

This handbook contains information that will be useful during your child's years at our Montessori school. In addition, a school newsletter is issued regularly that also provides important school updates.

Now that you have made this commitment to Montessori for your child, we wish to welcome you to the school and are hopeful that you will be able to blend Montessori attitudes into your family life.

The success of your child's Montessori education depends on your cooperation. The more aware you, as parents, are of what goes on in the classroom and of the basic Montessori theories and their application in the home, the greater chance your child will have of achieving his full potential. You are not expected to duplicate classroom activities in the home nor apply pressure for reading and writing, but instead try to blend Montessori attitudes into family life in a natural way.

Our school promotes the Lithuanian heritage through language, culture and traditions. It is very important that parents speak to their child in Lithuanian at home. This will ensure successful communication at school.

Children, rather than being pieces of clay to be molded, are more like blooming flowers. We provide an environment where children blossom at their pace. We help them develop an attitude of love and respect for themselves as well as concern for others.

**THE MONTESSORI METHOD** is based on Maria Montessori's humanitarian philosophy. It is a unique educational system that focuses on the child as an individual. It encourages independence and recognizes the child's capacity for learning.

Through work in the various areas of the classroom, comprised of Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Geography, Science, and Art activities, Montessori's specially-designed materials are used to develop a child's sensory-motor abilities and make use of his sensitive periods (periods where children are psychologically ready to learn new skills and ideas more easily than at any other time in their lives). The environment is prepared to fit the needs of the children. It is scaled down to size, orderly, and non-competitive.

**OUR PROGRAMS** include a good balance of individual work with Montessori equipment and quality educational toys. Planned activities in arts and crafts, listening, physical development, nature study, creative play, and outdoor activities are provided. Music is included in our daily program, with children being encouraged to sing and use musical instruments under the direction of our teachers. The session is conducted in Lithuanian so as to foster a deeper understanding of Lithuanian culture, language, and traditions.

**THE MAJOR AIM OF OUR STAFF** is to prepare for each child an environment of his own: where he can do things for himself, no matter how long it takes, where he can explore

and discover as much as he wishes at his own pace, and where he can learn all he is capable of learning.

The Head of School, sets the atmosphere for the entire school. She stays in the background observing, helping, and guiding a child to new materials as he becomes interested and/or the Head of School thinks he is ready for them, interfering with relationships among the children only as is absolutely necessary. Her staff, consisting of fully-trained assistants and aides, confers daily about their students to insure each child's optimum progress.

### **ADMINISTRATION**

Our school is a cooperative preschool, where in parents and teachers together share the responsibility for the daily functioning of the school. To facilitate this, the Head of School works directly with an administrative committee of parents to help provide the best Montessori education possible for each child. The Parent Committee is responsible for coordinating parent-run fundraisers and other school-related activities. The Head of School, as well as the president and vice-president of the Parent Committee, serve on the Board of Directors of the Lithuanian Montessori Society of America, Inc. All schools affiliated with the Lithuanian Montessori Society of America, Inc. work together to promote an understanding of the Montessori Method, applying it to the preservation and growth of the Lithuanian culture, language, and traditions.

### **PARENT INVOLVEMENT IS ESSENTIAL.**

Two times per year, individual conferences will be arranged for all parents to discuss the child's progress with the Head of School or teacher. Parents are encouraged to call the Head of School for an appointment if they have any questions about their child.

Newsletters and notes informing parents of school activities and developments will periodically be sent home with the children or left on the table outside the classroom door. As these sometimes concern urgent information, parents are asked to read them thoroughly, as soon as possible.

Parents are welcome to borrow books on child development and Montessori topics from the "school library".

### **Parents are expected to volunteer to help with school activities and fundraisers.**

The school is a non-for-profit organization that strives to keep tuition affordable for the greatest number of students possible. The school is supported by parent-run fundraisers to bridge the gap between expenses and tuition and to ensure the school's long-term financial stability. Parents, who anticipate that they will be unable to fulfill their volunteer requirements, are asked to notify the Parent Committee president.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

### **PROGRAM DAYS**

Consistency works wonders. Because of the benefits realized from daily continuity as children attempt various tasks, a 5-day program is strongly encouraged, especially for returning students. However, 3 and 4-day programs are available.

### **HOLIDAYS**

The school holidays coincide with those of other schools in the area. Other days are scheduled for Teacher Institute and professional days. A calendar will be provided to each family.

### **PUNCTUALITY**

Help the children form good habits from the very first school day. Do not bring children earlier than 10 minutes before class. Early arrivals inhibit classroom preparation time. Late-comers disrupt both children and teachers who have settled down to their day's work. Time before and after class is also needed for staff conferences and preparing the room for the next session.

### **TRANSPORTATION**

Transportation is not provided by the school. Parents may request contact information for potential car pool families. Children will be dismissed only to parents or assigned car pool drivers. If your child is to be picked up by some other person, you must notify the school in writing.

### **DROP-OFF/PICKUP**

Children are to be dropped off at the classroom door. Parents should say goodbye in the hallway, ensure that a staff member is aware of the child's presence, and leave. The teachers will assist the child in hanging up his coat, etc., if necessary.

When dropping off children, please check the table in the hallway for any notes that may have been placed there for you.

Parents will be notified of the pick-up location. This will be at one of the outside doors of the building.

### **OBSERVATION**

Parents are encouraged to observe their child's class. It is preferred that this be done on the day the child's birthday is to be celebrated. However, other observation days may be arranged, at the discretion of the Head of School. In general, parents are asked not to request an observation appointment until after the winter holiday break and parent observation must not disrupt the class.

## **ADJUSTMENT**

The period of adjustment for children in the Montessori environment varies with the individual children and their diverse backgrounds. Some children will want to try every activity the first day.

That is why new classes start with less than a full complement of materials, and new activities are added as children learn the ground rules. Other children might do nothing but intently observe others working for some days but, when they do start to choose activities, show remarkable prowess. The Head of School can distinguish idleness from intent observation and will act accordingly.

A few children might cry the first day (or week) on being brought to school. These tears are rarely long-lasting, as teachers are very skilled at shifting the child's focus. A parent should say goodbye kindly but firmly and leave. In certain cases, the Head of School will ask a parent to stay with their child during this period of adjustment.

## **UNUSUAL OCCURENCES**

Parents are asked to notify the Head of School if anything has happened at home which might explain a sudden change in a child's behavior, i.e., accident, death in the family, bad scare, illness, visiting relatives, new baby, divorce, etc.

## **WRITTEN WORK**

The product of a Montessori classroom is the child, not the written work he produces. The growth within the child occurs during the process of an activity.

The work your child will bring home is material evidence of his development in school; however, be careful not to place too much emphasis on it. There are other results that may be less tangible and are important, such as your child's growth in self-confidence and independence.

If your child brings work home, review it and let him tell you about it if he wishes. Make no critical remarks about quality or quantity of work. It is important that your child work spontaneously, following his own interests, rather than in response to outside pressure.

## **BIRTHDAYS**

We will be celebrating your child's birthday. Parents are encouraged to make this day their day of observation.

The week of your child's birthday, please bring in a poster with labeled photos of your child from birth to present. We will display this poster in class and share in the joy of each child's special day.

A special treat that day is acceptable, but please make it manageable and not messy. No cakes please!

Please confine any exchange of party invitations, greeting cards, or gifts to outside the school.

## **SHARING**

We ask that children not bring games or toys from home. Interesting objects from home, such as nature specimens, vacation souvenirs, or a special book, are always welcome. It is helpful if an explanatory note is attached giving information about the object and whether it should remain in school or be brought back home.

We invite talented members of children's families to enrich our class. For example, a parent or sibling who plays a musical instrument could give a short concert for the children and answer their questions.

Should a piece of school equipment shows up at home, please send it back.

## **SNACKS**

Each family is asked to take a turn supplying snacks for the child's class. Parents will be notified ahead of time of the schedule and what items to bring. If you have more than one student attending, each child will be asked to supply snacks, so you will be bringing snacks more than once during the year.

We encourage child participation in snack preparation such as slicing cheese and apples, counting grapes into cups, peeling cucumbers, etc.

The school will provide a list of acceptable snacks. If your child has any food allergies, please notify the school. A bottled water dispenser is available to the children in the classroom.

## **LUNCH**

Children attending the extended day program are to bring a healthy lunch to school. Some suggestions include: a sandwich made with whole-grain bread, vegetables, fruit, yogurt, milk. Please do not send chips or candy.

All lunches must be packed in insulated lunch boxes and include an ice pack to keep the food fresh. We do not have refrigerator space in the classroom for the children's lunches.

## **OUTDOOR ACTIVITIES**

Weather permitting, some activities will be scheduled outdoors. Extended day students will spend ½ hour outside every day.

## **CLOTHING**

Dress your child according to weather conditions to allow outdoor activities. All coats, hats, boots, etc., should be manageable by the children themselves and must be labeled. Mittens must be attached to coats. Boots should be large enough to facilitate easy removal.

For inside activities, please dress your child in comfortable, washable play clothes. Parents are requested to see that their children have soft-soled shoes for classroom wear. Laces must be in good condition.

Unnecessary trinkets and jewelry will distract your child during the school day and should be left at home. No toys from home, please!

Unlabeled articles that accumulate at the school are kept in a lost and found box, which is available for inspection by parents until the end of the year, at which time unclaimed articles will be donated to charity.

### **CHANGE OF CLOTHES**

Health regulations require that all children have a complete change of clothing (except shoes) at school for emergency use. Please provide a change of underwear, socks, pants or skirt and shirt, in case of spills or bathroom accidents. The school will supply a box labeled with your child's name into which the clothing can be packed. As items of clothing are used, please send fresh replacements promptly.

### **POTTY TRAINING**

All children attending the school must be completely potty trained. Diapers or pull-ups are not allowed and will not be changed.

### **T-SHIRTS**

School t-shirts are available for purchase at the school. We request that children wear these during field trips.

### **DISCIPLINE**

Behavior fostering respect for others and their feelings, as well as respect for the environment and materials is encouraged through frequent reminders of ground rules to the class. When necessary, the Head of School verbally reprimands children individually. As a last resort, the child is isolated from the group. Physical punishment is not used. Instead, if behavior detrimental or disruptive to the group persists, parents will be contacted for a conference.

### **DISCHARGE POLICY**

Any child who, after attempts have been made to meet the child's individual needs, demonstrates inability to benefit from our program, or whose presence is detrimental to the group, shall be discharged from the program.

### **PERSONAL RECORDS**

Personal information regarding children is only released to the child's teachers in our program or the child's legal guardian, unless a specific request is made in writing by the legal guardian.

### **SCHOOL CLOSINGS**

If it is necessary to close the school due to hazardous weather or other emergency situations, parents will be notified by means of a telephone tree. In cases of an emergency early dismissal, the parent or parent designees are called. Each

student will be dismissed only after the parent or parent designee arrives in person to take the child home.

### **EMERGENCY DRILLS**

Fire drills and tornado drills will be conducted on a regular basis.

## **HEALTH & VITAL INFORMATION**

### **ADDRESS CHANGES**

Parents should report any changes in home address, telephone numbers, e-mail addresses or emergency numbers to the school immediately. This information is essential for quick communication between home and school in case of accident or illness.

### **ABSENCES**

If your child will be absent, please notify the school. If your child contracts a communicable disease (i.e. chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, etc.), please contact the school immediately so that all parents may be notified. A student will not be allowed to make up days missed or to attend school on days other than for which he is registered.

### **ACCIDENT OR ILLNESS**

**Please do not send a sick child to school. If a child is ill with a fever, he should not return to school until he has been fever-free (without the use of Tylenol, etc.) for at least 24 hours.**

If a child becomes ill at school, the child is made as comfortable as possible, the parents or designees are notified, and arrangements are made to take the child home. If attempts to reach the parents or designees have failed, the doctor listed on the emergency card is called.

In case of major accidents or illness, paramedics will be called immediately. Parents must fill out a form granting permission to administer emergency treatment.

It is imperative that the school have on file the name and phone number of two persons to call in the event of a child's illness or accident. The school must be notified in writing of any changes in emergency information.

### **HEALTH SCREENING**

By state law, we are required to screen children daily for symptoms of illness. This will be a very informal screening. If a child appears to be ill, parents will be notified and asked to remove their child from class.

### **MEDICATION**

Parents are responsible for dispensing any necessary medication before or after class time. We will not dispense any medication.

### **MEDICAL FORMS**

Health regulations require that each child have a medical form on file with the school. When another examination is necessary, the form will be returned to you for your doctor to update and sign.

### **BIRTH CERTIFICATES**

Each family is required by law to submit their child's birth certificate or equivalent documentation within 30 days of attendance. The school will make a copy of the document and return it immediately. If the certificate is not supplied within 30 days, the school is required to notify the police.

### **VISION & HEARING SCREENINGS**

The school is required to provide hearing and vision screening for each child. The child's guardian must pay the screening fee.

### **REMEMBER TO NOTIFY THE SCHOOL**

1. If your child contracts a communicable disease, so that other parents might be informed.
2. If your child will be absent.
3. If there are any changes in car pool arrangements (written).
4. If there are any changes in emergency numbers or other information supplied during enrollment. (A new emergency card will need to be completed.)
5. If there are any unusual occurrences in your child's environment outside of the school setting.

## **REGISTRATION AND FEES**

### **REGISTRATION**

An annual registration fee must accompany the application form of all children; half of the registration fee applies to tuition and the other half is non-refundable, unless enrollment is closed.

### **TUITION**

The school is operated on an annual budget, based on 100% enrollment. Tuition is due in full, even if your child is absent due to illness or vacations. Missed

days may not be made up. Students withdrawing from the program will not be entitled to refund of tuition or fees paid.

Tuition due dates are as follows:

- a) in full by the first day of school
- b) in two equal payments, half by the first day of school and the balance in January.
- c) in four equal payments, one quarter by the first day of school and the remaining quarters paid in November, January and March.

Please make payments by check, money order, or cash. You may pay by mail or in person. Please do not send cash payments by mail: please give all payments in cash directly to the book-keeper or Head of School.

### **DELIQUENT FEES**

If current payment is not received by the due date, the school book-keeper will send a reminder note to the parent and a \$20 late payment fee will be added. There will be a \$25 charge for all returned checks.

### **SOCIETY DUES**

The school is associated with the Lithuanian Montessori Society of America, Inc. Families whose children attend a Society-associated school become members of the Society. Dues for the Lithuanian Montessori Society of America, Inc. are included in the annual registration fee.

## **LITHUANIAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY OF AMERICA, INC. (LMSA)**

### **MISSION**

The primary objective of the LMSA is to promote an understanding of the Montessori Method, applying it to the preservation and growth of the Lithuanian culture, language, and tradition. It also serves as a support system for its affiliated schools' Administrative Committees.

### **MEMBERSHIP**

Membership consists of all families enrolled in an LMSA-affiliated school, as well as, Montessori teachers and other dues-paying individuals who are interested in promoting the benefits of a Montessori education as well as the preservation and growth of the Lithuanian language, heritage and culture.

### **BOARD OF DIRECTORS**

The Board of Directors is elected by the members of the Society. They serve without pay for various-length terms. The Board is a policy-making body, which has delegated the administration of the school to the Head of School. The

board supports the Administrative Committee with regards to the hiring, retention, and education of teachers. It also assists with financial and other long-term matters.

### **BOARD MEETINGS**

Your comments and questions are welcome at Board Meetings. Requests to bring items of concern to the Board's attention may be submitted to any of the Board members.