



# ***Parent/Student Handbook*** **2021-2022**

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## **Mission and Philosophy**

### **Our Mission:**

- **To awaken and nurture an endless passion for knowledge.**

### **Our Philosophy:**

Our non-profit school is designed to nurture the development of the whole child through creative discovery and interaction with teachers, peers and materials. We believe in preparing an enthusiastic environment that will nurture the growing child. Our curriculum fosters intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development and prepares our children to be global citizens.

## **SWMA Visions**

### **Vision for the World**

This is the kind of world our school aspires to create through the education of children in our program.

**Peaceful**  
**Compassionate**  
**Environmentally Conscious**  
**Educated**  
**Spiritual**  
**Boundless**  
**Joyful**  
**Empathetic**  
**Balanced**  
**Charitable**

### **Vision for the Child**

These are the fundamental life skills, abilities, and attributes we aspire to see children develop as a result of their experience in our school community. This is the child upon graduation of our program.

**Wise**  
**Respectful**  
**Confident**  
**Compassionate**  
**Self-Motivated**  
**Self-Disciplined**  
**Independent Thinker**  
**Life-long Learner**  
**Nurturing**  
**Tolerant**  
**Peaceful**  
**Skilled Problem Solver**  
**Global Citizen**

### **Vision for the Teacher**

These are the fundamental personal and professional characteristics and abilities we believe teachers in our school community require in order to facilitate our **Vision for the Child**.

**Nurturing**  
**Peaceful Demeanor**  
**Respectful to All**  
**Able to Model Behavior**  
**Able to Entice Children to become Passionate Learners**  
**Displays Classroom Leadership**  
**Able to Relinquish Leadership to a Normalized Classroom**

(Normalization has occurred when the teacher can leave the room and the students continue working without her or him. A normalized child has learned to, and wants to, work productively and cooperatively.)

**Detailed Observer**  
**Able to Identify Growth Needs**  
**Embraces our Mission, Philosophy, and Visions**  
**Intelligent**  
**Enthusiastic**

### **Vision for the Parent**

These are the fundamental characteristics and abilities we believe parents in our school community require in order to facilitate our **Vision for the Child** and support our Montessori program.

**True Montessori Supporters**  
**Loyal**  
**Nurturing**  
**Respectful to All**  
**Willing to Learn About and Embrace Montessori**  
**Open Minded**  
**Volunteer**  
**Ambassador of our School**

### **Vision for School Leadership**

These are the fundamental characteristics and abilities we believe the members of the leadership team require in order to facilitate our **Vision for the Child** and support the faculty and parents in our school community.

**Fiscally, Legally, and Morally Responsible for all Aspects of our School**  
**Ensures all Decisions and Actions are in Harmony with our Mission, Philosophy, and Visions**  
**Respectful to All**  
**Able to Communicate Constructively and Effectively**  
**Offers both Acknowledgments and Suggestions**  
**Holds all Staff to the Highest of Standards**  
**Participates Effectively in Meetings**  
**Available**  
**Acts as Ambassador of our School**  
**Grounded and Levelheaded**  
**Ethical**  
**Determined on the Success of our School**

# Admissions and Enrollment Process Overview

The Montessori Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin, religion or sex in administration of its educational policies, admissions, financial aid programs, athletic and other school-administered programs.

## Enrollment Process

1. Return completed application and non-refundable application fee of \$150 per child. If your child is enrolled in the Montessori Academy, this fee will apply towards tuition.
2. Upon receipt of completed application, schedule a meeting with the Lead Teacher and the Head of School. This is a time for us to learn about you and your child, for you to learn more about us, and to determine whether our school is a good fit for your family.
3. If your child is currently attending or has attended another school, the director will provide a Teacher Recommendation Form. Please complete the top portion of the form and give to current/previous school office to complete remainder of form. This form should be mailed back to us directly from the current/previous school.
4. Provided that your family and the school agree upon the Montessori philosophy and environment, and there is space available, admission will be granted.
5. You will have two weeks to respond to our letter of acceptance. You will also be required to sign a tuition contract and provide a non-refundable tuition deposit of \$1500.
6. After we have received your signed contract and deposit, you will have the option of applying for financial aid according to the process below.
  - a. Return the complete financial aid application and all relevant documents.
  - b. Once we advise you of our decision, you will have two weeks to accept our decision and continue the enrollment process, or decline our decision and end the enrollment process, upon which the tuition deposit will be refunded.
7. Once the financial aid process is complete, or if you did not request to apply for financial aid, all necessary enrollment forms will be sent to you. You must return all complete enrollment forms before the first day of school.
8. The balance of your tuition will be due July 1<sup>st</sup> and is non-refundable. We may be able to offer the option of a payment plan. However, if a payment plan is put in place and the child is withdrawn, the tuition will still be due for the entire year.

## Emergency Procedures

In the event of an emergency we will call 911, emergency services and transport your child to the nearest medical facility. You will be contacted in the event of an emergency and be given information regarding your child, his/her illness, situation etc.

# Parent Involvement

## ***Torre Rosa***

Torre Rosa is Italian for the Pink Tower, which is a fundamental beginning work in Montessori classrooms. It is also the name we gave our annual fundraiser with silent auction. We count on every family to donate a minimum of 3 auction items and to help with the event in some way. Each family is required to purchase a minimum of 2 tickets to the event.

## ***Event Dues***

***Each family pays \$50 to the event fund (PO Dues) at the beginning of the school year to cover the cost of things like classroom parties and pizza. Families with more than one child enrolled pay \$75. Event Dues are due on your child's first day of school.***

## ***Volunteer Opportunities***

There are plenty of volunteer opportunities available at school. Your child's teacher is an excellent person to contact if you are interested in working in the classroom environment or helping with material making. Also, please refer to the Parent Involvement Survey for even more opportunities.

Some volunteer opportunities include:

- Fundraising events
- Special Event Planning/Hosting

## ***Parent/Teacher Communication***

Teachers will respond to parent inquiries/concerns within 24 hours via note, email, phone, or in person. ***We ask that parents respond to all teacher or administrative inquiries/concerns within 24 hours as well.*** Email is the main form of communication. Please email any questions or concerns to your child's teacher initially. If we are not able to address the concerns or answer the questions with email, then we will schedule a meeting. If you only require a brief conversation, please feel free to pull in and park during carpool. If available, your child's teacher will meet with you during school hours assuming coverage can be provided by other teachers. ***(Please see Procedures for Contacting Staff on Page 12)***

## ***Parent/Teacher Conferences***

There are a total of 2 scheduled conferences that will be held throughout the year. Conferences will be held at the school and they will be scheduled at mid-year and end of year. These conferences are required. For a schedule of conferences please refer to the school calendar. There will be no school on the day of conferences. Depending on your child's age, you may or may not be allowed or required to have your child attend with you. In order to ensure that both parents receive the same messages, teachers will only do one conference per family per child.

## ***Parent Education Classes***

***You as the parent are required to attend at least 4 of these information sessions.*** We will be discussing specific information about child development, Montessori principles, philosophy and educational methods. We will be bringing you all together as a group as well as having you work with your child's teacher in their specific environment. For a schedule of education meetings please refer to the school calendar. The planned topics will be communicated in advance. If a family does not meet their obligations to attend the minimum of 4 meetings, they will be required to make up the hours by scheduling observations in the classrooms. Observations must be scheduled in advance.

## ***Parent Observations***

**At least one parent from each family is required to observe their child's classroom environment at least one time during the scheduled school year.** (Except in the Toddler class.) These observations shall be scheduled with Beth. All parents are invited and encouraged to schedule observations in all classrooms (except Toddler). Expectations of the observation will be communicated to you prior to your scheduled visit. An observation is the best way to understand what your child does during the day and is such a source of pride for the children.

## **Supplies and Belongings**

It is the philosophy of the Academy, as a Montessori school, that no toys are permitted on campus. Any items not school related are to be kept at home. There may be an exception when a child starts Lower Elementary. **Personal belongings- blankets, pillows, extra change of clothes, lunch boxes, back packs etc. are to be clearly labeled in permanent ink with the child's full name.** This will ensure your child's personal belongings are not misplaced, or accidentally used by another child.

**We ask that your child bring lunch boxes and backpacks to school with solid/printed colors or realistic animal figures. Cartoon characters and action figures will be distracting to your child and detract from the essence and purpose of their Montessori educational experience, thus they are not permitted at school.**

At SWMA, we do not ask you to provide standard school supplies (pencils, folders, paper, etc.) as it is important that these items are consistent in the classroom. Therefore, teachers will shop for uniform supplies for his or her classroom. In lieu of regular school supplies, we do ask that each family provides other consumable supplies (paper towels, tissue, hand soap, etc.) as a contribution to your child's classroom. The children are always so proud to make a contribution to their classrooms. You can use this opportunity to take your child shopping for their classroom and have them bring their supplies to school. This is an important part of our philosophy – the children contribute to their classroom environment and learn the value of consumable items (learn that they cost money and that everyone should only use what they need).

Before the beginning of the school year, each classroom will provide you with a supply list to bring during the first week of school, or mid year. Each family will be asked to bring any depleted supplies mid year as well.

## **Dress Code**

Your child is expected to attend school wearing the Academy's uniformed shirts. If a uniform shirt is not available, a plain navy or grey shirt will suffice. Your child may choose from a variety of logo tops, purchased from Lands' End. The bottoms may be anything khaki in color: skorts, pants, shorts, capris or skirts. Students can wear navy blue or gray T-Shirts or Polos. Please expect your child to come home with paint, mud, dirt, sand and food on his/her clothes. We assure you this is a normal occurrence and we encourage exploration inside and outside our classroom environments.

Shirts can be purchased online at Lands End. The preferred school number is 900104548. The logo is \$5.50 and it is called Sunburst. The logo number is 0941386K.

If you chose to purchase your own gray or navy T-shirts, they need to be solid grey or solid navy without ruffles or beads. You can have our logo embroidered on the shirts for \$5 per shirt by going to:

PCB Embroidery  
2624 Dorothy Ave  
Panama City Beach, FL 32408

We encourage recycling of gently used uniforms. If you have uniforms that no longer fit, please bring them to the school at a designated time. All gently used uniform shirts, dresses, and sweaters will be available on a first come first serve basis at the Meet and Greet, which happens each year on the Friday before the first day of school for Elementary students. We only accept uniform shirts, not pants.

Tennis shoes are the absolute best shoes to encourage movement and independence and in some instances, tennis shoes are required (for example, physical education).

**Your child may not wear tennis shoes that display cartoon characters, action figures or lights. This would be distracting to your child and detract from the essence and purpose of their Montessori educational experience.**

## **Procedures for Contacting Staff**

At the beginning of the school year, you will be provided with a school directory that lists all staff members' personal cell phone numbers. Please be respectful when contacting staff. ***Email is always the preferred method of communication.*** If it is necessary to text or call a staff member, we ask that you only text or call between the hours of 7:30 and 8AM; and then again from 3 to 4PM. ***It is never appropriate to text or call a staff member before 7:30AM, or after 4PM.*** Unless it is an emergency, an email should be used to communicate with staff both during and after school hours. Your child's teacher is in class teaching, so they will not be able to reply to text messages and phone calls received during the school day.

The exception to this rule is with administration, specifically, Beth. Beth is available to reply to text messages from 7:30AM to 4PM on days when school is in session. ***Unless it is an emergency, parents should communicate with all staff, including Beth, only via email after hours.***

## **Potty Training**

A child must be completely independent in the bathroom in order to be enrolled in the Primary classroom at SWMA. If it is determined that a child is not potty trained, they will not be invited back in the classroom until they meet the following criteria:

**A potty trained child is a child who can do the following:**

- 1) Be able to TELL the adult they have to go potty BEFORE they have to go. They must be able to say the words "I have to go potty" BEFORE they have to go.
- 2) Be able to pull down their underwear and pants and get them back up without assistance.
- 3) Be able to wipe themselves after using the toilet.
- 4) Be able to get off the potty by themselves.
- 5) Be able to wash and dry hands.
- 6) Be able to go directly back to the class room without directions.
- 7) Be able to postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom



## ***Nutrition***

New guidelines from DCF: Foods that are associated with young children's choking incidents must not be served to children ***under 4 years of age***; such as, but not limited to, whole/round hot dogs, popcorn, chips, pretzel nuggets, whole grapes, nuts, cheese cubes and any food that is of similar shape and size of the trachea/ windpipe. (This includes Veggie Straws) Food for infants must be cut into pieces ¼ inch or smaller, **food for toddlers must be cut into pieces ½ inch or smaller to prevent choking**. These items will not be served in the classroom, and can not be in lunches coming from home.

## ***Snacks***

Each classroom will have a snack schedule in place. The families are responsible for supplying their classrooms with healthy, nutritious snacks. Some examples of healthy and nutritious snacks are fresh or dried fruit, vegetables, crackers, pretzels, cheese etc. Each snack must be prepared in a commercial kitchen (store-bought) and individually wrapped when brought into the classroom. This is the guideline we must follow in accordance with the Department of Children and Families. We appreciate your support and understanding in helping us to adhere to the state's guidelines.

## ***Lunches***

Please make it your child's responsibility to bring his/her lunch to school. **If your child forgets lunch please do not bring it to them during the day**. This will help them to learn a valuable lesson in responsibility and natural consequences. We will ensure your child is provided a healthy lunch here at school in the event that lunch was forgotten.

We encourage the use of recyclable containers whenever possible. For example, thermos for water or milk, Ziploc sandwich plastic containers or wax paper bags as opposed to plastic baggies etc.

It is our philosophy to teach your child how to establish healthy eating habits and to learn to be respectful of their own bodies both inside and out. We as teachers do this not only by teaching about health and nutrition in the classroom, but by consistently modeling these healthy eating habits. As a Montessori parent, please keep this in mind when packing your child's lunch.

**Feed your child what you would eat yourself.** A balanced meal includes proper portions of protein, natural sugars and carbohydrates. Below is a list of foods that are acceptable and unacceptable for school lunches and as snacks in the classroom. Foods sent to school in your child's lunch that are considered unacceptable will be sent home with your child uneaten. Healthy eating habits start early and your support is crucial to the nutritional education of your child.

### **Acceptable Foods (Organic/Natural if Possible)**

Crackers  
Peanut Butter Crackers  
Goldfish  
Deli Sliced Meats  
Tuna  
Raw Vegetables  
Whole Fruit  
Pasta  
Plain Milk  
Nuts  
Pretzels  
Sandwiches with Whole Wheat Bread

### **Unacceptable Foods**

Chocolate  
Candy  
Pudding  
Carbonated Beverages  
Juice of Any Kind (Sugar Content)  
Chips (Cheese, Potato, Corn)  
Processed Meats (Includes Lunchables)  
Cookies (Graham Crackers- All Natural, Whole Wheat Acceptable)

Raisins  
Air Popped Popcorn  
Granola Bars (No Chocolate)  
Natural Cheese (Not Processed)  
Apple Sauce (No Sugar Added)  
Yogurt Eaten With a Spoon - Check label for sugar contents and avoid artificial colors  
Water

In some cases, specific classrooms may alter the acceptable foods list because of a child with a food allergy present in the classroom. Thank you for your cooperation and respect of this policy.

## Parties/Birthdays

SWMA has a special celebration for birthdays. "Walk Around the Sun" is a Montessori tradition that we feel is very meaningful and purposeful. Starting in the toddler classroom, your child will be a special part of this tradition throughout his/her Montessori education. You will coordinate this celebration with your child's teacher when the time is appropriate to do so. Parents are invited to bring in a picture or display board with pictures of each year of your child's life. Depending on the classroom, some parents will be invited to join the class for the Walk Around The Sun celebration. Some classes will allow you to bring in a special snack for your child's birthday to share with the class. If your child's teacher allows this, we ask that the snack be *healthy* and provided in accordance to our nutrition guidelines outlined above. Each snack needs to be individually wrapped for each child. Any special birthday snacks that do not fit with our nutrition policy must be individually wrapped and will be given to the students at afternoon carpool.

Parents are encouraged to mail or email birthday party invitations to their child's friends. A school wide directory is created at the beginning of each year and emailed to all of the currently enrolled parents. It is the parent's responsibility to save a copy of the directory and keep it for your records. The purpose of the school directory is for parents to be able to get in touch with other parents in your child's class to plan play dates and birthday celebrations. The directory will only be distributed once a year and may be subject to change.

Your child's teacher will help distributing birthday cards only if you choose to invite every child in the class and the cards are labeled with the names of each student in the class. Teachers are willing to forward an email to their class distribution list announcing the birthday party if every student is invited. Please communicate with your child's teacher if you would like them to help you with this.

## Arrival/Dismissal/Parking

### Drop Off Directions:

**Drop off is from 8:00 AM to 8:20 AM. Your child must be in the classroom no later than 8:20 AM.**

Go north on Highway 395. Turn left on Eden Gardens Road. Teachers will be there to greet you and your child as you pull up to the school gate. **Please do not park your car or turn off your car. Other cars will be in front of and behind you and this will slow the arrival process.** A teacher will open the *back driver's side door* and help your child get out of his/her car seat while you sign your child into school by scanning the QR code from Brightwheel. Once your child has gotten out of the car, a teacher will escort him/her to the school gate where he/she will walk to his/her classroom. Students should wait inside their cars until staff opens the gate.

After drop off, please continue down Eden Gardens Road, go through the gates at Eden State Park to Gilmore. Gilmore will return you to Highway 395. **As we intend to be good stewards of our neighborhood, we ask that you be respectful of all speed limits and road signs. The speed limit is 15 miles per hour all the way down Gilmore Road. Help us to be good neighbors!**

The morning is valuable working and learning time for each child and consistency and timeliness are necessary for an optimal academic experience. **If you arrive to school late you must call or text Beth to come unlock the gate and walk your child to class.** Often times with younger students, this change in routine can upset them and throw off their day. Tardiness occurring more than three times a semester may result in a conference with the Head of School and your child's teacher to determine whether our school remains a good fit. We are all working very hard to instill consistency, as well as respect for your child's self and others in our school environment. Arriving to school on time is critical to help foster this philosophy and its importance. Please keep this in mind when you are preparing your morning routine. If you need to pick your child up early for any reason, please call ahead and plan on parking and coming in to the office to sign them out. Please enter the classroom/office quietly. **If you are unable to bring your child to school before 9AM for reasons other than emergency situations, scheduled appointments or other reasons previously communicated with your child's teacher; please do not bring your child to school that day. This is a disruption to your child's classmates and teachers, as well as your own child.** To help ensure the health, safety and respect of your child, his/her classmates and teachers, **we ask you refrain from smoking in the car prior to carpool.** Scents linger throughout the day and our environment is smoke free.

We ask that parents refrain from turning on iPads, TVs or Movies while driving to school. Students should not have access to any electronic devices, including phones, during the morning commute. Children become upset when the items are removed from them, and it can make it difficult to get the child out of the car and ready for their school day.

*See map attached for greater detail.*

#### **Pick Up Directions:**

#### **Please note our staggered pick up times:**

Dismissal from Toddler Class is from 2:30-2:45

Dismissal from Primary Class is from 2:45-3:00

Dismissal from Elementary Class is from 3:00-3:15

#### **Siblings may wait with older child during pick-up time**

Take the same road route as in the morning. The children will be waiting inside the school gate. As you drive up we will escort your child to your car and ensure they are safely belted into his/her seat as you are signing your child out of school by scanning the QR code from Brightwheel.

**Please do not park your car or turn off your car. This will slow the dismissal process down.** The quicker we can make drop off and pick up, the less likely we are to have traffic back up.

#### **Late Policy for Picking Up**

You are considered late if you arrive after your child's specific pick up time. If you are late picking your child up from school in the afternoon, we will attempt to contact you or an approved guardian. After 3:15, your child will be sent to an after school activity (on the days when after school activities are offered) and you will be responsible for paying the after school teacher for

watching your child. *Please also note that if this happens, your child will most likely not be able to participate in the activity as the teacher was not able to plan for that child to attend ahead of time. **If you are late on days where there is no after school activity, you will be charged \$5 per minute after your oldest enrolled child's pick up time.***

If your only or oldest child is in Toddler and you arrive between 2:45 and 3:00, you will be responsible for paying \$10. If you arrive after 3PM, it's \$1/minute past your child's pick up time.

If your only or oldest child is in Primary and you arrive between 3 and 3:15, you will be responsible for paying \$10. If you arrive after 3:15, it's \$1/minute past your child's pick up time.

If your only or oldest child is in Elementary or Middle school and you arrive between 3:15 and 3:30, you will be responsible for paying \$10. If you arrive after 3:30, it's \$1/minute past your child's pick up time.

Administration will be notified if payment has not been made and a meeting will be scheduled if a parent is late picking up more than twice.

We are able to release your child only to those individuals listed on the enrollment form and are added on Brightwheel. If you would like someone other than those listed on the enrollment form to pick up (i.e. a visiting grandparent or relative), you must contact administration and let them know who will be picking up and/or who your child will be riding home with, and add them to Brightwheel. Unless it is another parent, we will ask this person for a picture ID. If you have arranged someone else to pick your child up that is listed on the enrollment form and/or added to Brightwheel, you must contact us with this information before 2:00 PM so as to get the message to the child's teacher and administration. We will ask this adult for a picture ID.

Your child's teacher may request that during a period of transition, such as the beginning of the school year, you drop your child off at car pool as opposed to walking him/her to school. We are trying to establish consistency throughout the school with all of our children and car pool is a very important piece in helping to develop a schedule your child will learn to rely on as a part of his/her day.

**During the phase in, Toddler parents are to pull past the car pool line and then park and take your child to his/her class.** Please park on the side of the gate closest to the park so you do not block the carpool lane. Eventually, you will be asked to become part of the regular carpool process. As we are practicing independence, please refrain from carrying your child or their belongings when walking to the classroom.

As a parent, you are legally responsible for your child before and after school hours if you and your child are on the school property. Playground equipment is to be used only at designated times during your child's school day with your child's class and under the supervision of your child's teacher.

**It is extremely important that we all follow these procedures. We want to ensure your child's safety, success, confidence, and happiness. The more supportive you are of them and their ability, the more successful they will be! We appreciate your full support with these procedures and are thankful you trust our knowledge and experience.**

## Field Trips and “Going Out”

Depending on your child’s class, Field Trips and Going Out will be scheduled according to each class’s needs and developmental abilities.

A child is not permitted to leave school property with any person other than his/her parent/guardian or person listed on pick-up authorization form unless written and signed permission has been given for the teacher to do so for a field trip or a Going Out. This permission form will be given to the parent well in advance of the off campus trip. Your child’s teacher will communicate with you the need for volunteers depending on the classroom size and class readiness and ability.

## Safety and Security

### South Walton Montessori Academy is a Drug Free Environment

When you visit school during the school day, you MUST check in at the office. This includes observing in your child’s room, going on field trips, etc. This is a safety issue, and being in a town that is busy with tourists and new people, we all must be aware of how important it is to be safe.

With your child’s safety in mind, the playground may only be used when your child is signed in under the supervision of his/her teacher. Play structures are not available for children to play on during class and holiday performances.

We will be practicing monthly fire drills in accordance with Department of Children and Families and the Fire Marshall of Walton County.

We are a part of the Walton County emergency notification system and receive notification regarding weather or other emergencies from county officials. Upon their advice, we may ask you to come early to pick up your child from school depending on the nature and severity of the situation. We appreciate your full cooperation in these rare instances.

## School Closings

We follow Walton County school closings. An email will always be sent to all parents notifying them of any school closings or unscheduled early releases.

## Health and Wellness Policies

Please use your best judgment when deciding whether or not your child is in good enough health to attend school. Green or yellow runny noses, diarrhea, and/or vomiting are good indications your child is not well enough to be in school. We will call you to pick up your child if these symptoms are observed at school. If a child has an unexplained rash, we will call you and might ask you to come pick up early. We may require a doctor’s note before your child is able to return to school. ***Please do not tell your child that you will come pick them up if they don’t feel well. This will almost always result in the child saying they don’t feel well. If you suspect they might not be feeling well, communicate that with the teacher or administration and we will keep a close eye on them and call you if we think they need to go home.*** Any child with fever, whether medicated or not, will not be allowed

**in school until he or she has been free of fever for 72 hours without the help of meds. This rule also applies to children with diarrhea, or have been vomiting.** Please be courteous and respectful to your child's peers and teachers.

Prescribed or non-prescribed medication may be administered by the faculty when you have given us permission to do so. The *Authorization to give Prescription/Non Prescription medication Form* must be filled out and signed by the parent in order for us to administer medications at school. This includes sunscreen and insect repellent. If you wish for us to administer any such medications on a regular basis you must bring them to the office and give them to Beth. Medication must be in the original medication container and in a Ziploc bag, clearly labeled with your child's full name written both on the medication and on the bag.

## **Attendance Policies**

Your child is expected to attend school on a regular basis unless he/she is ill. If your child is absent from school, you must call the office, email, **or text Beth every day** and let us know that he/she will not be in until they return, unless we are notified in advance that you will be gone for an extended period of time.

These absences should be approved and excused by your child's teacher (i.e. doctor's note, planned vacations, etc.).

If your child is not in school and we are unable to get in touch with you to find out why, we will call the numbers provided by you on your emergency contact list. This is a state requirement to ensure the safety of your child and family.

**All children are on a schedule of five days per week** and any exceptions must be approved by school administration.

*\*\*Any excessive absences may result in the inability to continue on with the school year. Excessively absent children are often not able to truly become part of the classroom environment.*

## **Phase in Process**

Any child under the age of 5 will be phased in to the classroom. There is not a tuition discount for late start dates due to the phase in process. This process is different in the Toddler class and the Primary class. Your child's teacher will discuss the phase in process with you during the interview. If your child is under the age of 5, their start date will be different than what is listed on the calendar. If your child is moving from Toddler to Primary, their start date will not be the first day of school. Please plan on being flexible with drop off and pick up times during your child's phase in. Your child's success in the classroom is our primary concern. If a child is showing us that they are not ready for full days, it may be necessary to back down to partial days, even after the child was phased in. No tuition discount will be given under these circumstances and the goal will be to work towards full days again.

## **Discipline Policy**

The Montessori program nurtures self-discipline, which develops over a period of many years. The basis of discipline is respect: respect for oneself, for others, and for the environment. The adults and children in the prepared environment set limits for behavior based on the group's need for a safe and mutually respectful community.

If a student is having a difficulty following the rules of the community, the response will be age-appropriate. Personal attention, distraction, substitution and or removal from the situation are

typical approaches. Many instances resolve themselves as the student, within the bounds of safety and common sense, experiences the logical consequences of his/her actions (for example, wiping up after throwing a paint can on the floor).

If a student disregards the rules of the classroom environment, the teacher seeks the underlying causes in order to help the student understand the inappropriateness of his/her actions and to find a constructive alternative. If such behavior occurs repeatedly, the teacher may request the support of the director or another teacher to observe and offer consultation before the parents are contacted for their support and cooperation.

To help support the child through behavioral situations, we give the child choices. By giving choices, negotiating disputes and using *Positive Language*, we invite cooperation rather than demand it. There are often times when a child needs to “pull back or start over”. It is a *positive* interruption of an unwanted behavior or overexcited child. We strive to teach the child that the world doesn’t end when he/she has stepped beyond the set limits or angered someone. Shaming a child does not help to develop a positive, healthy self. By being held accountable for their behaviors and communicating the why and how, the child will develop lifelong skills.

The following are examples of some general guidelines of the *positive* approach to discipline South Walton Montessori Academy follows. We encourage and fully support this philosophy in both the school and home environments.

- Allow freedom with order

- Limit choices and allow the child to choose within these limits

- Hold the student to standard- he/she will rise to expectations

- Think satisfaction and motivation vs. gratification and manipulation

- We motivate internally and not through external rewards

- To maintain strong, effective discipline, seek consistency and clarity

- Catch children “doing something right”

- Engage and interest the child

- Involve and stimulate the child

- Redirect the child from destructive and negative behavior

- Let natural consequences flow from inappropriate behavior

- Be respectful- through your treatment, demeanor and language you use with children

***It is the policy of South Walton Montessori Academy to never physically discipline and it is in all cases inappropriate to physically discipline a child on school campus.***

## **Defining Bullying and an Anti-Bullying Action/Prevention Plan**

People often say that teachers have eyes in the back of their heads. They don’t. We can’t see everything that is happening and we depend on our students to let us know when something is going on that needs to be addressed. Students are always encouraged to ask for support immediately when a situation arises at school. Teachers act as facilitators to resolve the conflict, and this is most effective when it is done immediately following the situation. If your child tells you about something that happened at school that upset them, the parents should ask the child what they did at school to resolve the problem. If the problem was not resolved, it should be addressed upon arrival the following day with the support of a teacher and both of the children involved.

How to deal with bullying depends on a lot of factors including the age of the child. Bullying can be physical and/or verbal.

It is important to draw a distinction between behavior that is rude, behavior that is mean, and behavior that is characteristic of bullying.

Rude behavior is characterized by saying or doing something that hurts someone else. In children, this usually takes the form of social errors. The critical factor is that these incidents are usually spontaneous, unplanned inconsideration based on thoughtlessness, poor manners or narcissism, but not meant to actually hurt someone.

Being mean involves purposefully saying or doing something to hurt someone. Mean behavior very much aims to hurt or depreciate someone. Very often, mean behavior in kids is motivated by angry feelings and/or the misguided goal of propping themselves up in comparison to the person that they are putting down.

Both rudeness and mean behavior require correction, however they are different from bullying in important ways that should be understood and differentiated when it comes to intervention.

Bullying is defined as intentionally aggressive behavior, repeated over time, that involves an imbalance of power. Kids who bully say or do something intentionally hurtful to others and they keep doing it, with no sense of regret or remorse.

Bullying is not tolerated at SWMA.

In order to prevent bullying at SWMA, when students display mean or rude behavior, it is immediately addressed so that the behavior does not continue.

At SWMA, we aim to prevent bullying and promote respect by teaching pro-social skills such as empathy, listening, and conflict resolution.

## **After School Policy- SWMA does NOT offer After Care**

If you would like your child to participate in an after-school activity, you must sign him or her up **with that specific teacher no later than the night before the activity**. Only the specific teacher can schedule your child to attend an after-school **activity as other teachers and administration do not keep track of space available or payment**.

**If you are not able to communicate with the specific teacher the night before, you will not be able to schedule your child to attend that day and must pick them up at their regular time.**

This is such a great lesson for our students to learn about making plans ahead of time and sticking with your planned schedule. We appreciate your support of these procedures, as they will make the awesome after-school activities run that much more smoothly for everyone.

*Please also note that on the rare circumstance when you will be late picking up your child at his or her regular time, your child will be supervised by the after-school teacher, but will most likely not be able to participate in the activity as the teacher was not able to plan for that child to attend ahead of time.*

**Most after school activities end at 4:30. If you are late more than 5 minutes for pickup at the after school activity, you will be charged \$1 per minute.** If you are late to pick up for the after school activities more than twice, it will be up to the teachers' discretion if your child will be invited to attend after school activities in the future.

## **Referral Process**

One of the most important responsibilities of a teacher is to observe his or her students.

Occasionally, the teacher will note behavior (whether it is emotional, social, or academic) that is disruptive to the child's ability to function as a student or a member within the SWMA community. In these cases, the teacher will make modifications in the environment and in specific works in



order to help the child to be successful. Once the teacher has exhausted his or her knowledge and modification options, we must refer to a specialist for support.

The teacher may refer to an Occupational Therapist, Speech Pathologist, Psychologist, etc. depending upon the issues at hand. The teacher has the responsibility to clearly document and communicate all behavior and concerns to the parents. In order to optimize success, the parents have the responsibility to communicate behavior seen at home and to follow through with a potential referral and recommendations.

SWMA is devoted to the success of your child and believes therapeutic interventions can be a valuable way to meet needs specific to your child.

If the SWMA administration is in agreement with the teacher's recommendation for a referral (testing, treatment, etc.) yet the parent is not willing to participate in this process, there will be communication between SWMA administration and the parent in order to determine whether continuing at SWMA is in the best interest of the child.

## **Communication Channels/Parent Grievances Procedures**

We expect our parents to follow the same procedure we have in place for our students. Any parent with a school concern is required to discuss the matter directly with the individual(s) involved as soon as possible. If a discussion does not resolve the matter or if a discussion appears to be impractical, the following procedures should be implemented:

- Step One: Email or discussion with teacher/person involved with the concern
- *If concern is not resolved:* Step Two: Meeting with teacher
- *If concern is not resolved:* Step Three (optional as recommended by director): Meeting of Consultation Group composed of teacher, parent, administration

## **Student Records & Required Health Forms**

**All children are required to have current health and immunization forms in their files before the first day of school. Children may not attend school without current forms.**

1. **Each child is required to have a Yellow "School Entry Health Exam" form (DH3040) and a form that was previously blue called the "Certificate of Immunization" (DH680). Your local physician will know what forms these are. If you do not have a local physician, the Walton County Health Department will also issue them by appointment. The Yellow form is valid for 2 years from the date it was signed. Each blue form expires at different times throughout the year. The blue form MUST be current in order for the child to attend school. If you choose not to immunize your child, a DH681 will suffice.**

If you are moving from another state, you will need to take your child's forms to a local doctor so they can transfer their records on to these Florida specific forms. (DH3040 & DH680)

The county health department director or administrator may exclude from school, preschool, childcare facilities, or family daycare centers those children without proper documentation of immunization (or with medical/religious exemptions) for the disease for which the emergency has been declared.

**Be advised that some students at SWMA have a DH681 form in place of a standard immunization form.**

Parents have a legal right to see any information that is forwarded to other schools unless they have waived their access to these materials. SWMA reserves the right to withhold any and all

records for students whose account balance has not been paid in full. Additionally, if you are not up to date on monthly payments, we may not allow your child to return until payments are current.

Student records usually consist of, but are not limited to, attendance records, health and emergency information, assessments, developmental and academic progress reports, accident reports and parental authorization for various school activities.

In cases of divorce when lawyers request student records, SWMA will only provide attendance records and other factual documents. SWMA staff will never offer opinions on a child or a parent. Parents are not permitted to subpoena staff for divorce cases.

#### Confidentiality of Student Records and Parental Rights:

South Walton Montessori Academy stresses the importance of protecting the rights and privacy of children, their families, and our teachers. The practice of maintaining the confidentiality of verbal information and written records is a basic policy of our school. The practice is in accord with one of the primary ethical principles of professional behavior in early childhood settings. For this reason, no parent volunteer working in the office is ever permitted any access to any records pertaining to a child or children other than the child or children of that volunteer.

Legal parents and guardians have the right to inspect and review any and all records, files and data directly related to their children. Parents/guardians who desire to review these records are requested to call the director to schedule an appointment to do so. Child care personnel are permitted to look at these files. A South Walton Montessori academy Administrator must be present whenever records are reviewed.

# Child Abuse

Chapter 39 of the Florida Statutes mandates that any person who knows, or has reasonable cause to suspect, that a child is abused, abandoned, or neglected by a parent, legal custodian, caregiver, or other person responsible for the child's welfare shall report immediately such knowledge or suspicion to the central abuse hotline of the Department of Children and Families.

## Abuse or Molestation:

### Commercial General Liability Coverage Part

1) Except to the extent coverage is provided in 2 below, this insurance does not apply to "bodily injury", "property damage", "advertising injury", or any other "injury", arising out of:

(a) the actual or threatened abuse or molestation by anyone of any person while in the care, custody or control of any insured, or

(b) the negligent

i employment

ii investigation

iii supervision

iv reporting to the proper authorities, or failure to so report; or

v retention: of a person for whom any insured is or ever was legally responsible and

whose conduct would be excluded by (a) above.

This exclusion shall apply regardless of the legal form any "suit" may take. As an example, this insurance shall provide no coverage for a claim alleging that an insured was negligent or in breach of contract due to the hiring of an employee accused of sexual abuse.

2) (a) if a limit of liability is shown in item b above, the exclusion shall not apply, subject to the following additional conditions:

1) The most we will pay for a claim otherwise excluded in item 1 above is the Limit stated in this endorsement.

2) We will pay the cost of defending a "suit" otherwise excluded in item 1 above, but the most we will pay is also limited by and contained within the limit of liability stated in this endorsement.

3) We will not pay any claim or defense cost on behalf of any person who personally takes part in the inflicting physical or sexual abuse, sexual molestation, sexual exploitation or sexual injury upon another person, or on behalf of any person who remains passive upon gaining knowledge of any alleged physical or sexual abuse, sexual molestation, sexual exploitation, or sexual injury committed by an employee or volunteer of the insured.

# Parent-School Partnership Agreement

## Working Relationships at SWMA- Setting Expectations for Parents and the School

### Background

The purpose of this agreement is to clarify expectations. What can parents and school expect of each other as we enter into a long-term partnership to aid the development of your children? This document seeks to answer that question by articulating expectations: those that parents can reasonably expect of the school, and in turn, what the school, with its mission of providing a superior Montessori learning environment, will expect of parents. By publishing a dialogue based on important questions and answers contained in this Agreement, we aim to reduce the misunderstanding and disappointment that can result when unstated expectations go unmet.

### What does the school expect from Parents?

**Q: What is the school's most basic expectation of parents?**

**A: Make continuing efforts to understand, embrace, and apply the Montessori approach at home and to work in partnership with the school.**

These efforts should begin before admission. The school desires parents who understand and embrace the mission of the school. To that end, we help parents learn about the Montessori approach by providing information and opportunities for parent education as part of the admission process- so that parents can make an informed decision in choosing to enroll their children- and continue to provide more opportunities throughout a family's years at the school.

Once children are enrolled, the school expects parents to attend Parent-Teacher conferences and Parent Education nights. While every family is only required to attend 4 throughout the year, you are strongly encouraged to attend every one. The dates are listed on the School Calendar. We encourage you to go ahead and mark them on your calendar and plan on attending them all. This is the most important thing you can do to understand your investment in your child's education. Additionally, we expect parents to familiarize themselves with the philosophy, policies, and procedures contained in the Parent Handbook and other school publications.

Professional staff and parents are expected to work collaboratively to foster the development of the child. Children thrive when both the home and school environments work in harmony, sharing the same educational values and expectations. Children develop a love of learning and become responsible, independent, and capable when parents' values and expectations are consistent with those of the school and are reinforced on a consistent basis at home.

The school expects parents to commit to growth in parenting in a Montessori way. We have defined the real "work" of a parent, in a collaborative partnership with the school, as modeling the attributes for their child and providing opportunities for their child to develop them at home. In other words, parents are expected to become proficient in applying Montessori philosophy at home. This begins with the general principle, "Never do something for your child that he can do for himself." Allow your child to engage in all of the simple tasks of everyday life that a child can do for himself at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style that is different from the way in which you were parented. This is a commitment that takes time and will likely involve change, which typically involves some level of

discomfort. However, you are not alone or isolated in your journey of growth as a parent. SWMA staff and other SWMA families are your support system. In this school, we are all members of a Montessori learning community.

**Q: What contribution can I make to create a positive school community?**

**A: Demonstrate respect for all adults and children, the school, and the school's programs and become involved in the life of the school community.**

Model respect for your children- for them, their classmates, parents of classmates, teachers and other school staff- in short, for everyone associated with the school. Respect begins with civility and deepens into trust. Our most fundamental behavioral guidelines for the children are: "respect yourself, respect others, and respect the environment." We expect the same from adults, parents, and school staff, at all times and in all relationships within the school community. We expect every member of our community, students, parents and staff, to be willing to accept full responsibility for their attitudes, actions, and ultimately for their lives. This includes speech and outward behavior. Support your child by speaking of his/her teachers, classmates, and school in positive terms. Respect and abide by the school's policies and procedures. Follow the school's problem solving process when you have a concern. Honor your commitments. Arrive and pick up your child on time. Look for ways to make a positive contribution to the life of the school. Through your behavior, you contribute to your children's moral development and to the culture and climate of our school, which they experience on a daily basis.

**Q: What are my responsibilities regarding communication and problem solving between home and school?**

**A: Maintain active, direct, and respectful, two-way communication with the school.**

Read all email communications carefully and keep important information in a safe place so you will have access to it throughout the year. This includes the gate code and directory. Inform the school in a timely fashion of pertinent changes in your child's life. Parents are responsible for keeping contact information current and informing the school of any changes in custodial arrangements. If the custodial arrangements of your child have changed since you enrolled the child, it is your responsibility to provide a copy of the current court order to the school.

Active communication involves parents sharing observations and concerns about their child with the child's current teacher. In matters large and small, remember the principle of respect; even when there is a disagreement, disagree respectfully, and follow the school's problem solving process.

Children prosper most when the adults in their lives work in harmony and resolve conflict through side by side problem solving, rather than face to face confrontation or by involving others who are not part of the problem or the solution. Asking for information, striving to see other perspectives, and remaining open to possible solutions are critical elements of collaborative problem solving.

**Q: What can I expect of the school academically?**

**A: SWMA aspires to fulfill its mission as a Montessori school.**

As a Montessori school, we differ from traditional schools. Our first commitment is to the multidimensional development of the child. SWMA's curriculum is challenging and you can expect your child to be provided with challenging work that is appropriate for him or her. Our aim is for each child to be far more than a repository of information. We educate the whole child. We guide each child to think for themselves. Cognitive development and a solid academic foundation

are important, yet they represent only one dimension of our aspirations for your child. Equally significant is your child's social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.

Children are given choices and a great deal of freedom- within limits- during the school day. They are allowed to experience, and learn from, the consequences of their choices thereby strengthening their critical thinking skills and promoting self-correction. The choices a child makes and the accompanying responsibilities influence the emerging character of your child. Choosing his own work, or shaping it to a considerable degree, following that work through to completion, while working independently or in cooperation with others, the Montessori child identifies his interests and develops his individual gifts with the goal to strengthen intrinsic motivation and self-direction.

Significant emphasis is placed upon community service. Younger children learn by serving their small community, e.g., classmates, classrooms, and family. As they grow, children reach out to the larger community and experience the many rewards of helping others. The children gain awareness and appreciation of others, of the challenges faced by others, and equally important, of their own strengths and abilities to help others and affect the world around them. Community service is an integral and important part of their lives and stays with them well beyond their SWMA years.

We treat each child with dignity and respect, and expect that she will treat others with the same respect. We treat each child as an individual and strive to develop each child's unique gifts- within the context of the classroom and the school community. With freedom comes responsibility, and each child learns to balance his personal freedom with a clear sense of responsibility to herself, to others, and to the community as a whole.

**Q: What can I expect in terms of communication from the school?**

**A: We strive to maintain open, honest, timely, and respectful communication with you about your child and about information affecting the school community.**

There are 2 regularly scheduled Parent-Teacher conferences each year, accompanied by a written progress report. **Please mark these days on your calendar and plan accordingly.** We close the school on these days to have time to meet with each family individually. Your child's teacher will have a sign up sheet and you will be able to pick a time that works for you. SWMA's policy is to do only one conference per family.

In the event of special concerns, your child's teacher will contact you to discuss these concerns by phone, by email, or in person. If you have a concern or question about your child's classroom or progress, please contact the classroom teacher by email or phone. Please allow 24 hours for the teacher to respond. In addition to conference reporting, classroom teachers will communicate with you via email messages, and short reports as needed for individual children.

Each SWMA teacher is a highly-trained professional and his/her evaluation is confidential and based on direct observation of your child. He or she or he will always offer their current, best understanding of your child's progress and his strengths or needs. For all children, this evaluation is based on the teacher's observation, which may be augmented by input from the administrative staff. For elementary children, we also report to you annual standardized test results. Should it ever become clear that a child is not benefiting from the school's program and outside professional assistance is needed, or if the school is not the best program to meet your child's needs, we will immediately schedule a meeting with parents.

**School wide communication is accomplished by emails. *Please make a habit of checking your emails on a regular basis.***

**Q: What can I expect of the school environment?**

**A: We strive to ensure an environment that is physically and emotionally safe and supportive, as well as aesthetically beautiful.**

Dr. Montessori said that the classroom teacher's first responsibility is to prepare the environment. This means that the learning materials should correspond to the developmental characteristics of the child at each level. It is important that those materials be attractive to the child: correct in size, aesthetically pleasing, well maintained, and complete. In a broader sense, the whole school environment must meet these criteria; to appeal to the child and inspire his work.

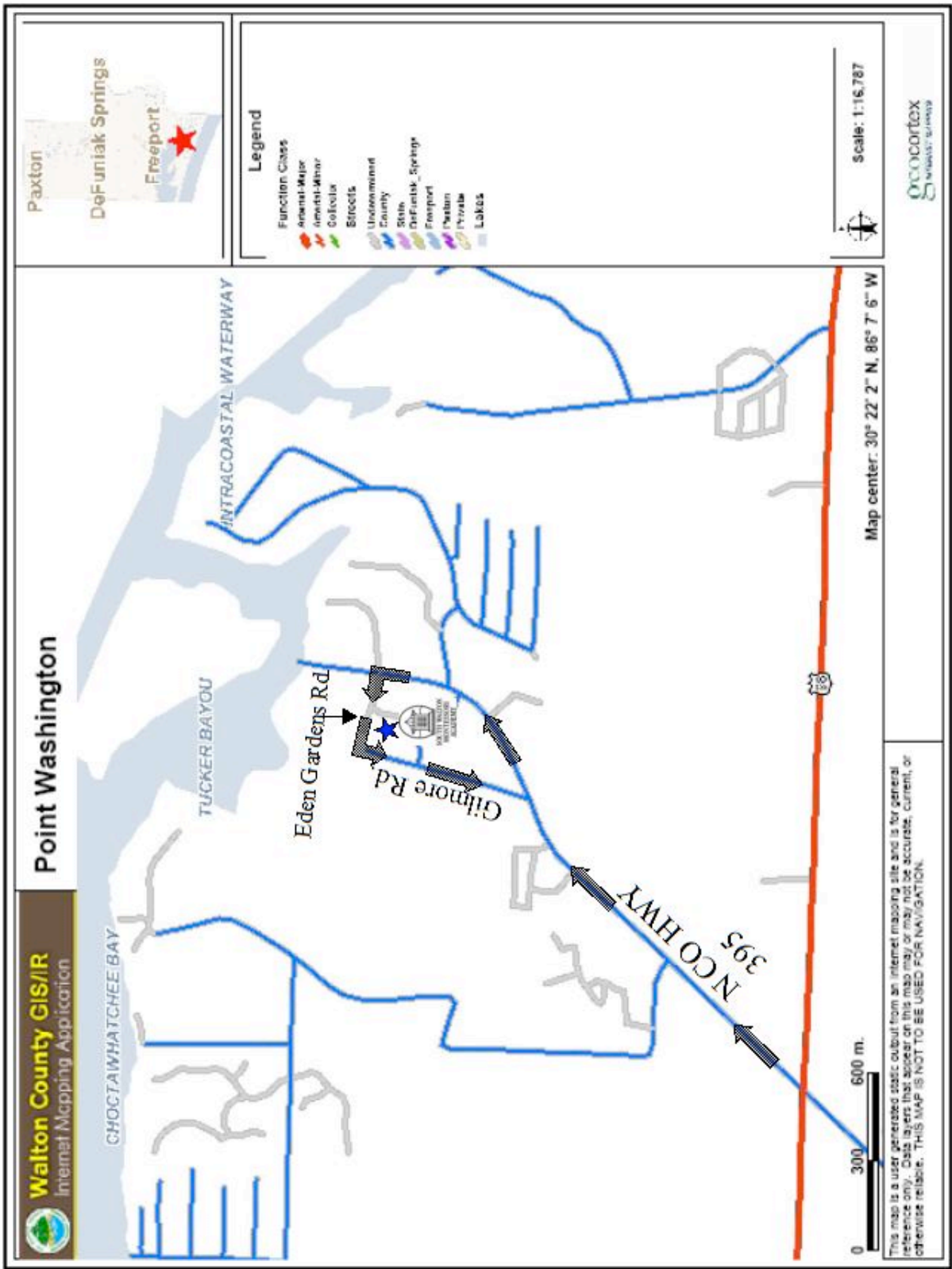
We are ever vigilant to ensure that the school building and grounds are physically safe, secure, and well maintained. If you notice something that needs to be addressed, please bring it to the attention of administrative staff.

Our community of children and adults comprise a social environment and culture that impacts the child's experience. We strive to make this environment emotionally supportive and safe for every child. This does not mean that there are no problems. It does mean that we will work with your child in developmentally appropriate ways to deal with problems as they arise, empowering him with problem solving and social skills and aiding him in the development of emotional intelligence to prepare for a lifetime of working with others in a variety of communities and organizations.

**Q: What can I expect of the school administration?**

**A: Integrity; a focus on the needs of the individual child in harmony with the life of the community; mission-driven decisions embodying good stewardship and responsible management; and an open door to your questions and concerns.**

Administrative staff interface with all of the various constituencies of the school: students, parents, extended family, faculty, board members, alumni, prospective parents, professional visitors, government officials, other schools and educational organizations, and the general public. In your interactions with administration, you can expect professional, courteous, and business-like conduct, as well as mutually respectful communication. Catherine Beall and Beth Brock comprise the Administrative team. They often face decisions requiring a balance of competing priorities. Sometimes those factors are mutually exclusive; sometimes equally well intentioned adults see matters differently. In making decisions, administration will focus on the interest of the individual child in balance with the needs of the school.



101 Eden Gardens Road • Santa Rosa Beach, FL 32459 • 850-231-5955  
www.southwaltonmontessori.com



# Parent Handbook Acknowledgement

Please return to the school with your enrollment forms no later than **April 16, 2021**

I (we), \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_, have read, understand,  
Parent's Name (Print) Parent's Name (Print)  
and agree to abide by the information given in the South Walton Montessori Academy's Parent/Student Handbook, including the Parent-School Partnership Agreement. I (we) understand that the content may change or be updated by SWMA.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Parents' Signatures

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

Please initial by each of the following indicating you are aware of the policy.

\_\_\_\_\_ Drop off is between 8 and 8:20AM. Students MUST be in class by 8:20AM. I have read and I understand the drop off directions.

\_\_\_\_\_ If you are unable to bring your child to school before 9AM for reasons other than emergency situations, scheduled appointments or other reasons previously communicated with your child's teacher; please do not bring your child to school that day.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware that Event Dues are due on the first day of school. \$50 for 1 child; \$75 for 2 or more

\_\_\_\_\_ Students must be **fever free for 72 hours** WITHOUT the help of any meds before they can return to school.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the policy for After School Activities at SWMA.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read, and agree to comply with the policy for communication with staff members at SWMA.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware that each family is required to attend a minimum of 4 Parent Ed nights throughout the year.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have turned in the Yellow School Entry Health Exam and a current Blue Immunization form or Religious Exemption form. I understand that my child will not be able to attend school with expired or missing forms.

\_\_\_\_\_ I have read the Nutrition Policy and understand what foods are not acceptable for school.

\_\_\_\_\_ I am aware of the conference dates listed on the school calendar and that each teacher will hold one conference only per family on the specified days.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that SWMA reserves the right to hold any documents for students with outstanding balances.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that if I choose to withdraw my child at any point in the year, my balance will be due for the remainder of the year and SWMA reserves the right to fill the spot in the classroom.

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand and support the phase in process. (children under 5 only)

\_\_\_\_\_ I understand that I am considered late if I arrive 15 minutes after my child's scheduled pick up time. I understand that it is **my responsibility to pay** the late fee associated with my oldest enrolled child's pick up time.