.

A SPECIAL NOTE ABOUT BACKPACKS

Each child has a labeled hook to hold a coat. For the YCC and Primary children, small backpacks may be sent as needed for bringing in items to replenish their cubby. Otherwise, they are unnecessary and can be left at home as we do not have space to store them.

Elementary children should have a backpack or school bag that they bring to school every day.

CLOTHING

Independence is one of the most important goals of the Montessori environment. When purchasing a piece of clothing, look for obstacles your child might face, including buttons, zippers, snaps, and clasps on overalls, suspenders, belts, leotards, and onesies. Practice taking new clothing off and putting it on with your child, before debuting it at school.

Please ensure that the clothing you select allows your child to move, run, and sit easily, and is appropriate for messy projects and active outdoor play. Please label all clothing items with the child's first and last name, including sweaters, coats, shoes, boots, hats and jackets!

- Pair skirts or dresses with shorts or leggings underneath.
- Consider pants with elastic waists, particularly for younger children.
- Avoid costumes, costume-like clothing, or shoes with lights or distracting decorations and any clothing with characters
- Send children in with closed-toed shoes that are secure on their feet so they can run and climb safely when playing outdoors

EXTRA CLOTHES

Please bring in a complete change of clothing, labeled with your child's first and last name, in a labeled Ziploc bag for your child. This set should include a shirt, shorts or pants, socks and underwear. This spare set of clothes should be updated seasonally as the weather calls for warmer or cooler clothing. The children's work sometimes gets messy, so it's best to be prepared. If your child has only recently become toilet-trained, please send in 2-3 extra sets of clothes!

As the weather changes, we will also send out a request for weather-appropriate outdoor gear, including rain boots and rain jackets, as well as winter items. We try to get the children outside as much as possible, weather permitting.

Each child is given a cubby where extra clothing is stored. When more clothing is needed, a note will be sent home with your child requesting the needed items. If any Fernwood spare clothing is sent home, please launder and return it the following day.

INDOOR SHOES/SLIPPERS

YCC

All children are required to have a pair of indoor slippers to keep at school for use each day. These should be easy for your child to get on and off independently. Shoes should be roomy enough to be worn with socks and have a sturdy sole to prevent slipping; they should also not be distracting to others. Indoor slippers provide comfort and added cleanliness to our classroom environment. Your child will change into these shoes each day prior to beginning work in the classroom.

Primary and Elementary

Please bring an extra pair of clean shoes for your child, which will serve as his or her designated "indoor shoes." Your child will change into these shoes each day prior to beginning work in the classroom. This helps to keep our classroom clean, as well as signal to the students that they are in a special environment. Please select indoor shoes that are comfortable, supportive, easy for your child to put on, and not distracting to others. Please avoid flip flops, and shoes that light up or make noises. Slip-on sneakers are the best option.

OUTDOOR SHOES

Keep in mind that children love to run on the playground and shoes that are loose or open are not safe. We discourage flip-flops, sandals and Crocs as they tend to fall off on the playground; sneakers are preferable. Please be attentive of weather conditions and send your child in weather appropriate shoes. Shoes that light up are not permitted.

YCC

Please send your child to school in "outdoor shoes" that are comfortable, supportive, and are easily able to be put on and taken off by your child; this means no laces and preferably Velcro.

Primary and Elementary

Please send your child to school in "outdoor shoes" that are comfortable, supportive, and are easily able to be put on and taken off by your child. Sneakers are preferable.

PLEASE LABEL ALL BELONGINGS