

# Parent Handbook 2019-2020



**Fernwood  
Montessori School**

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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, an AMI-recognized program, offers an outstanding learning environment for children ages 2 through 12. 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, our AMI-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, parents, 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,

Elizabeth Zifcak  
Head of School  
Fernwood Montessori School

## **Accreditation and Memberships**

Fernwood Montessori School is 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, Primary and Elementary 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 and the Montessori Administrators Association. Our teachers maintain membership in both AMI-USA and the North American Montessori Teacher's Association (NAMTA).

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

All of 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 and having 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, we emphasize 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 Child Community (2 year olds)
- Primary (2½-6 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.

## **Communication**

### **School Address**

Fernwood Montessori School  
10100 Old Georgetown Road  
Bethesda, MD 20814

### **School Phone Numbers**

Main Office	(301) 469-4888
After Care	(301) 897-5300

### **Email Contacts**

Elizabeth Zifcak, Head of School, [director@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:director@fernwoodmontessori.com)  
Avril Jarecki, Director of Montessori Education, [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com)  
Chantou Gerdes, Lead Guide- YCC Classroom, [ycc@metromontessori.com](mailto:ycc@metromontessori.com)  
Cori Kasura, Lead Guide- Primary 1 Classroom, [primary1@metromontessori.com](mailto:primary1@metromontessori.com)  
Emily Tremblay, Lead Guide- Primary 2 Classroom, [primary2@metromontessori.com](mailto:primary2@metromontessori.com)  
Alison Kingsley, Lead Guide- Elementary Classroom,  
[elementary@metromontessori.com](mailto:elementary@metromontessori.com)

### **Open Communication is Key!**

We promote open, honest and transparent communication at Fernwood, and believe any questions or concerns a family has should be addressed immediately. There are no silly questions, and it is always better to deal with a small problem than wait for it to become a larger one. Small changes for a child can have a big impact on their experience in the classroom. Please keep us informed of any changes at home: a parent's business trip, grandparents visiting or leaving, changes in sleep schedules, a new sibling on the way, etc.

The classroom teacher should be the first point of contact for questions about your child, the classroom, or Montessori pedagogy. However, at any point, you should feel free to approach the Head of School with any feedback, questions, or concerns, or if you believe that the issue has not been sufficiently addressed by your child's guide. The entire Fernwood Montessori team is committed to supporting the parent/teacher/child relationship and to foster a strong school community.

If you need to reach us during the school day, you can call the main office at 301-469-4888. All calls go through the office and a message will be relayed to the appropriate staff member.

## Whom do I contact?

- Please call the office at (301) 469-4888 or email Avril Jarecki, [admissions@fernwoodmontessori](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori) with any of the following:
  - If your child will be late, or you will be picking them up early
  - 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 Elizabeth Zifcak, 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. She can be reached via email at [director@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto: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.

- **Parent-Teacher Communication** You may contact the guides by leaving a written note, calling the office at (301) 469-4888 during normal business hours, or sending an email, either directly to the guide or through the Head of School. 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 24-48 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.**

- **Parent-Teacher Conferences** 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.
- **Classroom observations** once or twice a year are highly encouraged 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". Observations are discouraged in the YCC environment, as it is very disruptive and challenging for the children.
- **Weekly and Monthly Updates** 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 will 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.

## **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**

Tuition payments may be paid annually, in two semester payments, or 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 on or before July 1, prior to the start of the school year for which you have enrolled. 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 2019-2020 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 10%. Annual student fees are not subject to discount.

## School 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.

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

Morning arrival begins at 8:30am every day. Classroom instruction for all programs begins **promptly at 8:45am every morning**. We strongly 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.

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

### Drop-In Extended Care Procedures

Drop-in Extended Care is **available if space permits**, from 7:30am to 8:30am, 12:00pm to 1:00pm, 1:00pm to 3:00pm and 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.

- \$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 of our **primary and elementary children**. YCC children will be walked in to their classroom by their caregivers/ parents and picked up from their classroom by their caregivers/parents.

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.

During carpool, please remain in your car. A Fernwood staff member will take your child from the car in the morning and place your child in the car in the afternoon.

**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 in 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 the double-door entrance, closest to Lone Oak Drive. All parents and care-givers will be given a door code to be able to freely enter the school. You must walk your child to the

before care room and check them in with before care staff. Please do not drop them off in the hallway, or at their regular classroom. Your child will keep their belongings with them during before care, and will go to their cubbies at 8:30am, so you do not need to stop at their classroom.

- **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.
  - **YCC Arrivals Procedure** Morning drop-off is from 8:30am to 8:45am. Parents will park and accompany their children inside the building, through the School arrivals door, to the double doors leading to the YCC classroom. Parents should not pass the double doors; children will be welcomed and ushered inside the classroom by a staff member. Please ensure on-time arrival to avoid disturbances to the work period.
  - **Primary and Elementary Arrivals Procedure** 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 to their classrooms.
- **Late arrivals (after 8:45am)** If your child arrives late, you will need to take them to the before-care door (the door with the code), walk them to their classroom, and sign them in to their classroom. Please do not just send them down on their own. We need to have all children physically handed into the care of one of our staff members. If your child will be late or absent, please call the office or email [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com) by 9:15am. *Even when children arrive late, it is important that they get ready for their day on their own (i.e. taking off jackets, changing shoes, etc.); please do not assist them with these tasks.*

## Pick-up Procedures

For safety and security reasons, children can only be dismissed into the care of parents, legal guardians, or those designated on the pick-up and emergency lists. When a child is going home with a friend or another adult, please inform the school in advance and send written permission for him or her 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 12:00pm Dismissal** Half-day YCC students are dismissed at 12:00pm. Parents or caregivers will come into the school, through the before care arrivals/late arrivals door, and pick their children up from the hallway outside of

their class, by the double-doors. A staff member will accompany your child to the double doors. **After 12:15, there is a late fee of \$15/hour or any portion of the hour.**

- **YCC 3:00pm Dismissal** Full-day YCC students are dismissed at 3:00pm. You will come inside the school and pick up your child from the hallway outside of their class, by the double doors where arrival takes place. A staff member will accompany your child to the double doors. After 3:15pm, your child will be brought to join After Care. **After 3:15, there is a late fee of \$15/hour or any portion of the hour.** If you know that you are going to be late, please alert the office.
- **Primary 12:00pm Dismissal** Half-day Primary students are dismissed at 12:00pm. Parents or caregivers will come into the school, through the before care arrivals/late arrivals door, and pick their children up from the hallway outside of their class. **After 12:15, there is a late fee of \$15/hour or any portion of the hour.**
- **Primary and Elementary 3:00pm dismissal** 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 of \$15/hour or any portion of the hour.** 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 use the “before care/late arrivals” door, the one with the door code. If you have forgotten your code, you may ring the bell and a staff member will be up to let you in. 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.

### **Attendance and Tardy Policy**

It is important that children attend class regularly to obtain maximum benefit from our program. Fernwood Montessori's Tardy and Attendance policy is based on adherence to the principle of following the child: when younger children arrive late, it violates their sense of order, their sense of what is right and what is expected of them. For the older child, a sense of embarrassment and disorientation accompanies the difficulties listed above. In either case, arriving late gets the day off on the wrong foot. Late arrivals disrupt the classroom community, the work of the other children, and the teacher. Out of respect for your own child, the classroom community, and the teachers, please help your child arrive to school on time. If tardiness becomes problematic, teachers will speak with parents directly to help problem solve about late arrivals.

The same policy holds true for absences from school. If your child will be late or absent from school, please call the office or email [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto:admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com) by 9:15am.

**Children who arrive after 10:00am without prior clearance from the office or the child's teacher may be denied admittance to Fernwood for the day.**

## **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.

## **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.

## 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 him or herself, 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, he or she 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° 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.

### **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 9:30am; arrivals begin at 9:30am with classes starting at 9:45am. **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 further 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 your children will have consistent energy throughout the day. When children are hungry they have a harder time concentrating.

- **Allergy Statement:** Fernwood 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** Fernwood Montessori provides a healthy mid-morning snack for both the YCC and Primary programs. In many cases, the children have assisted in the preparation of the snack. We provide a variety of healthy options, including fruit, vegetables, whole-wheat crackers or pretzels, and cheese, in addition to the foods your children help prepare. If your child has any allergies other than nut, please make us aware. Depending on the allergy, you may need to send in snack for your child (nut-free please!)
  - **Elementary 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.
- **Fruity Tuesday (only for Primary students)** We ask that each primary child bring a piece of fresh fruit on Tuesdays to fill their classroom fruit basket. Children wash and prepare the fruit and share it with the class at the snack table.
- **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 most 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.
- If any school silverware goes home in lunchboxes, please be sure to send them back.
- 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. Your child's lunch can be refrigerated during the morning hours. If you pack something warm for your child in a thermos we can store these separately, so it does not get cold in the refrigerator.
- Filtered water and milk will be available for your child to have with his or her lunch each day. Please do not send in juice with your child.
- There is no need to send in water bottles or other drinks with lunch; water and milk are always offered at lunch, and 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 Child 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. Also, the bathroom is set up in such a way that the children recognize where all items are; this provides a sense of security and ownership which supports the toilet independence process. 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 himself/herself. Participate in your child's joy after he/she has used the toilet; avoid rewarding your child for his/her 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 he/she wakes up, before bedtime, before all meals and snacks, and periodically throughout the day.

- **Primary** We expect that all Primary children are able to 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 4 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), 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 another driver not on your authorized pickup list. You can also send an email to [admissions@fernwoodmontessori.com](mailto: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.

## **Transitions**

Around the YCC child's 3<sup>rd</sup> birthday and the Primary child's 6<sup>th</sup> birthday, the transition from YCC to Primary and Primary to the Elementary environment typically begins. In a Montessori school, this transition is not precisely tied to the child's birthday, but rather is based on the individual readiness of the child. The YCC, Primary and Elementary guides are all trained to observe signs of readiness and are committed to working collaboratively to make sure that the move is appropriate for each individual child. Factors, such as social, emotional, and physical characteristics, in addition to the academic, are all taken into account.

The actual transition process is often fluid, consisting of short, initial visits which increase in length until the child is attending only the new class. This process may take days, weeks, or months. Please speak with your guide if you wish to know more about this transition. The guides, Head of School, and parents work together for an appropriate, smooth transition.

### **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 are parent volunteers who serve as a liaison between the classroom and other parents. This interaction allows parents 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 to parents from your child's classroom
- Recruiting volunteers for school events
- Acting as resource for parents new to school or the class
- Assist in planning events
- Coordinate classroom gifts

### **Items to Leave at Home**

Nothing treasured should be sent in 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, 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.
- 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 by himself/herself.** 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!**

## **Program Descriptions**

### **YCC**

The Young Child Community 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.

Additionally, we encourage a collaborative relationship with parents to provide consistency of the work done in the classroom at home. Children are capable beings and should be given every opportunity to do for themselves based on current abilities. Give them the needed time to succeed, especially as it is so easy for us to rush in and help in order to save time. You will be pleasantly surprised by how much your children can gain and the pride they feel when allowed to do for themselves.

Here are a few key elements to focus on regarding your child's development:

#### **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. The clothing should be comfortable for movement, art, and outdoor activities. This is important to help your child be as independent as possible in the bathroom, including sending in clothes without fasteners which can limit their ability for success.

One objective of the Young Child Community is to expose the children to a wide variety of tastes, smells, and textures through food. They see whole vegetables, fruits, and grains; they assist in the preparation of snack by making rolls, cutting fruits and vegetables, combining the ingredients, experiencing the aromas, and serving themselves. In addition, the children independently set the table with placemats, plates, glasses, utensils as needed, and pitchers. They learn to pour water and milk and graciously acquire patience as they wait when a pitcher is being used. Once done, the children scrape their plates and put them on the dirty dish cart. We eat together as a community.

If any YCC silverware goes home in lunchboxes, please be sure to send them back.

## Typical Daily Schedule

Below is an approximate schedule for the YCC environment:

8:30am	Arrival
8:45am	Morning work cycle begins
10:30am	Community 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 to meet the developmental needs of children between the ages of 2 ½ and 6 years old. Children of this age are motivated from within by a natural curiosity and a love of knowledge. In our carefully prepared Primary environments, children are guided by AMI-trained guides in their exploration of new concepts and ideas. The goal of the Primary program is to cultivate the child's own natural desire to learn.

Each Primary classroom is staffed by one lead AMI-trained guide and one assistant. 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.

## **Culture**

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

## **Typical Daily Schedule**

8:30am-8:45am	Arrival
8:45am-11:45am	Morning Work cycle/Snack
11:45am-12:15pm	Recess followed by dismissal of half-day students
12:15pm-1:00pm	Lunch
1:00pm-2:30pm	Afternoon Work Period / Nap
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 AMI-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. Students have the option of taking part in extracurricular classes right here at Fernwood!

In addition to the time spent learning and exploring their interests in the classroom, Elementary children take part in “Going Outs.” When children discover that they cannot always find the answers to their questions inside their classroom, they realize that they must go out into the world to find the answers. These “Going Out” trips, which are planned by the students, show children that the whole world is indeed their classroom, providing endless possibilities in their search for knowledge and understanding.

