



dubuque **montessori** school

a parent-run, not-for-profit corporation

2605 Pennsylvania Avenue

Dubuque, IA 52001

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Parent Handbook

Updated August 2025

Mission Statement

The mission of Dubuque Montessori School is to bring together children of all social, economic, and cultural backgrounds in an atmosphere that encourages children to develop to their fullest potential, using proven, child-directed Montessori methods and materials in a warm, nurturing, safe, and loving environment.

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Dubuque Montessori School

Since 1968 Dubuque Montessori School has provided thousands of children with the learning tools needed to build a solid foundation for future growth, development, and success. Dubuque Montessori School is a parent-run, not-for-profit organization composed of parents of children attending Dubuque Montessori School. Parents elect their own representatives to the board of directors, which in conjunction with the Montessori trained administrator and teaching staff make important decisions regarding the school.

Board meetings are held monthly and are open to all. Time and date of upcoming meetings are posted in the monthly newsletter and are typically held the second Monday of the month at 6:15pm at the school.

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Affiliation and Licensing

Dubuque Montessori School is a licensed preschool and childcare center through the Iowa Department of Human Services. Dubuque Montessori School is a member of the Dubuque Child Care Alliance, the Montessori Institute of America, and the National Child Care Association.

Non-Discrimination Policy

Dubuque Montessori School admits children of any gender, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to children at school. It does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admission policies, scholarships, and other school administered programs. This notice is included pursuant to the regulations of the Internal Revenue Service relating to tax exempt entities.

Inclusive Policy

At Dubuque Montessori School, our aim is to provide every child, regardless of ability, language, or health needs with the opportunity to learn and socialize in a safe, peaceful environment. Our teaching staff and director will work together with parents, caregivers, and specialists to provide as much support

as possible to each child to help them develop to their fullest potential while at Dubuque Montessori School. We will achieve this by:

- DMS staff receive continuous training through networks such as Childcare Resource and Referral and Iowa Health and Human Services to support diverse needs of children.
- DMS staff provide an individualized Montessori style of teaching to children which is focused on recognizing their delays and strengths and building on that throughout the year. Children will be provided a variety of materials and activities to work with both independently and with others to aid in their development.
- The child's needs in the environment is also recognized and staff will make as many adaptations and accommodations as possible that are necessary to support their learning and development.
- Children will be taught skills to develop positive social relationships and feel a sense of independence and belonging in their community.
- DMS teaching staff and director will work together by partnering with specialists such as Keystone AEA, Unified Therapy, physicians, therapists, etc. to support children.
- DMS teaching staff and director will conduct regular meetings as deemed necessary, provide resources, and communicate any necessary information to give as much support as possible to parents and caregivers.
- Children's assessments, care plans (IEP, IFSP, health plans, etc), and any other necessary documents are kept in child's file and can be provided as necessary to aid in the transition to the child's next school.

Unlimited Access

In accordance with the Department of Human Services Licensing Standards Section 109.5, all parents shall be afforded unlimited access to their children and to the provider caring for their children during the center's hours of operation or whenever their children are in the care of a provider, unless parental contact is prohibited by court order. The provider shall inform all parents of this policy in writing at the time the child is admitted to the center.

School Hours

Dubuque Montessori School opens for extended care at 7:15am and closes at 5:30pm Monday through Friday, unless the last child leaves before 5:30. Our Toddler class time is from 9am-11am and our 3-5 year morning class time is from 9am-11:30am. Our 3-5 year afternoon class time is from 12:45pm-3:00pm.

Translation

DMS strives to accommodate the language needs of families we serve. Please contact the office if you need help translating any information. We will use the following resources to help – The Multicultural Family Center and Child Care Resource and Referral Language Line.

DMS se esfuerza por adaptarse a las necesidades lingüísticas de las familias a las que prestamos servicios. Comuníquese con la oficina si necesita ayuda para traducir cualquier información. Utilizaremos los siguientes recursos para ayudar: The Multicultural Family Center and Child Care Resource and Referral Language Line.

Montessori Philosophy

Dubuque Montessori School, Inc. (further referred to as DMS) was founded on the principals of Dr. Maria Montessori—physician and educator. She advocated the theory that children develop according to natural law and that they have special periods of sensitivity to aid them in the development of life. She urged that these sensitive periods be utilized to the fullest by giving the children the opportunity to develop their capabilities within a carefully prepared environment. She warned that no amount of good teaching would help the child if given at the wrong time. Every sensitive period of development prepares them for the next, and if children are properly prepared in one period, they are more able to fully develop their capabilities in later periods. This understanding of the child's development is the basis for the design of the Montessori materials, which are educational materials designed to provide the child with hands-on experiences with practical activities and cultural and academic concepts. Through generous contributions and continued fundraising efforts, Dubuque Montessori is very fortunate to have state-of-the-art Montessori materials in each of its classrooms.

Fundamental to all of Dr. Montessori's ideas is respect for the child and for their ability to learn. Montessori was unique in her view of the child as more than merely a yet-to-be grown adult. She taught us that...

"We ought not to consider the child and the adult merely as successive phases in the individual's life. We ought rather to look upon them as two different forms of human life, going on at the same time and exerting upon one another a reciprocal influence."

Just as the child is dependent upon the adult for protection and care, Montessori saw the adult as being dependent upon the child for hope for the future.

"Humanity can hope for a solution to it's problems, the most urgent of which are those of peace and unity, only by turning its attention and energies to the discovery of the child and the development of the great potentiality of the human personality in the course of its construction."

Dr. Montessori called her schools "houses for children." They are places designed with respect for the child. Their design is specific to the social and developmental needs of the child. The adults who build them must have a careful eye to "see through the child's eyes" and in the process of doing so appeal to the child's sense of order and beauty and to his physical capabilities. She saw education as a natural

process, which develops spontaneously in the prepared environment. Dr. Montessori described her method as "an aid to life."

At Dubuque Montessori School, we are committed to the practical application of these ideas by providing an educational environment for the preschool child. We are a community of families dedicated to the discovery of the child.

Goals of Montessori Teaching

The teacher works with individual children, introduces materials, and gives guidance. One of his/her primary tasks is careful observation of each child in order to determine his/her needs and to gain knowledge needed to prepare the environment to aid the child's growth. The method of teaching is indirect in that the teacher neither imposes upon the child as in direct teaching nor abandons the child as a non-directive permissive approach. Rather, the teacher is constantly alert to the direction in which the child has indicated he/she wishes to go and the teacher actively seeks ways to help the child accomplish their goals.

The principal goals of Montessori learning are as follows:

- To respond to a child's intellectual interests so that they may develop to their full capacity within a scientifically prepared learning environment.
- To maintain respect for the individual child's learning ability and thus enable them from their earliest years to deal with the challenges of life and to develop a love of learning.
- To recognize that the most productive learning period in life is between birth and six years of age, and thus utilize the enormous flexibility of these learning years.
- To instill the value of self-education and to direct the child's creative energy into meaningful paths of learning.
- To encourage self-discipline, self-knowledge, and independence, as well as enthusiasm for learning, an organized approach to problem-solving and academic skills.

Montessori Classroom

The child is free to move about the classroom at will, to talk to other children, to work with any equipment whose purpose he understands, or to ask the teacher to introduce new material. Children are not permitted to disturb other children at work or to abuse the equipment that is so important to their development.

A Montessori classroom is a prepared environment divided into the following areas:

The **Practical Life** area has two types of activities: those that teach the children to care for themselves and activities that teach the child to care for the environment. The direct aim of these activities is to teach the child order, concentration, coordination, and independence.

The **Sensorial** area contains materials which help the child to develop discrimination and classification skills. These materials assist the natural process of the child's mind to receive impressions of the environment through the senses.

The **Mathematics** area introduces the child to quantity, then the symbols 1 - 10. The next step is teen and tens. By using beads and number cards the child learns the basis for the decimal system. It is a gradual process of working with many materials in addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division that will lead to total abstraction.

The **Language** area is composed of specially designed materials which assist the child in his natural development of writing and reading skills. They are broken down into components and distributed according to the natural powers of the child.

The **Science** area is closely related to all other areas in the classroom. Hands-on experiments will allow the children to observe and draw their own conclusions. The children will also delve into the study of animals: their habitats and their classifications, such as non-living, living, plants or animals, vertebrates and invertebrates.

The **Geography** area begins with the study of the globe with its land and water masses, continents, countries, and cultures. Materials include the globe with color-coded continents, maps, and clay models of land and water forms. Cultures are studied through pictures, foods, music, and artifacts.

The **History** area provides a concrete presentation of the past and is accomplished through work with timelines relating to the child's own day and life as well as famous holidays or individuals, non-human and human time periods.

In addition to in-depth explorations and the various areas of the Montessori classroom, **Art, Music, and Movement** are also offered daily. **Yoga, Spanish, and Sign Language** are introduced a few times a week and can be practiced daily throughout the classroom.

Anti-bias Education

As we provide very well-rounded learning experiences, it is difficult to make most holidays meaningful for the young children we serve ages 2-5. Most holidays are religious and based on concepts that are beyond the young child's understanding. Within your family you have the opportunity to involve your child in the aspects of holidays you feel are in keeping with your personal family beliefs, values, and traditions. We feel it is most effective for us to expose children to information and activities that you might not have the time or resources to facilitate as a family, therefore we have developed an anti-bias approach to educating our young children.

Because children live in a diverse and complex world, they interact daily with people different from themselves. By using an anti-bias approach, children can develop and strengthen their self and group identities, while interacting respectfully with others in a multicultural environment. The goal is to help children to become sensitive to issues of bias, race, age, physical or mental ability, etc., and to develop anti-bias skills.

The following is a list of the celebrations Dubuque Montessori School incorporate into our curriculum throughout the year:

- September: World Peace Day.
- October: Focus on autumn activities.
- November: Focus on being thankful and giving.
- December: Multicultural celebration - a "feastival" - provide foods from different cultures, a celebration of all. Focus on winter activities.
- January: New Year and celebrate historical people.
- February: Celebrate love, friendship, and random acts of kindness. Celebrate famous people (continued).
- March: Celebrate reading month.
- April: Earth month: flowers, spring, and new birth.
- May: Promote grace and courtesy; end the year with a school-wide tea party.

Our goal is to, in an age-appropriate way, awaken and broaden a child's horizon through an anti-bias curriculum. In the 2017/2018 school year, DMS began a Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) initiative. We reached out to families in the community and at DMS and held a meeting for anyone that wanted to attend to discuss ways DMS could incorporate more DEI curriculum into our classrooms. DMS implemented DEI into our curriculum in 2019. If any families wish to share anything they believe would be valuable in helping us fulfill our mission to be more diverse, equitable, and inclusive in our classrooms and/or for a parent education evening, please contact the Director. We would be very happy for any help!

Programs

Dubuque Montessori School is licensed for 90 children between our four classrooms with children ages 2 years through 5 years.

Toddler Program

Designed for two and very young threes, this program offers socialization and formal learning experiences in a fun and happy setting for the young child. It utilizes gross motor coordination activities, singing, stories, and presentations of Montessori Materials in the area of Practical Life, Sensorial and Pre-Mathematics. A smaller adult to child ratio allows optimum interaction in preparation for the Montessori primary Program. We have up to 12 students with three teachers in the classroom – one lead teacher and two assistant teachers.

Montessori Primary Program

This program helps the child build a foundation for a life of creative learning. It is designed for children three to five years of age, including kindergarten. The Montessori prepared environment is filled with a sequence of activities ranging from simple to complex, leading to the development of order, self-discipline, concentration, initiative, coordination, and independence. The core curriculum areas of

Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, History, Geography and Science are enhanced by activities in Art, Music, and Movement.

Our Primary program has a maximum of 20 children for the five-day AM and All-Day classrooms and a maximum of 16 children for the three-day AM program. Each classroom has two staff – one lead teacher and one assistant teacher. Classroom volunteers are needed! Please let your child's teacher know if you are interested in being a volunteer in the classroom. All classroom volunteers will need a background check and need to be fingerprinted.

Extended-Day Program

The Extended-Day Program is designed for children and families who need a loving and stimulating environment beyond that of the designated class time. Children who join us for Extended-Day will have endless opportunities to delve into art, dramatic play, large motor activities, singing, movement stories and games, only to mention a few. Extended-Day is a home away from home and is available for all enrolled children. The hours are before class 7:30am-9:00am and after class until 5:30pm. Hot lunch is served daily and is included in the 1½-hour lunch block extended care from 11:30am-1:00pm. Please refer to the DMS Extended Day Policy brochure for rules, rates, etc. Space is limited so please call to schedule your child. You will be billed weekly for the use of Extended-Day.

Entrance Requirements

Children two to five years of age are accepted at Dubuque Montessori School without regard to ethnic, social, or religious background. Children will be enrolled as openings are available. A waiting list is established and filled with preference given to siblings of children already in attendance at DMS and to children of optimal enrollment age (younger than four). This policy provides for continuity of enrollment which enhances each child's experience in a Montessori environment. Montessori is designed for cycles of three years. Children who attend the full cycle receive greater rewards than those attending only one.

Tuition and Fees

A non-refundable registration fee of \$50 (\$40 for returning students) must accompany all registration contracts. The tuition for Dubuque Montessori School is an academic year fee which is prorated in nine installments with the first installment due at the time of registration. The last month's (May) tuition is due at the time of registration and is only refundable if written notice is given prior to July 1st of the upcoming school year. Monthly installments are due thereafter August through April, by the 5th of the month. A \$10.00 late charge is assessed on all overdue accounts. August's tuition will be prorated for the number of days your child will be in class.

For children beginning mid-year, Registration Contracts require the accompaniment of all fees as well as the first and last month's tuition.

In an effort to continue to employ top professionals and reduce staff turnover, our staff is contracted based on full enrollment. For this reason, DMS is unable to make tuition adjustments because of weather related school cancellations, child vacations and/or illness. We are also unable to refund May's tuition if a child withdraws mid-year.

In the event of a *continued, prolonged school closure*, a 50% tuition reimbursement will be given in the month when the following conditions are met:

- If 5-day classes close 15 or more consecutive days
- If 3-day classes close 9 or more consecutive days
- If 2-day classes close 6 or more consecutive days

Automatic Deduction of Payments

Parents are encouraged to enroll in Tuition Express which will allow DMS to automatically withdraw payments from a checking or savings account or credit card for tuition, extended care, and lunch block. Once enrolled, you will remain enrolled each year your child is enrolled in our school. At the point you would no longer like to have payments automatically withdrawn, please submit written notice to the office to be kept in your file. All information is kept confidential.

The payment schedule is as follows:

- Monthly tuition will be taken out 1st of the month. If the 1st falls on a weekend, it will be processed the following Monday.
- Prorated tuition for August needs to be paid by check or cash.
- Extended care and lunch block payments will be taken out each Monday afternoon for the time used the previous week.

Forms

Upon admission to DMS the following forms must be submitted in accordance with the Department of Human Services Licensing Standards before a child may begin:

- Registration Contract
- Parental Emergency Medical Consent Form
- Child History
- Student Medical Form-Completed and signed by a physician
- Iowa Department of Public Health Certificate of Immunization
- Parent/School Agreement
- Travel & Activity & Media Release Form
- Permission to Apply Sunscreen
- Signed statement acknowledging receipt of the Dubuque Montessori Parent Handbook

Child Withdrawal Policy

Voluntary withdrawal of a child from Dubuque Montessori School after registration requires written notification by July 1 to receive a refund of May's tuition deposit. The registration fee is non-refundable.

Withdrawal of a child after July 1st and after the commencement of the program requires a thirty-day in advance written notification to be released from further tuition obligations.

Orientation

In Montessori schools all over the world, it has been found that a careful orientation period produces effective and longer lasting adjustment for the Montessori Child. New students to DMS or returning students that are going to be in a different classroom will be given the chance to come in before the first day of school for a Welcome Conference with their teacher. Any important information that will help the teacher take better care of your child should be discussed at this time. If you think you need extra time and/or a more private meeting with the teacher, please let him/her know upon the time they contact you to set up the Welcome Conference. Teachers will begin setting welcome conferences up when they come back after mid-August.

A Parent Orientation evening is held early in the school year. The program includes the introduction of staff, review of policies and procedures and a discussion of the rights and responsibilities of parents and staff as well as an introduction to the Montessori materials and methodology. Please refer to the school calendar for when this is scheduled.

Arrival and Dismissal

Classroom hours for the Toddlers are 9am-11am. Classroom hours for the Primary Program (3-5) are 9am-11:30am or 12:45pm-3:00pm. During arrival (8:55-9:05) or (12:40-12:50) children enrolled in the Primary Program will enter through the front door. Using our car line is strongly encouraged. Simply pull up in line right in front of the steps and we will greet your child at your car and escort them into school. **Please do not get out of the car if you are in the car line or leave your car running and unattended.** This is very important to keep everyone safe. If you prefer to walk your child in, please park in the lower lot and walk your child up the sidewalk to the brick patio to wait for a teacher to receive them. If your child is enrolled in the Toddler Program, drop off is at the lower-level entrance. Follow the same car line procedure in the lower-level parking lot. If you choose to walk your child to the door, please park in a designated parking stall in the lower lot.

During dismissal, parents should pick their children up no later than five minutes after dismissal time. This practice is for the child's peace of mind as well as the smooth operation of the program. For your convenience, you can pick your child up in the same manner that he/she was dropped off. Pull up in line right in front of the steps and we will escort the first two vehicle's children to their cars. (Staffing in the Toddler Room only allows the teacher to bring out one child at a time.) Those two vehicles will then pull up just past the steps to the little library box and the parent/guardian will get out to secure the child in their car seat. **Staff are not permitted to secure buckles on car seats.** This "two at a time" dismissal procedure has proven to run smoothly and efficiently as long as the rules are followed. If the teacher needs to talk with you, you will be asked to pull up farther past the little library. If you need to speak with the teacher and it will take longer than a couple minutes, please let him/her know and arrangements can be made for after dismissal time. Again, if you wish to walk to pick up your child, we ask that you park in the lower lot and walk up to wait by our brick patio. Teachers will bring your child to you when it is deemed safe. We will also go over arrival and dismissal routines at our annual Parent Orientation.

We ask that you respect the authorized arrival and dismissal times. The time needed before and after class is valuable time for the teachers to prepare. If you have a conflict and need early drop off or late

pick-up, please call and we can make arrangements for your child to join us for some fun in Extended-Day.

Please note that your child will not be released to an unauthorized person without your written or verbal permission. Written notice of car-pool arrangements should be sent to school. Any changes in pick-up plans (even for one day) must be made known. A note pinned to your child's clothing, email, or phone call is acceptable.

Objects Brought to and from School

Your child is encouraged to bring appropriate books and nature and cultural items or other related educational materials to school to share. **Toys can be a distraction and should be left at home.**

If your child inadvertently brings home objects from DMS please send them back to school immediately. Do not confront your child, simply state that this belongs to school and should be returned. Our Montessori equipment has many pieces and is self-correcting. If one piece is missing, we remove it from the classroom. The missing piece generally means it is no longer self-correcting and it becomes confusing and frustrating for the child.

Communications

We believe strongly that the parents and staff working together maximize the child's Montessori experience. Our teachers are available to you during drop off and pick up if there is just a quick conversation you need to have; if you need more time, they are always available to set up a meeting. Our administrator is available daily between the hours of 8:45am and 3:00pm. If you need to speak to the administrator outside those times, that can definitely be arranged. If you have something of a sensitive nature that needs to be addressed, we ask that you not discuss it in the presence of the child or the presence of the other children. A conference or informal chat can be arranged by contacting the administrator or leaving a message for the instructor. We are happy to meet with parents anytime a need arises.

In 2019, DMS made the decision to send most of our communications electronically. The Parent Survey results indicate that most parents appreciate not having so many pieces of paper sent home every week. We are certain that the trees appreciate it too! Your child's teacher will provide you with their work email address so you can communicate efficiently that way if desired. Your child's teacher will be sending all weekly newsletters and any other important classroom notes via email. The office will be sending lunch menus, monthly DMS newsletter, fundraising info, upcoming event reminders, and any other pertinent information through email and also on our website. If you want to receive paper communication, simply let the office know and we will have you sign an "Opt Out" of electronic communication form to keep on file. Billing statements will also be sent out electronically. You can also choose to opt out of receiving electronic billing statements. A signature will be required to receive paper bills and that will be kept on file as well.

Your child's DMS mail bag is another important method of communication for the parents and teachers! This will be sent home weekly and will contain things such as work done by your child and/or important notes that were not sent electronically. 3- and 5-day toddler and 3–5-year-old classes will bring mail

bags home on Wednesdays and should bring them back the next day they are in school. 2-day toddler class will send mail bags home on Thursday and children should bring it back on Friday. Parents can use the mail bag to send things too! Notes for teachers, tuition payments, any supplies that need to be replenished (diapers, change of clothes, etc.), or certain forms office needs. Teachers will check mail bags when they are returned for any important things from you.

DMS strives to maintain great communication with our families. We believe that this is key to keeping things running smoothly and to help solve any problems before they get out of hand. Please let us know immediately if you feel we are not providing you with this.

Conferences

Conferences will be held twice per school year as indicated on the current school calendar. You will receive a conference invitation form, which you will send back indicating specific times that you are available, or you will receive an electronic sign-up link. The school will then send you confirmation of the date and time for your conference. Conferences are intended to be a time of sharing. You are encouraged to bring your questions and observations of your child's Montessori experience to the conference. We believe strongly that conferences are an opportunity to cement the home-school partnership, coordinating approaches to encourage the child. Again, we are happy to meet with parents any time a need arises; it is not necessary to wait for conferences. Simply let your teacher and/or the administrator know.

Parent Involvement

You are encouraged to become actively involved in the many activities at DMS. Each year, several events are scheduled to help strengthen the link between home and school. We are always looking for interested parents to enhance our program. If you or someone you know would like to share a profession, hobby, or talents with us, we appreciate any contributions of time and talents.

In-Service Days

A number of in-service days are scheduled each year. These dates are noted on the school calendar, and reminders will be noted on the weekly classroom newsletters, marquee, and via email. In-service days are a valuable tool used by our staff to increase our professional knowledge. These are used to visit other schools, attend educational workshops, and do team building.

Weather Conditions and Cancellation Policy

In the event that the Dubuque Community Schools have canceled school for the day due to weather related reasons, Dubuque Montessori School will be closed. Listen to your radio on days of questionable weather. KDTH AM or KAT FM announces school cancellations every nine minutes in the morning. The administrator will send out a text and email to families in the event of a cancellation as well. To get text and email notifications from the Dubuque Community School District, search Iowa School Alerts on the internet and follow the prompts. If you have other children in the Dubuque Community Schools, you are automatically signed up for these alerts.

In the event that the Dubuque Community Schools have announced late arrival or early dismissal, **Dubuque Montessori School will start on schedule.** It is at the discretion of the parents to determine if they can safely get their children to DMS. When the weather becomes severe and businesses are closing early, DMS may also close to ensure the safety of the children and our staff. If this happens you will be notified and asked to pick your child up provided you can make it here safely.

Clothing

Play clothes are appropriate and recommended at Dubuque Montessori School. We guarantee that the children will get dirty. The children should not be fearful of ruining their clothing as this inhibits their eagerness to explore and express themselves.

A child learns self-respect through self-mastery. Help your child by choosing clothing that can be mastered with ease. Roomy coats, larger zippers and buttons, elastic pants and Velcro are just a few things to look for when choosing your child's clothing.

Always dress your child appropriately for outside weather. During cold weather it is important to send your child in boots, hat, and mittens, and also to send along a pair of shoes or slippers for indoors. **All outer clothing should be labeled with your child's name.** With around 70 children passing through our doors and many with identical clothing items it is very easy to get things mixed up.

Please send a complete change of clothing in a shoe box sized container or a zip-lock bag labeled with your child's name. The school does have extra clothing in case of an emergency; however, the children generally feel more comfortable changing into their own clothes. If your child is sent home in our clothing, please wash and return it as soon as possible.

If your child has an accident at school, soiled items will be placed in a plastic bag. For sanitary reasons, the Department of Human Services Licensing Standards prohibits us from further handling soiled clothing. For this reason, we apologize that items will not be rinsed out.

Outdoor Education/Indoor and Outdoor Physical Activity Policy

The preschool experience is enriched by time spent outdoors. Our children spend time outdoors developing their gross motor skills, socializing in a manner different than that within the classroom and observing nature. Our outside experiences are an integral part of the education we provide.

Physical activities play an important role in the health and development of all children. Our program is committed to providing children with opportunities to move throughout the day. As weather allows, we strive to have children outdoors for at least 20 minutes per class time and 30 minutes after lunch. During rain, icy conditions, poor air quality, or dangerous heat or cold, children stay indoors, but get the same amount of physical activity doing large gross motor activities led by the teachers. Our parameter for outdoor activities is above 15 degrees F wind-chill, as determined by the National Weather Service. We will go outside, however briefly, if the weather conditions are above the wind-chill limit and it is not raining or snowing too hard to stay dry. Winter months require that the children come to school with snow pants, coats, boots, hats, and mittens or gloves.

We never manage challenging behavior by taking away scheduled or promised physical activity or removing children from physical activities for more than a couple minutes to “cool off” or to talk with a teacher about making better choices.

We do realize that it sometimes might be advisable to keep a child indoors after an illness; however, we do not have the extra staff needed to keep a child indoors during outdoor playtime. **For this reason, we ask that you give your child the time needed to recover until he/she is free to join us outdoors.**

Playground Safety Policy

All staff at Dubuque Montessori are required to attend our annual playground safety meeting that takes place before school starts. We will review playground policies that cover safety, playground zones, fall surfacing, daily, weekly and monthly inspections, active supervision, staff to child ratio, accidents, active outdoor play and engaging with children, and maintenance of equipment. Staff will sign a document each year stating they have reviewed playground policies. Any staff that miss the meeting or start later in the year will be trained individually by the director and/or assistant director.

We will comply with U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) Playground Safety handbook and Caring for our Children (CFOC) handbooks regarding the outdoor play space, fixed play structures, and any equipment that requires assembly. All playground equipment is installed according to the manufacturer's instructions including anchoring. Information and instructions for playground equipment (both anchored and non-anchored) is kept on file.

We use playground grade (non-chromated copper arsenate) wood mulch for our fall surfacing. Fall surfacing is maintained to meet depth/height requirements as stated in the CFOC handbook Appendix Z. We maintain fall surfacing by measuring the depth during our daily playground checklist. If it is not adequate, we rake it to meet qualifications and add more as needed.

Staff are trained to keep an eye out at all times for any potential playground hazards. For routine, we have daily, weekly and monthly inspections to spot any hazards on the playground. If a hazard is found, but cannot immediately be fixed by the staff member, the issue will be reported to the director or assistant director, who in turn will either fix the issue, or in cases when we cannot fix the issue ourselves, find a qualified person to do so.

Here are examples of what we look for when we do daily, weekly, and monthly playground checks-

Daily inspections done for:

- Trash (various litter, broken bottles, cigarette butts), broken toys, insect nests or animals
- Fall surfacing is at the required depth for all play zones and surfacing is not packed under frequently used equipment such as slides and swings.
- Missing or broken parts
- Hazardous protrusions
- Trip hazards

Weekly and Monthly inspections done for:

- Rust and chipping or peeling paint
- Sharp edges, splinters, and rough surfaces
- Stability of handholds
- Visible cracks
- Stability of non-anchored large play equipment
- Wear and deterioration
- Fence, benches, or sign damage
- Drainage issues

Playground inspection logs are kept in a playground safety binder.

Nutrition and the Child and Adult Care Food Program

We are committed to providing healthy foods and beverages, positive mealtimes, and nutrition education for our students. We achieve this by participating in the Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and by having mealtimes be an extension of the Montessori classroom by encouraging good manners and courtesy during snack and lunch. Snacks are served in each of our classes daily. Snack consists of 2% milk or 100% juice and a serving of nutritious food which may include cereal, bagels, fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, crackers, pretzels, and cheese. Snacks are served self-serve to encourage child's independence. Children are encouraged but never forced to eat. For children who are with us after their scheduled class time, a snack is also served mid-afternoon around 2:30pm.

For children who join us over the lunch hour, lunch menus are sent home monthly, and are also posted in the main lobby, downstairs, kitchen and each classroom. Our lunches and snacks meet or exceed the standards as set forth by the CACFP. Teachers and children eat lunch together and meals are served family style so children can learn and practice table skills. Children are encouraged to serve themselves and try new foods. Teachers never force or bribe children to eat any particular foods or to clean their plates. Teachers talk with children frequently during lunch time about healthy habits, healthy foods and check in with them about hunger and fullness. If at any time your child requires a diet different than what we serve, a written statement needs to be submitted by you or your child's physician and must include the date, specific diet change needed, medical diagnosis specified indicating the need for food variation and the time frame involved.

Example: Charlie needs to drink only rice milk because of possible milk allergy. This needs to be in effect October 1, 2021, through October 31, 2021.

We ask that no outside food be brought in for snacks (except for a special birthday treat meeting nutrition guidelines), or lunch, unless medically required and/or approved by the administrator.

Dubuque Montessori School participates in the U.S. Department of Agriculture's federally subsidized food program. It is administered through the Iowa Office of Education's Child and Adult Care Food Program. As participants in this program, DMS staff participate in nutrition training of at least two hours every year. As CACFP participants, DMS also receives reimbursement for qualifying snacks and lunches served to the children. We are required to keep on file family income verification forms for each family. If your income is over the limits set by the Department it need not be listed; however, the form should still be signed and returned. Your cooperation in releasing this information is vital to the success of this program. If your income falls within the guidelines, you qualify for either reduced .40 or free hot lunch. Please be assured all information is kept confidential. Income verification forms are updated annually in the fall.

In accordance with Federal law and U.S. Department of Agriculture policy, this institution is prohibited from discriminating on the basis of race, color, national origin, sex, age, or disability. To file a complaint of discrimination, write:

***USDA Director, Office of Civil Rights,
Room 326-W Whitten Building
1400 Independence Avenue, SW
Washington, DC 20250-9410***

You may also call (202) 720-5964.

Oral Health Policy

We care about the health of children's teeth. Tooth decay is one of the most common childhood illnesses. To help children stay happy and healthy, and avoid the discomfort and expense of tooth decay, Dubuque Montessori School follows the practices below.

- We rarely or never offer sugary foods like candy, cookies, cakes, or ice cream. We ask parents to only send healthy treats for birthdays or celebrations such as fresh fruit and vegetables, cheese, whole grain crackers, or yogurt.
- We follow CACFP guidelines and offer the children only recommended healthy food and beverages for snacks and meals.
- We never offer sugary drinks such as soda, fruit drinks, or flavored milk. We limit servings of 100% juice to twice per week.
- We do not use sippy cups unless circumstances require them.
- Water is freely available to children at all times.
- Age-appropriate oral health lessons are implemented in the teacher's lessons throughout the year and teachers take advantage of any "teachable moments" about dental hygiene when they can. Activities and lessons include, but are not limited to- teeth-brushing, cavities/germs in mouth, healthy foods and the food groups.
- When funding is possible, a dental hygienist will visit and meet with each child with parental consent.

Along with what you do at home and what we do at school to promote healthy dental hygiene, it is recommended by the American Academy of Pediatric Dentistry for children to start going to the dentist around the age of 1 or within 6 months of getting their first tooth. Information regarding your child's dentist is required and kept on file in case of a dental emergency. If you need help locating a dentist in the area, we have a list of resources in the office. In the event of a dental emergency (i.e. tooth getting knocked out or chipped, bitten lip or tongue), the staff will assess the situation and respond using guidelines from our Emergency Preparedness Plan that they have been trained on.

At this time, we do not have the extra staffing to support having the children brush their teeth after having snacks and lunch, but children are encouraged to rinse their mouths out with water after eating. We encourage you to have your children brush their teeth as soon as possible when they get home with fluoride toothpaste. If you have any questions about our oral health policy or want more information on oral health for your child, please contact the office.

Sunscreen Policy

Skin cancer is now considered an epidemic throughout the nation by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. For these reasons, Dubuque Montessori School has established a Sun Protection Policy. The policy is as follows:

- For all outdoor activities occurring between 10:00am and 4:00pm during the months of March through October children will:
- Have applied a SPF 30 or greater broad-spectrum, water-resistant sunscreen to exposed skin thirty minutes before going outdoors.
- Be encouraged to play in shaded areas.
- Be encouraged to wear a four inch or wider brimmed hat which will create a shadow that covers the head, face, nose, ears, and neck if provided.
- Be encouraged to wear sunglasses that protect 100% of UVA & UVB if provided.
- Dubuque Montessori School will provide sunscreen of at least 30 SPF and apply it to children's exposed skin areas prior to outdoor play. If parents wish to send their own brand of sunscreen, that will be indicated on the sunscreen permission form and supplied to the school. Parents must sign the Permission Slip to Apply Sunscreen and present it to Dubuque Montessori School. If there is a medical reason that the child cannot have sunscreen, a doctor's note needs to be given to the office.
- Parents who wish for their children to wear a hat and/or sunglasses will provide them daily and have them labeled with names.
- While on duty, personnel are encouraged to practice sun safety principles to serve as positive role models for the children.

Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating each child's birthday with a simple ceremony in the child's classroom. Children with summer birthdays are invited to celebrate their "half birthday" during the school year with their class.

If you wish to bring a snack to celebrate your child's big day, please let your child's teacher know. Healthy individual treats such as cheese and crackers, salami or fresh fruit or vegetables are appropriate choices. Cakes and cupcakes are not acceptable for the preschool setting and the Department of Human Services Licensing Standards regarding health and nutrition. Because all families do not share the same view of what is appropriate and what is not for their young child, take home treat bags may not be distributed. In lieu of providing treat bags for the children, you may choose to donate a book or gift of materials to your child's classroom.

If you are planning a party for your child, please be sensitive to the fact that children are very sensitive and aware at this stage in their development. Therefore, party invitations must not be sent either through school mail bags or made in person at school. It isn't always feasible to invite an entire class of children to a party, but inevitably the entire class generally knows of the event if invitations or gifts are sent through school. The child who is left out doesn't understand and is left with hurt feelings.

Field Trips

Occasionally, short field trips are scheduled for the 3- to 5-year-old classes to enhance the unit of study. A signed permission slip must be on file before any child is taken on a field trip. DMS will send permission slips well in advance and no child will be allowed to attend without written permission. A separate permission slip is needed for each field trip. No child is obligated to participate; however, non-participating students must stay home the day of the event. Most field trips incur an additional but reasonable fee, but no child will be excluded for financial reasons. If cost is an issue, please contact the administrator. In order to comply with DHS standards, when transportation is needed, Dubuque Montessori will hire a bus service that will be noted on the permission slip.

Emergency Evacuation

During tornado or severe weather warnings, children and teachers will gather in the lower level. When evacuation of the building is necessary due to power/heat/cooling failure, structural, water or health hazards, all children and teachers will go to the fenced in play area if safe, otherwise to the Flora Park area. Teachers will grab all emergency medications and child emergency contact forms. Any immobile children will be carried by a staff member. If needed emergency officials and parents/guardians will be notified. When evacuations are of a prolonged length and/or weather is not tolerable to stay outside, all children and staff will proceed across the street to Irving School or in the event Irving is closed, the Flora Pool warming house. If pick-up of children is needed, parents and guardians will be notified at that time. A full copy of our staff Emergency Preparedness Plan is available upon request.

Absence Policy

When it is necessary for your child to be absent from school for any reason, please call or email the school. If your child contracts a communicable disease (chicken pox, strep throat, etc.) let us know immediately. Exposure notices will then be sent home to all of our families. Many epidemics have been prevented because of prompt reporting by parents.

If you will be taking a vacation or have any other scheduled absences, please contact the school in advance. **Remember that tuition is not subject to adjustment due to illness, travel, or school closings due to weather.**

Children and Attendance Tracking

Extended Day Program

- Any child that utilizes our extended care program will need to be signed in and out by parent/guardian on our extended day sign-in/sign-out sheet kept by extended day entrance door. Parent/guardian will note the time of drop-off and pick-up under the date and sign their name.
- Children utilizing morning extended care will be signed out by a staff member when transported to class and signed in by staff member when leaving class and joining afternoon extended care.

Class Attendance

- Children arriving for class time will be signed in on attendance tracking form by a staff member in the classroom when either arriving from extended care or being dropped off by a parent/guardian. If a child participates in both morning and afternoon classes, they will be signed in for both.
- **Please call or email the office and teacher to notify us of absences and late arrivals for your child.** If a child has not arrived at the scheduled time within one hour and there has been no communication about the child's absence, we will contact parent/guardian.

Health Policies

For your child to derive the greatest benefit from classroom experience, adequate rest is a must. If your child is up late at night for special reasons it may be to his/her advantage to stay home and catch up on his/her rest.

Parents are asked to use discretion when sending their child to school. Children should not be brought to school (even if they seem normal or well) if during the previous 24 hours they have exhibited any of the following symptoms:

- Temperature of 100.4 degrees or more
- Vomiting or diarrhea
- Unusual or unexplained rash
- Unusual or severe coughing

Should your child become ill while at Dubuque Montessori School, we will isolate him/her in a quiet area. We will then contact the parents and if unsuccessful, we will contact those that you have listed on your emergency consent form. Children who are ill should be picked up as soon as possible. Should your child vomit, have a fever of at least 100 degrees, or have diarrhea more than one time while at school, you will be contacted to come get your child so they can recover quickly and/or you can get them to see a doctor if needed. If you need to come get your child for any of these reasons, please know that your child cannot come to school the next day and not until he/she is 24 hours symptom free. Even if your child does not have any of the symptoms warranting going home, we may call if we feel the child is in discomfort or may be starting to exhibit signs of an illness coming on, just so you are made aware.

Masks and face coverings are a common tool to help prevent the spread of respiratory illnesses. Children, staff, and visitors may choose to wear them at their own discretion in order to protect themselves from illness and/or when required by CDC, IDPH. We use guidance from Iowa Dept. of Public Health, HHS, and CDC for illness exclusion criteria.

In the event of a communicable illness outbreak/exposure, we consult with Iowa Department of Health and Human Services for directives on exclusions and/or follow-up care needed.

Communicable Illness Chart

Illness	Incubation	Main Symptoms	Minimum exclusion from school
Chicken pox	16-17 days	Mild symptoms and fever. Pocks and "blistering" scabs, mostly on covered parts of the body.	Until physician permits return.
Conjunctivitis (pink eye)		Red, itchy eyes, pain or discomfort, matter or discharge.	Until physician permits return.
COVID-19	2-14 days	Fever/chills, cough, shortness of breath, fatigue, muscle aches, headache, loss of taste and smell, sore throat, congestion or runny nose, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea	Consult CDC/IDPH exclusion criteria.
Diarrhea (infectious)		Runny, loose stools with or without stomach upset.	There are special exclusion rules for E.coli, shigella, and cryptosporidiosis. When diarrhea stops and health care providers and public health officials state the child may return.
Diarrhea (non-infectious)		Runny, loose stools with or without stomach upset.	If stool cannot be contained in a diaper, or if a toilet child has 2 or more loose stools in 24 hours, or blood in stool.
Diphtheria	2-5 days	Sore throat, grayish membrane in throat.	After 2 negative cultures from nose and throat 24 hours apart.
Ear Infection		Pain, redness around the ear, impaired balance or dizziness, drainage.	No exclusion necessary, but should be on antibiotics until pain subsides.
Erythema Infectiosum (5th disease)	4-14 days	Usual age 5-14 years, brief low grade fever. Erythema (slapped look on cheeks) on cheeks, rash on extremities lasting a few days to five weeks, rash seems to reappear.	None, unless the child meets other exclusion criteria.
Gastro-intestinal Virus or GI Upset		Nausea, vomiting, diarrhea.	1-2 days. Must be vomit and diarrhea free for 24 hours.
German Measles	14-21 days	Usually mild. Enlarged glands in neck and behind ears. Brief red rash.	5 days from onset of rash. Keep away from pregnant women.
Hand and Mouth	3-6 days	Sores in mouth and rash on hands and feet. Fever, and/or loss of appetite may be present.	None, unless the child meets other exclusion criteria.
Impetigo	4-10 days	Inflamed sores, with pus.	Until physician permits return.
Infectious Hepatitis	Variable- 15-50 days (average 25)	Headache, abdominal pain, nausea vomiting, usually fever. Skin and eyes may turn yellow.	14 days from onset of clinical disease, and at least 7 days from onset of jaundice.
Influenza or 'flu'	Usually 2 days, but can range 1-4	Abrupt onset of fever, chills, headache, muscle soreness, nasal discharge, sore throat, and cough are common.	2-7 days.

Lice	7 days for eggs to hatch	Lice and nits (eggs) in hair. Itchiness.	1 day after adequate treatment to kill lice and nits. If multiple treatments are given and the presence of lice/nits is still observed after a prolonged time, a recommendation to consult a physician will be given. Prescribed medication may be needed.
Measles	10 days to fever, 13-16 days to rash	Begins like a cold, fever, blotchy red rash.	7 days from onset of rash.
Meningococcal Meningitis	2-10 days (commonly 3-4)	Sore throat, grayish material in throat.	After 2 negative cultures from nose and throat 24 hours apart.
MRSA		Bump or sore that is painful, red, leaking fluid, or swollen. Rash or fluid filled blisters. Fever may be present.	None unless the child meets other exclusion criteria. Wounds should be kept covered. Do not share towels or clothing and use good hand hygiene.
Mumps	12-26 days (commonly 18)	Fever, swelling, and tenderness of glands at angle of jaw.	9 days or until swelling disappears.
Poliomyelitis	7-12 days	Fever, vomiting, headache, stiff neck, muscle soreness.	At least 14 days from onset AND with physician permission.
Ringworm of Scalp	10-14 days	Scaly patch, usually ring shaped on scalp.	Until physician permits return.
Scabies	3 days to 3 weeks	Tiny burrows in skin caused by mites.	Until physician permits return.
Strep Throat	1 to 3 days	Sore throat (white spots on throat common), fever, swollen lymph nodes, bad breath.	24 hours on antibiotics and no exclusion criteria present.
Whooping Cough	7 to 10 days	Head cold. Slight fever, cough, characteristic whoop after about 2 weeks.	5 days of antibiotics and no exclusion criteria present.

Medication Policy

Dubuque Montessori School will not administer medication, including non-prescription drugs, ointments and diaper rash creams to any child without a parent's written consent. Parent authorization must be on file for each medication.

Prescription Medication

Prescription medication must meet the following conditions:

- Medication has been prescribed by a physician and is in its original container. Label contains the child's name, name of physician, name of the drugstore where filled, prescription number, name of medication and instructions for usage and duration.
- Medication will be stored in a place inaccessible to the children. For emergency medication such as Epi-pens or inhalers, medicine will be located on a high shelf in each classroom. For other prescribed medications, medicine will be located in the main office (for upstairs classrooms) or in the kitchen first aid cupboard (for toddler classroom).
- Parents must complete and sign the Medication Release Form for each medication each month the medication is needed.
- For every day an authorization for medication is in effect and the child is in attendance, there shall be a notation by the lead teacher, administrative assistant, assistant director, or director of administration including the name of the medicine, date, time, dosage given or applied, and the initials of the person administering the medication or the reason the medication was not given.
- In the case of medications that are administered on an ongoing, long-term basis, authorization shall be obtained for a period not to exceed the duration of the prescription.

If a physician prescribes an antibiotic for anything other than ear infection, we ask that you keep the child home for 24 hours before returning to school.

Over-the-Counter Medication

We are not permitted to administer eye or ear medication or any over-the-counter product except sunscreen, lip balm, body and hand lotion, diaper cream and Vaseline.

- All of the above requires a completed Medication Release Form filled out. All products must be in original containers and labeled with the child's name.

We are unable to allow you to come into the school and administer prescription/non-prescription medication to your child that isn't documented on our Medication Release form in the event that a child might have an adverse reaction.

Supervision Policy

Supervision of the children at all times is necessary to keep them safe. We do this by maintaining the Iowa Childcare Department of Human Services Staff to Child ratio guidelines and using Active Supervision. Staff use Active Supervision to ensure our students of all ages can explore their environments safely while being engaged by staff. Active Supervision requires the environment to be

set up in a way that is safe, well organized, and has a variety of materials that the children can use appropriately and will keep them engaged.

The Active Supervision strategies below help keep both classroom and outdoor environments happy and safe.

- Set up environment. Environments should be free from clutter and items arranged so children can be visible. Materials are checked often to make sure they are in good working condition and safe.
- Position staff in ways that children can be seen at all times.
- Scan and count children often. Counting children is especially important during transitions.
- Listen. Specific sounds or the absence of them may signify reason for concern.
- Engage and redirect. Staff know each child's individual needs and development to offer support.

Anticipate children's behavior. Knowing beforehand what a child may do can be helpful in early intervention of unwanted behaviors. Staff communicate with each other about any useful information to pass on when transitioning children to different staff.

Missing Child Policy

In accordance with Iowa Department of Human Service Child Care guidelines and Caring for our Children National Resource Center Active Supervision guidelines, children are never left in a room or out on playground unattended. Parents and guardians are to contact the teacher upon drop off and pick up.

In the event that a child is suspected missing, and after a quick, but thorough search of building and outdoor areas is done, and confirmation an authorized person did not pick up, the following steps will be taken:

- Notify the director immediately or on-site supervisor if the director is not available.
- Notify the authorities by calling 911. Follow all directions given and provide them with photos of the child, what they were wearing, description of child, and when they were last seen.
- Notify the child's parents and include information of when the child was last seen.
- Remaining calm, bring any children outside in, do attendance again and lock down the building.
- Available staff should continue to search for child and notify police and parents if found.

Iowa HHS will be notified after parents and police regardless of if child is found and where last seen. An incident report will be filled out and given to HHS and kept on file at DMS.

Strangulation Prevention Policy

Eliminating strangulation hazards helps keep children safe. The following are steps taken to prevent strangulation:

- Parents will be asked to remove hood and neck strings from all children's clothing.
- String and cords long enough to encircle a child's neck will not be accessible.
- No blinds with cords, or any window treatments with tie-downs or cords will be used at DMS.
- Pacifiers attached to strings/ribbon will not be used.
- Lanyards worn by staff will be break-away style. Children shall not wear lanyards.
- Dramatic play items with handles or straps will be removed. No scarves, necklaces, etc. will be used.

Tobacco, Nicotine, and Vape Free Policy

In accordance with Iowa Department of Human Services Child Care guidelines and Iowa Department of Public Health, Dubuque Montessori School is a tobacco, nicotine, and vape free campus. At all times, tobacco, nicotine, electronic cigarettes, and vaping are prohibited both inside the school and on the grounds. This includes in staff and parent/guardian vehicles on the grounds.

Staff and students shall not wear clothing that smells of smoke while at school due to the effects it may have on others.

Bat Sighting Policy

In the event a bat is sighted in a classroom the following actions will be taken by the staff at Dubuque Montessori School:

- The children will be removed from the area where the bat has been seen. If the weather allows, the teacher will let the office know where the bat has been sighted and the class will go outside to play.
 - If the bat is found in an upper-level classroom, all three classrooms must leave the building.
 - If the bat is found in the lower level, the children and teachers from the lower level will go outside. One staff member will also close the door to the hallway and place towels or cloths under the door to seal up that opening.
 - No one is to be let into the building once the bat is discovered, and the upstairs/downstairs containment measures are specifically for students that are already on site.

- In inclement weather, the lower-level students and staff will go to an upstairs classroom. The three upstairs classrooms can go downstairs.
- Orkin or a similar bat removal service will be called to come to contain the bat.
- The director or assistant director (in absence of the director) will take the bat to Colonial Terrace to be sent to the University of Iowa Coralville Laboratory to be tested for rabies.
- The director or assistant director (in absence of the director) will consult with the Department of Public Health.
- In good weather, if we are unable to contain the bat within an hour, the director will make arrangements for children to be picked up from school.
- In inclement weather, if we are unable to contain the bat within 30 minutes, the director will make arrangements for children to be picked up from school.
- The guardian(s) of the students affected by the bat sighting will be notified of the incident at pick up time on the day it occurs. The guardian(s) will also be advised of the Department of Public Health's guidance and that, as guardian(s), they can choose to see their own doctor.
- When DMS knows the test results, the director will contact the families via email or phone. Families will be contacted via email if there is no concern. Families will be contacted via a phone call if the rabies test comes back positive.
- In the event that the child's guardian(s) chooses to vaccinate their child and the vaccinations become a financial burden, DMS will do their due diligence to help cover expenses.

Discipline/Behavior Guidelines

All children enrolled at Dubuque Montessori School are given the opportunity to discover and create in a safe environment. The staff will implement the discipline policies outlined in this handbook, which utilize the environment and a variety of techniques, and which encourage the development of the child's inner ability for self-discipline. Our staff will be positive role models for the children and are trained throughout the year, especially before school starts, on positive guidance, redirection, child self-regulation, coping skills, and problem-solving techniques to appropriately address any behavior issues. Staff receive trainings throughout the year here at DMS during professional development days and through trainings through such organizations as Child Care Resource and Referral, Iowa HHS, Iowa State Extension, American Montessori Society, and other reputable early childhood resources. State law and the Dubuque Montessori Program policies absolutely prohibit the use of any form of corporal punishment and/or physical discipline at all times. Dubuque Montessori will not remove or exclude a child from activities (i.e. time-outs) as this is not a developmentally appropriate behavior guidance technique. If multiple attempts fail to stop unwanted behavior and/or the child or other children are at risk of harm, then the child shall be removed to a quiet area to "cool down" and talk with a teacher and resume activity when they are ready.

The children are prepared to participate in the social life of the classroom through presentations in the Montessori Curriculum area of Grace and Courtesy. The environment is carefully prepared to meet the physical and emotional needs of the children and to cultivate a desire to discover, explore, and learn. It is our belief that in a setting where most of the child's needs are met most of the time, he/she will feel secure and thus act accordingly.

School ground rules are that we respect each other, the environment, and ourselves. Children causing physical harm to themselves, others, or the environment will be stopped. Disciplinary measures used by the staff are carried out in a respectful way, which helps the child develop self-control and assume responsibility for his/her actions.

If a child has difficulty adjusting to the Montessori program, a meeting will be held between the teacher and other school professionals concerned. We will discuss the situation and find alternative ways to help the child benefit from his/her Montessori experience.

Following are our discipline techniques, involuntary withdrawal prevention, and behavior communication policies:

Discipline Techniques at DMS

- Montessori presentations in Grace and Courtesy are used as an introduction to self-discipline.
- Redirection when appropriate provides the child with alternative choices of activities to avoid conflict.
- A breather is used for calming down a child whose behavior has become escalated. This is used before a situation becomes disruptive or dangerous. A breather is also used as a reminder to the child of more appropriate behavior.
- Our staff uses removal of the child from the situation when it is apparent that the child's ability for self-discipline is lacking. Removal is used automatically in cases of harmful actions towards others. Removing the child from the situation gives the child an opportunity to calm down and requires communication with the instructor, which promotes the use of verbal and problem-solving skills, recognition of and empathy for the needs of others.

In cases where further discipline techniques are required, the staff will document by means of an Incident Report and parents will be notified. Following State law and our Dubuque Montessori program policies, be assured that under no circumstance does the staff use forms of verbal abuse or corporal and physical discipline such as being struck, pulled, or shaken. Corporal and physical discipline are absolutely prohibited. RESPECT of the child is always preserved.

Suspension and/or Expulsion Prevention

It is always our goal here at DMS to prevent suspending and/or expelling children from the classroom or activities. We give children time to “normalize” to their environment, observe, perform assessments, and communicate regularly on behaviors.

If behaviors require intervention or we feel the child's needs cannot be met, the following will be done to attempt to resolve situation:

- Document and communicate concerns with family.
- Set up a meeting with family to work out an action plan
- Discuss outside services that may help (AEA, CCNC, CCR&R, etc.)
- After six weeks if a child is not successfully able to participate and meet the behavioral expectations, another meeting will be held to determine if the child's needs are best served by remaining at Dubuque Montessori School.
- If a child needs to leave our program, we will help by providing as many resources as we can (ie- CCR&R, Keystone AEA, etc).

Involuntary Withdrawal

After attempts to resolve an unwanted situation go unsuccessful, a child may be asked to leave Dubuque Montessori School based on the following:

- Child injurious to self and/or others
- Inability to adjust
- Program not meeting the specific needs of the child
- Parents are not cooperative in helping the situation
- Habitual tardiness which is disruptive to the class
- Non-payment of tuition and fees

If you encounter a family emergency and are unable to pay tuition, please see the administrator immediately. All information will be kept confidential. Occasionally funds are available through anonymous contributions for families who are going through a tough time.

Biting Policy

Perspective on Biting

Biting is a very common behavior among children birth to three years of age. Biting is a form of communication and is almost always a response to the child's needs not being met or coping with a challenge or stressor. At Dubuque Montessori School, we believe by understanding the developmental stages of the children in our care and their individual needs, we can proactively prevent many biting behaviors by the environment which we create for the children.

Common or not, we understand that children biting other children is one of the most difficult behaviors to deal with in group childcare settings. It can occur without warning, can be difficult to defend against, and provokes strong emotional responses in the biter, the victim, the families, and the caregivers involved.

For many toddlers, the biting stage is just a passing problem. Toddlers try it out as a way to get what they want from another toddler. They are in the process of learning what is socially acceptable and what is not. They discover that biting is a sure-fire way to cause the other child to drop what they are

holding so the biter can pick it up. However, they experience the disapproval of the adults nearby and eventually learn other ways of gaining possession of objects or expressing difficult feelings.

For other children, biting is a persistent and chronic problem. They may bite for a variety of reasons: teething, frustration, boredom, inadequate language skills, stress or change in the environment, feeling threatened, or feeling a sense of power.

In order to alleviate some of the triggers for biting, DMS has many practices in place that are known to help prevent incidences of biting in small children.

- Quality relationships: Staff develop nurturing relationships with the children and get to know each child individually. Staff are given many opportunities for professional development to help them learn ways to build quality relationships with the children.
- Environmental influences on child's behaviors: Children are given opportunities to work in both small and large groups; there is a variety of work and children are taught how to share "work;" the environment in a Montessori classroom is often quiet and productive which is very soothing to children; and staff are very aware of and willing to help a child that is feeling overwhelmed.
- Targeted social-emotional supports: Children have a daily routine that they follow which consists of circle time, time to pursue their own work, and snack time. Children learn early how to navigate classroom transitions in a way that helps them build confidence and alleviate stress. Staff talk about emotions/feelings through books and other work and teach strategies such as yoga to help children learn to calm themselves.

No matter what the cause, it is important to be aware of the potential problem before it happens. Therefore, Dubuque Montessori School, after consulting childcare experts and manuals, has developed the following plan of action to be used if and when biting occurs in our school.

Response to Biting

Before biting occurs:

- Upon initial enrollment or at the start of each school year, the Director will give each family a handout which addresses the issue of biting.
- Distribute the written policy "When a Child is Bitten" to all families upon enrollment.
- Create an environment which meets the developmental needs of the children. Monitor and supervise all children while working and/or playing. Redirect in situations where a potential biting incident may occur. Maintain an environment that elicits calm, thoughtful behavior.

When a child is bitten:

For the biter:

- The biter is immediately removed with no emotion, using words such as “biting is not okay – it hurts.” We will avoid any immediate response that reinforces the biting or calls attention to the biter. Caring attention will be focused on the child who was bitten.
- The biter will not be allowed to return to work/play and will be talked to on a level which he/she can understand. “I can see that you want that truck, but I can’t let you hurt him. We don’t put our teeth on people.”
- The child will be redirected to other work/play.
- Staff will complete a DMS incident report* and notify the family of the biter when the child is picked up for the day.

For the victim:

- Staff will separate the child who was bitten from the biter.
- Special attention will be given to comfort the child.
- Staff will administer appropriate first aid as follows:
 - Assess the wound and if it is bleeding, apply pressure directly to the wound, using a clean, dry cloth, until the bleeding stops.
 - Clean the bite wound with a mild soap and warm running water for approximately 3-5 minutes.
 - Rinse thoroughly, and pat dry with a clean, dry cloth.
 - Cover the wound with a clean, dry dressing.
 - Should the wound require immediate medical attention, appropriate action will be taken, and parents will be notified immediately.
- Staff will then complete a DMS incident report* to notify the family of the victim that the child has been bitten.
- Classroom staff will confer with the director to review the context of the biting incident, whether adequate supervision was present and whether the environment contributed to the biting incident. If changes in supervision and/or environment are warranted, then those changes will be implemented.

*DMS incident report is a confidential, standardized form that all staff use to document incidents that happen at school such as first aid notification, child wellness reports, etc. in which pertinent information must be recorded for school records as well as to communicate with parents.

When biting continues:

- Classroom staff will meet with the director on a routine basis for advice, support and strategy planning.
- Staff will chart every occurrence, including attempted bites, and indicate location, time, participants, behaviors, staff present, and circumstances.
- Staff will “shadow” children who indicate a tendency to bite, to:
 - Head off biting situations before they occur.
 - Teach non-biting responses to situations and reinforce appropriate behavior.
 - Adapt the program to better fit the individual child’s needs.
 - Teach responses to potential biting situations: “Stop” or “That hurts!”
- Staff will work together as partners with the parents of both biting children and frequent victims to keep all informed and develop a joint strategy for change.
- Teachers will hold a conference with the parents of the biting child to develop a written plan of action. Schedule follow-up meetings or telephone conversations as needed.
- Teachers will consider early transition of a child “stuck” in a biting behavior pattern for a change of environment, if developmentally appropriate.
- Prepare the parents of the biting child for the possibility that the child may have to be removed from DMS and help them to make contingency plans.
- If it is deemed in the best interest of the child, center, and other children, terminate the child from DMS for the duration of the biting stage. Written warning will be given to the families before this action is taken.

Biting Confidentiality

In compliance with NAEYC (National Association for the Education of the Young Child) confidentiality guidelines, DMS staff will maintain complete confidentiality of all children involved when notifying parents that their child has been bitten or bit another child.

Incident/Accident Reporting Policy

Incidents/accidents involving a child, including injuries or behavioral concerns, will be reported to the parent/guardian on the day of the incident/accident with one of our incident/accident forms written by a staff member who observed the incident/accident describing the event and signed by the director or on-site supervisor. A copy will be made of the report. The original will be signed and dated by the parent/guardian that day and kept in the child's file. The copy will go home with the parent/guardian. If the parent/guardian will not be picking up that day, a phone call or email will be issued that day to let them know what happened. Incidents/accidents resulting in a serious injury to a child will be reported immediately to the parent/guardian. Serious injury means an injury that requires follow-up observation or treatment by the parent or requires a medical or dental examination and treatment outside the school's scope of care.

To protect the privacy and interactions of children, we will not identify other children by name on incident reports.

Grievance Procedure

The administrator of Dubuque Montessori School addresses all formal grievances and requests. When a parent has a grievance or request related to the services provided by the school and/or its personnel, they are to follow the procedure outlined below.

When an action or event has occurred, the parent must first verbally and/or in writing discuss the concern with the staff involved, trying to resolve the situation.

If the parent and/or staff member are not satisfied with the results and wish to pursue the matter further, they may contact the administrator. A formal written, signed, and dated grievance must be submitted to the administrator, outlining the situation. The administrator may wish to hold a fact-finding meeting with the parent and staff member involved, either together or separately, before taking appropriate action.

If any of the involved individuals are not satisfied with the above outcome, a copy of the grievance may be submitted to the President of the Board of Directors who will meet with the Executive Committee. The Executive Committee will make their recommendation to the full board during a closed session. The president will then notify those involved, in writing, of the board's decision. All decisions made by the Board of Directors will be final.

Any and all grievances must be handled following these procedures. No board member is authorized to act on his/her own accord. It is the right and the responsibility of the administrator to have the first opportunity to address questionable issues. Be assured that all matters brought to the attention of the Administrator and/or the Board of Directors will remain confidential.

Montessori Parent Guidelines

Dr. Maria Montessori found that children need:

- Respect and self-discipline. You can foster these by encouraging your child to hang his/her own coat, get dressed, etc. A cardinal rule is "never do for the child what he/she can do for himself."
- Order. Help your child establish order by giving him/her places to put things away in the home. Shelves are more appropriate than toy boxes.
- Self-control. Aid your child in gaining self-control by allowing her to make choices and experience the result of her choice.
- Consistency. Be sure you are giving your child consistent messages. The same behavior should elicit the same responses every time. Never lie to your child or allow her to make a choice which you are not prepared to accept.
- Real, not pretend items. Allow your child to work with real materials at home.

You can help us protect these guidelines while your child is at DMS by:

- Bringing your child to school on time.
- Allowing your child to make simple choices.
- Dropping your child off at the front door and allowing him/her to enter independently.
- Refraining from constant correction of accidents or mistakes. Your child's level of interest is far more important than cognitive gains at this stage. Conceptual understanding built through work with the hands will lead to cognitive gains. We promise!
- Conveying any sensitive issues to the teacher in a private time and place away from the child. We will make every effort to respect you and your child by doing the same.
- Allowing your child to bring books, natural wonders and unit-related items to school to share with their friends. Please do not allow your child to bring toys.
- Refraining from asking, "Were you good at school today?" Children find this question very difficult to answer.
- Remembering that Montessori is a process-oriented method of education involving manipulation of materials. Your child will not bring work home daily. If you are interested in more information about what your child is learning, come in and observe or speak to your child's teachers.

Visitor Policy

Dubuque Montessori School encourages parents and other citizens to visit DMS and believes that there are many potential benefits that can result from increased interaction with the public. At the same time, we have an interest in avoiding disruption to the educational process and protecting the safety and welfare of the children and staff. A balance must be achieved between the potential benefits and risks associated with the presence of visitors in our building. Limitations may be placed on visitors who are not parents or guardians of children who attend DMS.

The director shall have the authority to determine which visits are to be permitted as well as the discretion to set any appropriate conditions on the nature and extent of such visits. In exercising the director's discretion, the director shall consider the purpose of the visit, the impact of the visitor's presence and the relationship of any visitor to the students. School personnel shall seek to assure that parents and other visitors are courteously received and that sincere efforts are made to provide them with information as may be needed to foster a cooperative relationship between home, school, and community.

General Requirements for Visitors

- A visitor is defined as any person seeking to enter the school building who is not an employee of the school or a student currently enrolled in that building.
- All visitors shall report to the school office when arriving or leaving the school premises. Visitors are required to obtain authorization from the administrator to remain on the school premises. Visitors may be requested to wear an appropriate form of identification when on school premises.
- Whenever possible, visitors should obtain authorization from the director in advance. At the discretion of the director, such prior authorization may be required.
- All school visitors must comply at all times with Board policies, administrative rules, and school regulations.

Sign-In/Sign-Out for Visitors

- All visitors entering the building (parents, family members, childcare consultants, occupational therapists, maintenance workers, etc.), must sign-in and out on our visitor tracking log.
- Visitors will write their name and sign, provide date and time of arrival and departure, reason for visit, and phone number.
- All visitors must wear a visitor name tag.

Visitors to Classrooms or Other Instructional Areas

- Access to classrooms or other instructional areas of the school may be restricted upon the recommendation of the teacher in charge or as otherwise deemed necessary by the director.
- Because classrooms and other instructional areas are the most vulnerable to disruptions, specific conditions may be imposed upon visitors, including but not limited to:
 - requiring that the visitor be chaperoned
 - limiting the duration of the visit to certain times or length of time
 - limiting the activities of the visitor to a particular purpose(s)
 - designating certain routes of travel in the building or upon the school grounds.
- Visitors wishing to conference with teachers or the director during the school day are encouraged to make arrangements in advance when possible.
- All visitors and parents/guardians, whether or not they have been cleared for involvement with the children through the formal record check process (as outlined in the Department of Health and Human Services rule 109.6(6) and pursuant to Iowa law) shall be supervised and monitored by the staff, teachers, or the director during the extent of the visit to DMS. Supervision is defined as having general oversight over, direction of, and regulation of the visitor's activities and interaction with the children at DMS. Monitoring is defined as watching and observing the visitor's activities and interaction with the children at DMS. Each classroom instructor or assistant shall be responsible for supervising or monitoring visitors in their classroom. All staff are responsible for supervising and monitoring visitors in their general vicinity, including the visitor activities in route to the classroom.

Exceptions

- Parents or citizens who have been invited to visit school as part of a scheduled open house, special event, scheduled performance by a class, during drop off and/or pick up procedures, or other adult participants in organized and school approved activities are exempt from requirements.
- Both parents and guardians of a student have the right to visit the child's school and have unlimited access to their child unless a court order exists restricting such contact.
- Student teachers are exempt from the above provisions because they are subject to record checks and background clearance from their supervising institute.

Furthermore, the director has the authority to exclude from the school premises any person who disrupts or who appears likely to become a disruption to the educational program. Any such individual shall be directed to leave the school premises immediately, and law enforcement authorities shall be called if necessary.

Suggested Reading

You may wish to understand the Montessori Method more fully by reading any one of the many books either written by or about Dr. Maria Montessori. These books can be found in area libraries and bookstores.

- A Parent's Guide to the Montessori Classroom- Aline D. Wolf
- The Montessori Toddler- Simone Davies
- The Montessori Child- Simone Davies
- The Montessori Family- Grace Stockholm
- Montessori and Your Child- Terry Malloy
- Montessori: A Modern Approach- Paula Polk Lillard
- Education for a New World- Maria Montessori
- Education and Peace- Maria Montessori
- The Secret of Childhood- Maria Montessori
- The Absorbent Mind- Maria Montessori
- The Discovery of the Child- Maria Montessori
- A Parent's Introduction to the Montessori Preschool- Maria Montessori

Dubuque Montessori School also has reference materials available to our families to borrow. Simply stop in the office.