



Student and Family Guide *2024-2025*

This guide is designed to help you learn more about the Montessori philosophy, policies, and procedures at CMS.

*716 Westwood Avenue
Jackson, Tennessee 38301
731-422-3116
www.jmcss.org/montessori*

Principal- Melinda Harris, Ed.D.
mmharris@jmcss.org

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Community Montessori School
Family Handbook Acknowledgement and Agreement Signature Page

As a parent (or guardian) of

(Please list all children's names above)

I understand and commit to the following:

- In conjunction with the policies of the school handbook, as a parent I will keep lines of communication open by
 - Attending parent conferences
 - Asking questions to the appropriate person when I do not understand a policy or procedure.
 - Reading school and classroom newsletters, monthly school newsletters and other written notes from school.
 - Adding dates of school events and the school schedule to our family calendar.
 - Notifying the school when my child is absent by email to jlwhitaker@jmcass.org
 - Notifying the school when there are phone number, address, or email changes.
- Reinforcing the learning environment by:
 - Bringing my child to school on time and well rested. (in class by 8:15)
 - Adhering to attendance, tardy and arrival/dismissal procedures.
 - Reading with my child for at least 20-30 minutes a day.
 - Becoming involved in school and PTO activities in order to understand and be fully engaged in my child's educational environment.
- I have read and understand the CMS handbook as well as the attached JMCSS school board policies.

Parent Name(s): _____

Signature(s): _____

Date: _____

CONTACT INFORMATION

Community Montessori School
716 Westwood Avenue
Jackson, TN 38301

School Office - (731) 422-3116
www.jmcss.org

JMCSS District Central Office - (731) 664-2500

Principal - Dr. Melinda Harris
mmharris@jmcss.org

Assistant Principal - Mrs. Jessica Donnell
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Assistant Principal - Mrs. Amber Cogbill
aldiggs@jmcss.org

Data / Instructional Coach - Sheronda Rivers
syrivers@jmcss.org

Bookkeeper - Mrs. Cheyenne Berry
cbberry@jmcss.org

Attendance Secretary - Ms. Janet Whitaker
jlwhitaker@jmcss.org

Dear Parents,

Welcome to Community Montessori School! Our unique school offers a safe and peaceful setting bolstered by the engaging educational strategies of the Montessori theory of development and philosophy. A committed faculty and staff will lead your child through a productive and fulfilling school year.

Community Montessori School classrooms will appear different to any parent who has not experienced a Montessori environment. Our rooms are organized to provide your child with the most effective and inviting way to learn complex and interesting concepts. We choose the unique materials you see to give your child two gifts: a strong challenge to learn and a high level of support to ensure his/her success.

Our primary goal is to ensure that each child masters essential skills in the core subject areas of language arts, mathematics, science, history, and geography, while integrating the arts, physical activity, and community service into the curriculum.

At Community Montessori School, we all learn how to value differences, how to value our local *and* our global world, and how to live peaceful and sustainable lives.

We offer this Family Handbook as a means of getting to know our school and to familiarize you with our **Mission** and **Vision**. Let this handbook be your resource when you have questions regarding policies or procedures at the school. Please read the handbook carefully and feel free to contact me at any time regarding questions and concerns.

It is my privilege to serve you and your children this year. I welcome your enthusiasm, commitment, and suggestions for our community.

Dr. Melinda Harris
Principal

Policies and Procedures

The policies and procedures in this handbook could not possibly address each situation that could occur at Community Montessori School during the school year. We have tried diligently to provide you with all the information that is relevant to our school, as the majority of the school system's policies are within the JMCSS handbook. We hope that this information will assist you throughout the year to make the time here at Community Montessori School truly enjoyable.

Please feel free to contact the school at any time should you have a question, a concern, or a need for clarification on any policy or procedure. It is a profound responsibility that you as parents and we as educators have in shaping and guiding our young people. We take this time to promise to you that our staff will strive to do the very best job in preparing your child for life. We will do this by teaching the skills necessary, by modeling good citizenship & by teaching problem solving both in the classroom and in the school environment.

As the year progresses, policies can change. We will keep you informed through school emails of any transitions at Community Montessori School. We also encourage you to use the district "Let's Talk" app for questions / comments.

We are excited about the new school year and the new opportunities. We expect challenges, but our outlook is always positive, and we want you to share in all that our school is to become.

Scientific observation has established that education is not what the teacher gives; education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences upon the environment. The task of the teacher becomes that of preparing a series of motives of cultural activity, spread over a specially prepared environment, and then refraining from obtrusive interference. Human teachers can only help the great work that is being done, as servants help the master. Doing so, they will be witnesses to the unfolding of the human soul and to the rising of a New Man who will not be a victim of events but will have the clarity of vision to direct and shape the future of human society.

Maria Montessori, Education for a New World

Philosophy of Montessori Education

Montessori Education is a philosophy based on the work of Dr. Maria Montessori. She felt, through her research, that the goal of education should be to cultivate a child's natural desire to learn. This is accomplished in the Montessori classroom in two ways. First, by allowing each child to experience the excitement of learning by making choices and second, by helping children to meet their full potential by preparing the environment to meet the individual needs of all children.

Our school provides a Montessori education within a public-school setting. The philosophy looks at the "whole child" and is an approach to education based on human development and the natural stages that children experience. The Montessori curriculum is extremely comprehensive and is correlated with the Tennessee State Standards. The philosophy emphasizes "preparation for life" as well as peace and respect.

Dr. Maria Montessori

Dr. Maria Montessori is the founder of the Montessori Method of education. She was the first female Italian physician and began her work in education in the late 1800's by developing materials for children to increase their abilities to learn and understand concepts. Dr. Montessori devoted her life to the study of child development. Her success led to international recognition, and she traveled all over the world lecturing, writing, and establishing Montessori training programs. In her later years, "Education for Peace" became a guiding principle in the Montessori method. Her work in peace education earned her a nomination for the Nobel Peace Prize. As a result, of Montessori's achievements at the Casa dei Bambini, her method spread rapidly. By 1915, over 100 Montessori schools had opened in America, and many more had opened in the rest of the world. At this time, there are over 4,000 certified Montessori schools in the United States and over 7,000 worldwide.

Montessori Grace & Courtesy

The Montessori philosophy uses the phrase “grace and courtesy” to reflect the way in which we endeavor to engage in all of our interactions: with ourselves, with others, and with the environment in which we live. Grace and courtesy expectations are taught, modeled, and practiced at every level in our work and play. Every community has expectations for behavior that are shaped by its culture. Our community’s culture is built on a belief of caring, respect, and consideration for others in and within our environment. We respectfully request the following from our students, staff, and guests.

1. Please follow direct lines of communication by speaking to the person who can directly address your concerns, provide the information that you seek, or offer the support that you need.
2. Clear, prompt, and open communication is essential. Our faculty is available to discuss issues with you; however, the highest priority during school hours is the children. Please do not hesitate to contact the office for information and guidance and to schedule conferences with teachers or administration.
3. Walk and speak softly in all areas where children and adults are working and concentrating.
4. Use a respectful tone of voice when speaking to others.
5. Suggest positive actions or resolutions.
6. Listen attentively and communicate in a clear and timely manner.

We greatly appreciate your desire to support the extensions of the grace and courtesy expectations of our students and staff.

Respect is the primary focus of the grace and courtesy curriculum. Students are taught lessons on specific areas of their social life in order to learn correct and acceptable behavior.

History of our School

The public Montessori program began in 1992 in Jackson and was housed at the Parkview location on 905 East Chester Street. The program began with (88) kindergarten and 1st grade students. Each year a grade was added to accommodate a K-6th grade program and 1996 was the first year to complete that cycle. Middle school (7th & 8th) was added in 2007. The program was moved to Bemis in the fall of 2011 and became The Montessori School at Bemis. In the summer of 2016, we moved again to 716 Westwood Avenue as Community Montessori School! In 2021, CMS added 4-year-old students to our Early Childhood classes.

Each year the school has met the requirements to be affiliated with the American Montessori Society (AMS), an international organization based on the studies of Dr. Maria Montessori. The AMS teacher certification is received after approximately 400 hours of class work, along with course requirements, observations, and internship. AMS is a non-profit, non-discriminatory, service organization dedicated to stimulating the use of the Montessori teaching approach in private and public schools.



Montessori Classroom Environments

Community Montessori School offers five Early Childhood (PreK / K) classrooms, eleven lower elementary classrooms (grades 1-3), ten upper elementary classrooms (grades 4-6) and six middle school classrooms (grades 7-8). Three special education teachers are on the faculty to provide individualized educational programs for students with special needs. Students with special needs are afforded the opportunity to meet their individual needs, utilizing an Individualized Educational Plan (IEP). Students' IEPs are drafted by the IEP team to provide students with the supports to best meet their needs.

The Montessori method views education as a preparation for life, not merely a search for intellectual skills. The emphasis in Montessori education is to teach the child how to learn. Every baby is born with the desire to know, the urge to explore, and the need to master the environment – in short, to achieve. The motivations for learning come from within the child. The child who accomplishes this moves in harmony with this world and becomes a whole person. With that in mind, the CMS Montessori environments are carefully prepared to train the senses, to stimulate curiosity, to satisfy the child's need to know, and to protect him or her from unnecessary failure.

Montessori emphasizes learning through all five senses, not just through listening, watching, or reading. Children in Montessori classes learn at their own, individual pace and according to their own choice of activities from hundreds of possibilities. Learning is an exciting process of discovery, leading to concentration, motivation, self-discipline, and a love of learning.

The basic principles of the Montessori method are the following:

1. Cognitive development follows a predictable progression from the concrete to the abstract. There are critical periods of time when children are most ready to acquire and develop certain skills. Educators must understand these levels and introduce material at times appropriate to the individual child.
2. Academic, social, and emotional development are interdependent; education must concern itself with the development of the whole child.
3. Every child has an inner drive to explore and discover the world; this innate curiosity will lead to productive learning if given the proper environment, resources, and guidance.
4. Learning is most productive when self-directed and founded on individual interest.
5. For younger students, learning is most effective when it takes place through direct sensory experiences and interaction with objects in their natural context.
6. Information should be presented in a pattern of whole-to-part, and integrated through interdisciplinary study, so students can place it in context and understand how things are related.
7. Learning must be enhanced and applied, especially in later years, by going out and doing relevant work in the community.

To learn more about the Montessori method, please visit: <http://www.amshq.org>

Vision Statement

“When a school community feels that it is really in control of its destiny, teachers, parents, and administrators are more inclined to do the hundreds of little things it takes to make their school work. When people are doing something they believe in, they do it better. There is more passion.”

The Vision of Community Montessori is to:

- Create a safe, supportive, and conducive learning environment
- Model peace and appropriate social conflict resolution skills
- Communicate openly and honestly with students and colleagues
- Be a part of the solution, not the problem
- Encourage parents to become meaningfully involved in the school and in their own child’s educational experience
- Engage the community to build greater ownership for the work of the school

School Mission Statement

“Peacefully educate, inspire, expect and achieve”

Student Creed

“I am an important person in this world.
Now is the most important time in my life:
My mistakes are my best teachers, so I will be fearless.”

School Colors

School colors are royal blue and red. School polo shirts may be royal blue, navy, white, or black. Please carefully read the updated dress code information in this handbook for more specific information and/or refer to the board policies regarding dress code at jmcss.org.

ARRIVAL, DISMISSAL, ATTENDANCE

Morning Arrival

All single car riders should be dropped off on the east side of the building (auditorium) and all siblings should be dropped off on the west side of the building (gym). **All PreK students must be signed in and out each morning and afternoon and will be dropped off and picked up from the auditorium back entrance. There will be a staff member with a clipboard.**

There will be a teacher or an assistant available at the door to greet students, **but students will be expected to exit the car on their own. Please make sure that your child has his/her items ready to exit quickly so that the line does not keep parents waiting for extended periods of time.** This not only allows the flow of cars to move more smoothly, but more importantly, it teaches independence for our students from the very beginning of the school year. In addition, parents should remain in their car and refrain from using their cell phone in the arrival and dismissal line while it is moving.

All students must be IN their classrooms by 8:15 or they will receive a tardy slip from the attendance office. If you pull up to the door close to 8:15, students will not have time to walk to their classrooms. The doors will be locked at 8:15 and students will need to come to the front door for a tardy slip. Remember that students must be **in their classrooms at 8:15**, so a late drop off can still constitute a tardy if students do not have enough time to walk to their class.

Afternoon Dismissal

It is imperative that we continue the calm, peaceful, and orderly environment that we maintain throughout the day during our dismissal. To do this, we need the assistance of our parents!

The dismissal procedure works very quickly and efficiently with your help. **Again, we respectfully request that you remain in your car and let the staff bring your child to you.** Parents coming into the office for pick-up, as well as congestion and noise in the lobby and main hallway at this time of day, hinders our ability to dismiss students safely and quietly. It is also very difficult for teachers to maintain order and structure if parents are visiting classrooms at the end of the day.

Please do not plan on meeting with your child's teacher after 2:30 without an appointment. In addition, any student that is signed out before 3:00 is considered an early dismissal, which is comparable to a tardy. If you need to pick up your child prior to 3:00 for an appointment, you will need to do so before 2:30.

In the PIK MY KID app, parents are asked to announce their arrival on the app as you enter the pickup line. This will assist in the process of having students ready for dismissal.

- Single Car Riders

All single car riders (K-8) will be dismissed through the back auditorium door with the awning/ walk in two lanes. Staff members will be in the parking lot to assist and escort your child safely to the car. You do not need to get out of your car. After your child is in the car, please stay in the line and exit onto Westwood Avenue making a RIGHT turn only.

- Siblings/ Carpool

All siblings/ carpool riders will be dismissed through the gym doors on the west side of the building. Drivers will enter from Westwood onto the street that runs from Westwood to Arlington. Drivers will enter into the parking lot from the right entrance near the gym. As you enter the parking lot, drivers will then form a double line (with assistance from a staff member) and pull around to the crosswalk near the front door. Please stay in your assigned lane and do not switch lanes as this is a safety hazard as we are loading students. **Please DO NOT get out of your car and park to enter the building.** Staff members will assist your child into your car throughout the dismissal process.

- All PreK students will dismiss from the back auditorium entrance.
- **STUDENTS WILL NOT BE DISMISSED TO ANY CAR WITHOUT AN APPROPRIATE SCHOOL CAR TAG (PikMyKid).** Parents will be asked to dismiss/ pick up their child from the office if they do not have their car tag.

- Walkers

All walkers are dismissed from the auditorium and gym - based on location of their home - and must have a current signed permission form on file with the office.

Attendance Reminders / Requirements

CMS is responsible for following the JMCSS Board policies regarding attendance as each school is monitored daily. In addition, we know that good attendance is directly related to school success and academic achievement. Please understand that it is critical that your child arrive to school on time and be in their classrooms by 8:15 and that they are picked up on time, no later than 3:30. When students arrive late in the morning, they miss essential instructional time in their classrooms.

When students are picked up late in the afternoon, it requires a staff member to stay late until parents arrive. Please refer to the letter in this packet regarding the importance of attendance regarding your position within the magnet school.

All absences and tardies are entered into the JMCSS PowerSchool database.

- **EXCUSED ABSENCES** - Absences are excused if a written note from the parent (preferably in an email to jlwhitaker@jmcss.org) or a medical note is received within 3 days of returning to school.
 - **During the school year, you are only allowed 5 -excused absences with a parent note. All additional absences would require medical documentation.**
- **UNEXCUSED ABSENCES** - An unexcused absence is any absence without a written excuse note or a medical note. After 3 unexcused absences, you will receive a “warning letter” from the school office. After 10 unexcused absences, the truancy officer from JMCSS will contact parents. **In addition, your attendance can ultimately impact your position within the Montessori magnet school as CMS is a choice school within the JMCSS.**
 - 3 Unexcused Absences - Parents will receive a reminder/ warning letter from the attendance secretary.
 - 5 Unexcused Absences - Parents are required to meet with a school counselor. Notes will be entered into PowerSchool.
 - 8 Unexcused Absences - Parents are required to meet with an administrator to review Open Enrollment Letter
 - 10 Unexcused Absences - Student’s name will be referred to the JMCSS District Truancy Officer and student will be referred to their zoned school.
- **TARDIES and EARLY PICK UP-** Tardies include late arrival (not in class by 8:15) and early pick-up (before 3:00).
 - After 15 tardies, parents will be contacted by the attendance secretary.
 - After 30 tardies, parents will be required to meet with an administrator and student will be referred back to their zoned school.

ATTENDANCE - CMS / OPEN ENROLLMENT

Jackson-Madison County School System board policy states that:

Continuation in an out-of-zone school is given with the understanding that the student's attendance, conduct, and academic effort will be satisfactory.

1. By accepting my child's position for the 2024-2025 school year, I understand that transportation to and from Community Montessori School is the sole responsibility of the parents unless the student is provided with special education transportation. I understand after 5 unexcused absences and/or 10 unexcused tardies or early pick-ups, attendance will be a factor considered for a student to return to his/her home school.
2. By accepting my child's position, I understand that my student is expected to meet the academic and behavior expectations of the Community Montessori School.
 - Students who show inability to work to the level of expected independence and who are unable to maintain passing grades will not meet academic expectations and would be a factor considered to return the student to his/her zoned school.
 - Students who have consistent behavioral concerns that impede their ability to work within the Montessori environment and/or impede other students' ability to work successfully would be a factor to return to the student's zoned school.

Overview Reminders

- Drivers must remain in the car and in the carpool line in the mornings and in the afternoons. It is extremely disruptive to call rooms and dismiss students from the office. **Students will not be signed out early from the office after 2:30.**
- Do not plan on meeting with your child's teacher between 2:30 – 3:30 during the school year without an appointment. Preparing students for the end of the day and dismissal time are very busy times and teachers need to be on their posts and focused on a safe and orderly dismissal for their students.
- Any student who is signed out before 3:00 is considered an early dismissal which is comparable to a tardy. Teachers are officially off duty at 3:30. All students should be picked up by this time. After 3:30, you must come into the office and sign your student out.

Athletics

Coaches and the athletic director will be responsible for communication of physicals, tryout schedules, and practice schedules. Any parental concerns must be directed to the individual coach in a timely manner. These concerns **MUST** not be addressed during or after games and an appointment should be made for a meeting with the coach. **Team rosters are created by coaches.** Any questions or concerns must be addressed to the coach and then to the athletic director.

Cafeteria

All students within JMCSS will have free breakfast and lunch. All extra, “a la carte” items may be purchased, but no charges are allowed. **The Jackson-Madison County School System has a no charge meal policy due to federal mandates.**

NO food from fast food or other restaurants may be brought into the school. This is a district-mandated policy and will be enforced.

Lunch boxes

Remember, in preparing student lunches, we are a PEANUT-FREE school. Please choose a peanut butter alternative. In addition, carbonated beverages (Coke, Sprite, Pepsi, etc.) are not allowed in cans or thermos. Please avoid packing high sugar items or candy in lunches. School lunches from outside restaurants may not be brought into the cafeteria (McDonalds, etc.). In addition, microwaves are not accessible to students in the cafeteria.

Food Allergies

Due to the increasing number of students with peanut/nut and fish allergies, we ask that you take this into consideration when bringing treats into the building. Do not send items containing fish, peanuts, or any ingredients made from peanuts. Please be aware of the contents of any treats you provide for students. **Please remember that food allergies can be life threatening.**

Celebrations / Holidays / Theme Parties

For theme parties (Christmas, Valentines, End of the Year), teachers will involve parents in menu planning for students. **Our school follows the district “healthy food program” and all items must be approved by the classroom teachers.** Flowers and balloons delivered to students at school will be held in the office until dismissal time. These items are not allowed in classrooms or buses.

Curriculum

As soon as you enter a classroom, you know that something is different! Montessori classrooms are immediately recognizable. You will see children working independently and in groups, often with specially designed learning materials; deeply engaged in their work; and respectful of themselves and their surroundings.

The Montessori curriculum is extremely comprehensive, as the teachers have correlated the Montessori materials with the Tennessee State Standards in order to follow state guidelines. In addition, the program stresses the value of “preparation for life” throughout the curriculum and emphasizes peace and respect.

Montessori education is student-led and self-paced but guided, assessed, and enriched by knowledgeable and caring teachers, the leadership of their peers, and a nurturing environment.

Within the community of a multi-age classroom—designed to create natural opportunities for independence, citizenship, and accountability—children embrace multi-sensory learning and passionate inquiry. Individual students follow their own curiosity at their own pace, taking the time they need to fully understand each concept and meet individualized learning goals.

Given the freedom and support to question, probe deeply, and make connections, Montessori students grow up to be confident, enthusiastic, and self-directed learners and citizens, accountable to both themselves and their community. They think critically, work collaboratively, and act boldly and with integrity.

Montessori ~ Practical Life Curriculum

“A child’s work is to create the man he will become, an adult works to perfect the environment but a child works to perfect himself.” **Dr. Maria Montessori**

Practical life is an area of the curriculum that is unique to the Montessori method. Using the children’s natural interests and inclinations, structured activities are planned for the Montessori classroom to prepare children for life’s basic skills. In addition, the activities assist children in lengthening concentration and perfecting coordination. For young children, there is something special about tasks that an adult considers ordinary, such as washing dishes, polishing, and cutting. Practical life lessons are given, based on the needs of the community/classroom.

Montessori Celebration of Life (Student Birthday Celebrations)

For each student’s birthday in grades PreK-3, the entire-class participates in the celebration by telling the child’s life story. As parents, you will be invited to come prepared to provide enough information about the child’s life to mark the developmental milestones. We suggest that you bring

a picture for each year of your child's life. On the day of the celebration, the students will gather in a circle with a lighted candle (signifying the sun) in the center of the circle. The child who is celebrating will hold the earth, while walking around the candle for each year of his/her life as the teacher, student and family members tell their story. This occasion provides the students with the concept of time by showing that the earth goes around the sun one time per year. **Typically, the parent provides a book for the classroom as a classroom community gift. We prefer that no snacks are brought due to possible student allergies.**

Students in upper elementary classes and middle school will have various other types of celebrations in the classroom as deemed appropriate by the classroom teachers.

*If you choose to provide a snack for your child's birthday, please be aware of our school healthy snack list as well as food allergies and bring snacks individually wrapped. **Please contact your child's teacher in advance if you would like to provide an appropriate snack.** In addition, please do not hand out any type of personal party invitations at school unless every child in the class has been invited.

Montessori Peace Education

"ESTABLISHING PEACE IS THE WORK OF EDUCATION."

Maria Montessori

The staff, students, and parents of Community Montessori School strive to eradicate conflict and create peaceful children, peaceful schools, and a peaceful world. The strong commitment of educators, parents, and the entire community empowers us to create environments where children truly feel safe and motivated to learn. Our staff recognizes that "peace" needs to be consciously taught and actively lived in our everyday lives.

We promote peace and actively teach our children to respect themselves, their peers, their

teachers, and their environment. It is our philosophy, as Montessori educators, to prepare our students for life. Peace education embodies and reinforces the state's standards of peaceful resolution to conflict and understanding of good decision making for everyday living.

Community Meetings

Community meetings are used to build a student-centered learning community in the classroom and within the entire student body. This type of group setting represents a symbol of unity. The activities are used to enhance the social and emotional development of children. Children learn how to behave properly in a group setting and will soon learn to value each individual within the group. This is a perfect time for children to gain an understanding of their feelings as well as the feelings of others. They learn how to respectfully communicate with their peers.

The teacher is aware of the needs of his/her students and will plan community circles to meet their needs. The teacher and students establish ground rules during several meetings at the beginning of the school year. Eventually, the teacher steps away from the lead role, and the meetings are led by a student. Maria Montessori said, "When dealing with children there is a greater need for observing rather than probing."

During the community meetings, the students use problem solving skills when role playing and discussing conflict resolution. Sometimes they discuss problems that may arise in the classroom and share ideas on how to resolve them. A community meeting is the time to celebrate student accomplishments. It also gives students the opportunity to acknowledge and appreciate others' kind deeds. Community meetings are a wonderful way to establish a respectful, collaborative classroom environment.

In addition to classroom community meetings, our entire student body meets together bi-monthly on Friday and students are given the opportunity, throughout the year, to present to their fellow students. This also teaches students the importance of attending and listening, as well as entering and exiting the auditorium peacefully.

Communication

- Communication Folders

The communication folder enhances your child's organizational skills and contains pertinent information. Communication folders will go home each Monday, unless otherwise instructed. It is the responsibility of the student and the parent to go over all paperwork, sign designated work, and return the folder to school upon the next school day. **Please see that your child always has a communication folder.**

- Communication with Teachers

Our school has an open-door policy; parents are welcome at any time, but please make an appointment by calling the school office for any in-class observations or parent-teacher conferences. During school hours, the teacher's primary responsibility is to the children and instructional time is valuable. Therefore, it is difficult for them to leave the classroom to engage in spontaneous conversations with parents. Remember that each classroom has its own routine and unannounced visitors disrupt the workflow of the children.

Short notes, e-mails, texts, and phone calls are welcome and will often clarify questions that you or your child may have, however, please be mindful that teachers are most likely not checking their phones during instructional time.

In addition, we request that you respect teacher's personal time and maintain your communication within reasonable hours. Check the school directory on our website (www.jmcass.org/montessori) for phone numbers, e-mail addresses, etc. Please keep the teacher informed of any changes in your child's routine or behavior that might affect him or her at school.

Communication Apps

Instagram

cmsjackson Tenn

Facebook

Community Montessori School PTO

Website

jmcss.org/Montessori

Twitter

@cmtymontessori

Crisis Management / Emergency Preparedness Plan

The school maintains and regularly practices emergency procedures for the following emergencies: fire (at least one per month), and three additional safety drills for bomb threats, tornado, earthquake, intruder, or other emergencies.

The principal has developed a crisis management plan and a crisis team for use in the event of any emergency situation and/or crisis. Specific procedures are posted in every room. Training for all school personnel on these procedures is conducted annually.

Closings

The director of schools may close schools for hazardous weather or any other emergencies that present a threat to the safety of students, staff members, or school property. The director of schools will notify the public media and an announcement will be made, typically using the automated ALL CALL system. It is important that you maintain current phone numbers with the school office.

Discipline

In a Montessori environment, the goal is for children to develop an intrinsic desire to be productively engaged, thus minimizing the need for discipline. Our approach is to teach and model respect and kindness. Restorative practices and conflict resolution techniques are used to facilitate and teach our children when discipline occurs.

Discipline, fair and individualized, is implemented in our classrooms. The Montessori philosophy helps children by giving them freedom to make choices but also instilling in them the responsibility that is required to have that freedom. The authority of the teacher is exercised as a directing knowledge, strong in wisdom and sympathy to which the children can appeal with assurance. CMS takes a **PROACTIVE** approach to discipline by incorporating peace education into the curriculum.

At Community Montessori School, we believe that “establishing peace is the work of education.” The school discipline team will determine if Community Service will be required for any student who has received a discipline referral during the week. Community Service takes place after school from 3:30-5:00 and is monitored by one of our staff members. It will be the parents’ responsibility to have the student picked up from school promptly at 5:00.

Student discipline is a critical factor in maintaining a safe environment for students and staff. While it is important that students be held accountable for their behavior, it is equally important that staff, students, and parents understand the discipline policy and procedures of the school. Please take time to review this section and speak with your child about the school’s expectation for behavior and the consequences for unacceptable behavior.

One of the primary goals of the Montessori program is to teach self-discipline. Montessori children are given a great deal of freedom within the classroom, but they are taught that responsibility and self-discipline go hand in hand with that freedom. Teaching children self-discipline prepares them for success in all areas of life. Staff members make every effort to understand a child’s individual needs, to direct him/her to make appropriate choices, and to help him/her understand the

consequences of his/her choices. School is a social organization in which the good of the group must be considered.

All of our students, beginning with early childhood, are taught conflict resolution skills and practices. Staff members encourage children to independently resolve problems with their peers whenever possible. As much as possible, children are allowed to experience the natural consequences of their actions. For example, playing during work time may result in a child forfeiting playtime to complete work. Discipline is also tailored to the child's age. Regardless of age, consequences of negative behavior are always age appropriate, never demeaning, or physical.

Dress Code

Please refer to the JMCSS handbook for the comprehensive uniform dress code. Students at CMS may wear white, black, royal blue, or navy shirts. Students need to wear comfortable, appropriate shoes for school that allow playing, running and gym use. Students will go outdoors whenever weather permits.

Spirit wear may only be worn on Fridays and student athletes may wear their appropriate athletic attire on game days. Please note that parents may be contacted to bring clothing items if a student comes to school in attire that is not dress code approved.

Field Trips

Field trips are a wonderful extension of the classroom. Parents will receive written permission slips for their child's field trips that must be signed and returned. Students will not attend a field trip without written consent from the parent.

Transportation/ Bus guidelines and rules are posted on the jmcss.org website

Guidance

Two full-time professional school counselors serve all children and classrooms at Community Montessori School. Counselors are available for individual counseling by request from the teacher, parent, or the principal. The school counselors teach a developmental prevention-based curriculum set forth by the Jackson-Madison County School System and the state standards.

Grading and Progress Reports

Community Montessori School uses a rubric progress report consistent with an individualized curriculum for grades PreK-3. The report will include the following key in lieu of letter/numerical grades:

- 4 Excelling / Exceeding expectations of grade level standards with quality**
- 3 Meeting grade level expectations with quality**
- 2 Additional assistance & supplemental materials needed in order to meet grade level standards**
- 1 Not Meeting Expectations of grade level standards**
- n/a Standard not yet presented / Student not at readiness level**

For grades 4-8, a numerical grading system based on JMCSS board policy is used. Nine week and mid-nine-week reports are available through PowerSchool. A percentage of the final grade will be from the standardized test in the spring. Parents are asked to check PowerSchool weekly with their students in order to review and be aware of grades.

- A 90-100**
- B 80-89**
- C 70-79**
- D 60-69**
- F below 60**

Upper Elementary and Middle School - Late work policy

Late Work Policy

Work that is turned in late will result in a 10% deduction per week. The highest grade that late work will receive is 90% (A). Work that is not turned in by the end of the grading period will result in a grade of 0.

JMCSS Grading Policy

According to district guidance, PowerSchool weighs daily work grades at 40% and test/exam grades at 60%.

PowerSchool is the platform used for attendance, discipline, demographics, and grades. Parents **MUST** inform the office immediately if there are any changes in the home address, phone numbers, emergency contacts, or parent rights. This is critical for clear and effective communication.

Health Guidelines

When a child becomes ill at school, parents are contacted. Please make sure the persons and phone numbers listed for emergencies are current. It is imperative that parents respond quickly to incidents of illness since the school does not have the personnel or facilities to care for a sick child.

A child must be free of fever, vomiting, and diarrhea as well as any contagious symptoms for at least 24 hours (without medication) before returning to school. Medications for continued recovery can be administered by the staff, as long as the child is no longer contagious and can participate in normal school routines.

Medications for Students

If under exceptional circumstances a child is required to take non-prescription or prescription medication during school hours and the parent cannot be at school to administer the medication, only the principal or the principal's designee will assist in self administration of the medication to competent students. Authorization forms must be completed in the school office for all medications that are to be administered at school.

All medication must be delivered to the office in person by the parent or guardian of the student unless the medication is required for immediate self-administration (i.e., asthma inhalers). Parental authorization will be required for a child to keep an asthma medication on his/her person, otherwise, all asthma medications, including inhalers and nebulizers, will be kept in the office. All medications **MUST** be in the original package.

Prescription Medications:

1. A written statement will be required from the physician that provides the name of the child, name of the drug, drug dosage, times of drug administration, the route of drug administration, possible drug side effects, if known, and the termination date for self-administration of the medication. The physician's name, phone number, and the diagnosis or reason the medication is needed will be required.
2. A statement from the physician outlining emergency care will be required if a prescribed medication could necessitate a serious reaction (e.g., a diabetic child that requires insulin in response to blood sugar levels. The physician, according to the blood sugar level, should order the amount of insulin).
3. Written consent from the parent to dispense the medications is required. The form in the medication manual should be used.
4. If the dosage of a medication or directions to give a medication change, the parent will be required to complete a new authorization form to reflect the changes.

Non-Prescription Medications:

All non-prescription medication (over the counter medication) will be dispensed at school for only a two-week period with parental authorization. The parent should pick up any remaining medication or it will be disposed of by designated school personnel. Should a student need to take a non-prescription medication at school for a period greater than two weeks, a physician's statement with the name of the medication and why it is needed will be required. Volunteer

personnel, trained by a registered nurse, may administer glucagon in emergency situations to a student based on that student's Individual Health Plan (IHP). All non-prescription medication must be in the original package.

Library/Media Center

The library/media center is designed to assist learners to find, generate, evaluate, and apply information that will help them function successfully in school and in society. It is also designed to assist the faculty and expand the work of the classroom.

A variety of materials are available to students and staff. The students also check out books and use materials, as needed for classroom research projects. Students may check out one book at a time and renew them if more time is needed. Students are responsible for returning books each week. A fee will be charged for any lost or damaged book. -

Lost and Found

Lost articles may be claimed by proper identification. Please mark all personal items with the student's name so they can be returned expeditiously. **Items not claimed by the end of each week will be donated.**

Magnet Program/ Open Enrollment – Selection Process

Applications for Community Montessori School are online at jmcass.org. Students will be notified of their selection status by the Board of Education. If more students apply to attend than space is available, a random selection process will be conducted at the Board of Education. Students who are not initially selected will be placed on a waiting list. If a vacancy occurs, the next applicant in the appropriate grade group will be notified of his/her acceptance for the magnet program. Siblings of students enrolled in the magnet program may attend the same magnet school if an opening is available.

Students selected for the magnet school programs will continue their enrollment until the termination of such programs or until such time as they withdraw. Students who withdraw from the magnet schools will be required to attend schools located within the zone in which the student

resides. The waiting list for magnet school programs will expire at the end of the first semester of the school year. A new application procedure to fill the available space in the magnet program for the next year will be conducted during January and February of each year.

Office Expectations/ Guests

All guests must check into the office to sign in and receive a visitor identification tag. This policy applies to all guests, including parents and guardians, for the safety of our children. Visits to the classroom during the school day must be scheduled in advance with the classroom teacher.

Observation of Classrooms

It is important for parents to observe classrooms in order to understand the routines and expectations of a Montessori classroom. Observations must be scheduled through the office or with your child's teacher. All observers need to report to the office, sign in, and follow instructions on the observation form. Your visit and caring comments are beneficial to our growth.

We respectfully request that you take a low position in the room by sitting on the floor or in the designated observer's chair. Please remain seated, quiet, and non-interactive, unless directed otherwise by the teacher. In order to accommodate other observers and not distract from the environment, we ask that you limit your time in the classroom to 30 minutes. Additional time may be requested. Please note that capturing images, video, or audio during the observation are prohibited based on the privacy of all students.

Parent Teacher Conferences

Parent Teacher Conferences are scheduled twice during the year by the school system; however, parents are encouraged to stay in close contact with their child's teacher by conferencing with them as often as needed.

Parent Contact Information

It is extremely important that every student maintain an up-to-date address and working telephone number in the school office. Notify the school office immediately if you have a

change of address or telephone number during the school year. Keeping student addresses and phone numbers current is extremely important for your child's safety and for school effectiveness. ALL CALL automated phone messages are used frequently by the principal to communicate important school information.

Parent Involvement and Volunteers

In order for your family to fully benefit from the Montessori method, on-going communication between the school and home is important. Parents can reinforce learning at home by being aware of what their child does at school. Classroom tours, PTO meetings, school functions and family nights are opportunities for parents to learn more about their child's classroom, spend time with the staff, and meet the parents of their child's friends. Studies have shown that children whose parents regularly participate in their child's educational process have greater academic success. Our school encourages parents to volunteer in the school's academic programs by sharing skills or experiences with the classes. Parents can regularly participate by listening to children read, assisting in preparing classroom materials, and performing odd jobs around the school. Involvement as volunteers greatly enhances the goals of the school.

Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)

Greater family involvement in children's learning is a critical link to achieving a high-quality education. We take pride in our multi-faceted approach to making parents feel comfortable in our school. All parents and families are invited to come by the office, personalize their visit, and let us know how we can better accommodate their child's learning experiences. Calls and visits are welcomed.

The PTO is a vital and important component of our school. Every family is encouraged to become an active member. This organization sponsors many exciting family-oriented activities throughout the school year. It helps raise needed funds for school improvement and helps to coordinate room parents. Children achieve success when families are involved in their education in partnership with teachers and staff.

School Fundraisers and Community Involvement

All fundraisers will be communicated to parents and earmarked based on the school's needs. Students are never to solicit door-to-door. All students and parents are encouraged to participate but may choose not to sell and donations are accepted.

Student Records

Parents of minor students have the right to inspect and review their child's education records. Please check with the attendance secretary regarding this information. In addition, it is the parent's responsibility to make sure that records, emergency contact information, and custody/ parental rights paperwork are current in the school office and the student's records.

School Supplies

Prior to the beginning of each school year, parents will receive a list of supplies that children will use during the year in the classroom. Most supplies are shared within the classroom community, so you will not need to label each item.

Teacher Requests

Our school does not accept parent requests for teachers. Our leadership team will work together with classroom teachers to make decisions based on the individual needs of the students. Our school works diligently to ensure that all classrooms are staffed with quality teachers.

Toys and Cell Phones

Toys are not allowed in school, including electronic games and collectable cards. At the discretion of the teacher, items may be brought to school on certain occasions. Please check with your child's teacher for specific class policies.

Cell Phones

Students are not permitted to use cell phones in the school building at any time. If a student brings a cell phone to school, it must be stored in a locker or backpack. Cell phones that are taken up by teachers during the day must be picked up from the office from a parent/ guardian. Cell phones will be kept in the office until picked up by the parent.

CMS is not responsible for any items brought to school in violation of these policies.

Telephone Messages

Should a parent/guardian need to contact a student, he or she should contact the office and messages will be delivered. The office staff will make every effort to cooperate in getting emergency messages to students. Requests for such messages should come from parents and must be kept to essential or unusual circumstances.

Community Montessori School

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What is a Montessori classroom?

- Instruction is delivered with each individual child in mind.
 - As a child-centered approach to education, the Montessori classroom is developed under the philosophy that all children are able to learn and that all children WANT to learn!
- The Montessori classroom is a prepared and ordered environment.
 - Each classroom contains age-appropriate, child-sized manipulative materials to reinforce each student's developing skills.
- All Tennessee state standards will be taught.
 - In the Montessori classroom, students work individually and in small groups. All students are encouraged and guided to become self-directed, self-motivated learners. Children are given the opportunity to work together, allowing the opportunity to learn from each other and enhance each other's understanding.
- The classroom is organized into several fundamental curricular areas.
 - These areas include language arts, mathematics, geography, history, science, and practical life.
- Montessori environments are specifically prepared for your child to develop and grow to become successful, independent thinkers.
 - Care and attention are given to each area of the classroom. The room is intended to be a peaceful learning environment with few distractions from the materials.
 - The shelves are prepared sequentially, and the work is organized so that children have an understanding and appreciation for order.

What is a magnet/open enrollment school?

Open enrollment schools are schools that do not have a population of students that are zoned to attend. They do; however, offer a specialty or a unique curriculum to “attract” students. Community Montessori School is the only public, Montessori school in Madison County and one of only four public, Montessori schools in the state of Tennessee.

How is Montessori different than traditional education?

Montessori education is a method of teaching that is very different from traditional education.

A few of the major differences are:

- Child-centered classrooms
- Multi-aged classrooms
- Individualized instruction
- Multi-sensory manipulatives
- Peace Curriculum
- Freedom of movement

What are the admissions/application procedures for entering Community Montessori School?

Any PreK-8th grade student living in Madison county may apply. Applications are accepted throughout the months of January and February for the upcoming school year. A computerized random selection is held at Central Office in mid-March. All applicants receive letters confirming their acceptance or their waiting list status.

How is discipline handled?

We believe that children must be taught the expectations, modeled the expectations, and retaught if necessary. All discipline concerns are handled individually and respectfully.

What is the practical life curriculum?

Practical life exercises are taught to fulfill a child's desire to learn practical and meaningful activities, such as pouring, scrubbing, sweeping, dusting, sewing, gardening, animal care, and service projects.

Can I observe my child's classroom?

We highly encourage parent involvement and feel strongly that the relationship between school and home is critical for student success. Observation forms are available in the office so that your feedback can be reviewed by the principal and classroom teacher and your questions can be addressed.

Why are the classes multi-aged groupings?

Montessori environments encompass a multi-aged span. This community allows a vast curriculum to be offered, as children are guided and challenged by the teacher to complete their individual work, fulfilling the state standards. Students are also allowed to work in small groups and benefit from peer tutoring. Developmentally, Maria Montessori proved that students grow, develop, and have similar characteristics in a 3-year age span. In addition, as the student remains in the classroom for 3 years, the environment remains stable, and the teacher is better equipped to meet the needs of the child.

Why do some students often work on mats rather than desks?

Students in a Montessori environment are able to move with freedom and purpose throughout their classroom, choosing materials and workspace as needed. Montessori believed that with freedom comes responsibility, therefore students are taught to move with respect throughout the environment, their peers, and the materials. Many of the Montessori materials require a “layout” presentation on a mat. The desks are used for work that requires more writing.

What is the purpose of the “hands-on” manipulatives?

Dr. Montessori, in her wisdom, realized that the hand is truly the child’s teacher. Her work with children enabled her to prepare “hands-on” materials that assisted children in understanding concepts in math, language, science, and history. These materials are universal in all Montessori schools and are critical in teaching the child, not only the concept, but the ability to focus and concentrate on his/her work.

Are the teachers certified?

All classroom teachers are Tennessee State certified for the age in which they teach. The Montessori training is approximately 400 hours beyond the State of Tennessee certification requirements.

What is a student work/ learning plan?

A daily or weekly contract is an individualized work plan for every student. Montessori students are not required to all “be on the same page”. Therefore, students are working at their own pace through the curriculum. The tracking folders contain the entire curriculum for each particular grade level. They are used to assist students and teachers in monitoring a student’s progress. The work plans are given each week to allow students the opportunity to organize their work, complete their work and manage their time. The individualized student work plan also enhances the Montessori students’ ability to be responsible, independent, and accountable for their work.

What is peace education?

Peace education is a basic tenet of the Montessori philosophy. Dr. Maria Montessori taught, “avoiding war is the work of politics and establishing peace is the work of education.” Montessori education instills within children the desire and skills to handle conflict in a peaceful and respectful manner. Montessori believed that peace is based on the peaceful development of children and that individuals who have fulfilled their potential will have a natural respect and appreciation for others.

Our goal is to instill in our children the ability to communicate effectively and respectfully and to handle all conflict in this manner.

Why does my child not have many worksheets?

Montessori is a “process-oriented” environment, rather than a “product-oriented” environment. This simply means that much of the work that students complete throughout the day may be in the form of a layout work or the use of a material. This method better assists students with the understanding of the concepts.

Student portfolios are maintained in the classroom and are open for parents to view at any time.

Does Montessori education believe in homework?

Montessori believes that homework is an extension of the work that the child is doing in the classroom. In addition, homework is individualized to meet the needs of each student.

Why does Community Montessori not have an Honor Roll System?

Montessori is an inclusive, peaceful, non-competitive, learning environment that prepares students for life by guiding them in reaching their fullest potential. Montessori education focuses on the “whole child” and believes that self-esteem, independence, individuality, and responsibility are key factors in academic success.

The truly educated individual continues learning long after the hours and years she spends in the classroom because he is motivated from within by a natural curiosity and love for knowledge.”

Maria Montessori

Suggested Books and Websites

How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way

Author: Tim Seldin

Understanding Montessori

Author: Maren Schmidt

Montessori Madness!

Author: Trevor Eissler

The Absorbent Mind

Author: Maria Montessori

Montessori Play and Learn: A Parent's Guide to Purposeful Play for Children from Two to Six

Author: Leslie Britton

Montessori from the Start: The Child at Home, from Birth to Age Three

Author: Paula Polk Lillard and Lynn Lillard Jessen

The Calm and Compassionate Child: A Handbook

Author: Susan Usha Dermond

A Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom

Author: Aline D. Wolf

How to Talk So Kids Will Listen and Listen So Kids Will Talk

Author: Adele Faber and Elaine Mazlish

The Science Behind the Genius

Author: Angeline Stoll Lillard

www.jmcass.org

www.amshq.org

www.montessori.org

www.montessoriconnections.com/parents

