Parent Handbook

DYNAMITE MONTESSORI, INC.

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(480) 563-5710
28807 N. 53rd Street
Cave Creek, Az 85331
www.dynamitemontessori.com

MISSION STATEMENT

Dynamite Montessori is a safe, peaceful, joyous learning place for children to optimally construct themselves, to sort out and clarify their impressions of the world, to build their characters and grow in a "natural" way – becoming independent and interdependent, expressing their love and spontaneity while developing a sense of responsibility, respect and gratitude so as to become contributing members of society.

Dynamite Montessori aspires to expose children to Spanish in context with their normal daily work so as to achieve fluency in this language by age 12.

DYNAMITE MONTESSORI SCHOOL

Dear Parents:

Please take the time to read this handbook thoroughly; then keep it in a handy place for frequent reference. All parents are expected to be familiar with the school polices and abide by them.

Sincerely,

Paula Fabian-Leach

Responsibilities of the School

- To provide an environment that is safe, clean, and attractive.
- To maintain the standard and licensing requirements by State, County and City Agencies.
- To provide a program that is stimulating, developmentally appropriate, and the best possible.
- To provide teachers who are exceptional in their capacities for observing, guiding and caring, and who are pursuing excellence in their professions.
- To remain committed to professional growth and openness to new ideas.

Responsibilities of the Parents

- To bring and pick up child/ren on time. To **ALWAYS** sign your child/ren in and out on our clipboard with full first and last name.
- To fulfill financial and legal obligations to the school promptly.
- To support both child and school
  - -by attending parent meetings and conferences, and parent Montessori educational opportunities
  - -by keeping informed on policies of school,
  - -by volunteering time, effort and talent as possible.

Responsibilities of the Child

- To construct the adult s/he will become.
- To respond to direction and correction.

Admission Requirements

- The child must be between 2 and 12 years of age.
- The child must be toilet trained and weaned.
- Manageable behavior and obedience are expected.

Enrollment Procedure

Dynamite Montessori has an open enrollment procedure based on an initial interview with the child and the parents. Dynamite Montessori is equipped to accommodate children with certain special needs. It is our policy that classroom placement is contingent upon a child meeting with the school director and/or the head teacher. A child is admitted after an interview has been conducted with the parents and a contract has been signed. A non-refundable enrollment fee is also required to complete registration. Parent and child orientations will then be scheduled. Children may be disenrolled for incorrigible behavior, medical reasons, failure to pay tuition, or at the parents' request. A written 30 day notice is required to withdraw a child.

When a child is enrolled, proper forms are completed, including:

1. Tuition Agreement
2. Enrollment form
3. Emergency form
4. Parent consent form
5. Medical Waiver
6. Parent Handbook-Policies and Procedures Agreement

Fees Paid Upon Enrollment

- A non-refundable registration fee
- First and last month's tuition
- Yearly AMI fee

Orientation

Children are eager, spontaneous learners, curious about the world around them. And you, the parent, are your child's first teacher. In your presence, your child spoke his or her first words, took the first step, heard the first story. The Montessori School is an extension of the education you have begun at home. We at Dynamite Montessori School view education as an aid to life, as a process. Our role is to preserve and nurture your child's natural curiosity and to promote an awareness of the limitless possibilities of life.

Dynamite Montessori is founded upon the traditions of the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and pioneer in child development who observed that children have a natural, progressive aptitude for acquiring knowledge about their world. Building on this natural aptitude, Dr. Montessori developed a philosophy which embraces the whole child. She found that by placing children in specially prepared environments that meet their physical, cognitive, emotional, and social needs, children not only learn but *thrive.*

Like Dr. Montessori, We Believe That Children:

- have within them a natural urge to explore, discover and learn.
- are in a crucial stage of development from birth to six years when intelligence itself is being formed.
- thrive in an enriched environment that provides opportunities for academic, social, physical, and emotional growth.
- benefit from heterogeneous age grouping that fosters peer teaching, sharing and natural social development.
- learn best when they are actively involved in the learning process.
- profit from having repetitive, successful experiences and minimized failures.
- grow when they can choose from materials that engage all of their senses.
- mature when they are free to make choices, developing independence and self-confidence.

At Dynamite Montessori School, this philosophy is expressed in classrooms where children work individually or in small groups at developmentally appropriate tasks. The children progress at their own pace. The curriculum follows the child rather than the child fitting into a set curriculum where all children are doing the same work at the same time. Our rich curriculum offers children freedom of choice in a dynamic classroom where learning is fun.

A Montessori Classroom Is A World Specially Prepared For Children

Children move about and choose materials from easily accessible shelves. They work on floor mats or at small tables. One child might paint, another place beads into groups of ten to perform a mathematical function, a third prepare a snack while the teacher works with a small group of children on a word game. At any given moment of the day one may find a variety of work being done, and one may hear a busy hum of activity - signs of concentration.

Respect Is A Key Element In The Montessori Classroom:

Adults respect each child as an individual, a unique learner with specific strengths. Children learn respect for each other and for the learning materials through lessons of grace and courtesy and from positive role models.

Remaining In The Same Class For 3 Years:

Once enrolled, a child shall remain in the same primary class until elementary readiness. It is our policy NOT to move a child into a different primary class. The dynamic of the group with the teacher and the peers evolves uniquely in each class during the 3 year cycle and it is generally not in the best interest of the child to disrupt this process of education, socialization, and maturation.

Staying in the same primary class with the same teacher and many of the same peers for 3 years is the design of Montessori.

Only in the RAREST of occasions, i.e. if a child is not thriving in said environment, would a change be considered.

Our actions must always be dictated by the needs of the child.

Accreditation, Licensing and Insurance

- The Association Montessori Internationale (**AMI**) is the organization founded in 1929 by Dr. Maria Montessori to serve two purposes: to protect her life's work in its original integrity and completeness, and to guide its further development and application in the interest of all children. From its headquarters in Amsterdam, The Netherlands, **AMI** monitors training centers around the world and functions as a center for research and development. Our head teachers are all AMI certified, as are the primary and elementary classes.
- Dynamite Montessori School is licensed by the State of Arizona Department of Health Services. We are inspected annually as is required to certify our operation. Inspection reports are kept on file in our office and are available upon request. Parents may contact the Department directly at any time for further information at: 150 N. 18th Avenue, 4th Floor, Phoenix, Az 85007 or call (602) 364-2539.
- Dynamite Montessori School carries the State required Liability Insurance on its premises.

Tuition Payment Policy

- Tuition is due by the 1st day of each month.
- A late charge may be applied to payments received after the 5th day of the month.
- Returned checks will incur an additional NSF fee in addition to the late fee.
- Sibling enrolled concurrently, full day-five days a week, will receive a 10% discount.

Hours Of Operation

- 8:00am - 4:00pm - full day
- 8:00am - 1:00pm - half day
- 7:30am – 8:00am and 4:00pm – 5:30pm (extended daycare is available)

Parent Involvement

The Montessori Method is one which involves the parents, the teachers and the child. The learning environment overlaps as do the duties of the parents, teacher and child. We ask that you consider our prepared environment as an extension of your home and contribute to maintaining its beauty and ordered richness in whatever "special" way you see fit. Parents are encouraged to volunteer their time and talents towards making the learning experience of their children optimal. You may volunteer to come in and read with some children or teach a special craft lesson, or talk about your ethnicity or help us celebrate a holiday, help maintain the conditions of the materials, assist in playground supervision, teach sewing, make materials, sing songs, eat lunch with us, etc. "Nuestra casa es su casa!" You are always welcome!

If you wish to visit with other parents while at school, please do so. But, please be considerate of the the children's need to work quietly. Have your conversations outside. Thank you for your understanding.

Discipline Policy

Maria Montessori believed that if we install a good sense of right and wrong in the child, the child will develop a sense of inner discipline. This means that all adults in the classroom have to be a good example to the child, because the child will absorb anything we show him/her.

We encourage the child to follow all the rules we have and we use positive reinforcement. If a child deviates from the rules, we will assume that the child does not know the rule and we will instruct the child. If the child continues, we will issue a verbal warning and an explanation to the child that s/he will be removed to a place apart from the group, but within the same room if possible, to watch the other children doing their work in the appropriate manner. The child may rejoin the children and continue work once s/he is ready to conform. Children like to do their activities and to remove a child from an

activity is normally all that is necessary to bring about the appropriate behavior. When a child purposefully injures another student or commits an act of severe inappropriate behavior, he may be asked to remain at home for 1 day. If there is a continuing discipline problem, we will notify the parents for a conference. Consistent methods of discipline will be discussed. Parents are encouraged to always avoid spanking or using abusive methods of discipline. When no apparent progress is made with unacceptable behavior, professional counseling with a psychologist is recommended. If all efforts fail to help the child and s/he is a negative influence on the classroom, parents are asked to remove the child from the school. Alternative placements may be suggested.

Basic rules explained to the children:

- Talk softly and walk slowly so not to disturb another child's work
- Touch only your own work
- Use a rug for floor work and sit down to do work
- Walk around rugs
- Replace materials where you found them
- Listen to speaker and wait turn to speak
- Place hand on shoulder and say "excuse me" when you want the teacher's attention
- Say "please" and "thank you" often
- Care for self, friends, and school

Illness

Any child who appears to be ill upon arrival will not be allowed to attend class. If you notice signs of illness before bringing your child to the school such as a new cold, sore throat, inflammation, fever, rash, diarrhea, vomiting, sleepiness, etc., please keep your child home. This is an **Arizona State Department of Health** regulation, which is enforced not only to protect the ill child, but all children and staff at the school in case of communicable disease. The observation of this policy will lessen your child's risk of illness and allow a faster recovery in the home environment. In the event of communicable disease in the school, we will notify all parents immediately of its presence and of symptoms to watch for. A call to the school is expected if your child will be absent.

In the case of certain diseases (whooping cough, RSV, etc.) your child will require a written doctor's note stating that he/she may return.

In the case of pink eye or strep throat – a child may return to class after being on appropriate meds for 24 hours. Children must remain fever/vomit/diarrhea free for 24 hours without meds before returning.

In the event of lice – we have a "no nit" policy. This means, that parents must undertake the tedious task of removing all nits each day from their child's hair before allowing him/her to attend class.

If your child becomes ill during the day we will isolate him/her from the group and you will be notified. You are expected to come and take your child from the school. The Emergency Information Card that you have completed provides us with information regarding persons who can be reached in this type of emergency if you are unavailable. If your child should be injured and require medical attention, you will be notified immediately. The Emergency Information Card with your signature gives parental permission for medical and hospital care.

Please help us reduce the rate of illness at our school by cooperating fully in keeping an ill child home! Plan ahead for alternative child care in the event of illness. Thank you.

Our school will communicate health notices to parents via email and via notes on the sign-in sheets.

Health Habits

In keeping with good health habits, we teach the children to wash their hands with soap every time they use the toilet, blow their nose, and before eating. This can be enforced at home until it becomes a life long habit. Teach your child how to blow his/her nose, discard used tissue, wash hands and cover mouth when coughing or sneezing.

Parent Visits

You are free to come any time to observe. As we will be working, it will be necessary for you to enter the classroom unobtrusively and sit

down while you quietly observe. You may want to take notes for further reference. Please refrain from engaging the teacher in conversation during lesson time. If you wish to have a lengthy talk with the director, or the head teacher, please schedule a meeting after 4:30pm or on a Saturday morning.

Our campus (all 5 acres) is a smoke-free zone.

Rules For Observing

1. Enter classroom quietly and sit in designated chair provided for you.
2. Observe, write down observations for discussion later at your appointed conference time.
3. Please refrain from directing the children in their activities or encouraging the children to visit with you.

Conferences

Conferences to discuss your child's work and development will be held each semester. Conferences will be held on weekday afternoons for a period of 30 minutes. We will share with you our observation of your child's development with regards to his/her social skills, perceptual motor behavior, activity patterns, and verbal development. We will also let you know which of the activities s/he is currently working on and which of the materials s/he has mastered.

Procedures For Unforeseen Events

Police will be called in case of any threat to the safety of the children or staff caused by civil commotion, riot, or any other threatening behaviors. Children will be kept in the safest possible location on the school premises and protected by the staff until the police arrive and pronounce that the threatening event has passed.

In the event children are to be sent home due to school closure for any reason, the parents will be notified and the children will be kept in the safest location possible on the school premises until the children can be picked up by parents or other authorized persons. When the children are picked up, the school's responsibility for the child ceases.

In the event of fire, the fire department will be notified. The children will be kept in the safest location on the school grounds until the Fire Chief declares that the fire danger has passed. If necessary, parents will be notified to pick up the children as outlined above. For emergency evacuation due to flood, toxic cloud, or any other dangerous event, the children will be transferred to the Sweetwater Stables down the road on the west side.

- A monthly fire drill is conducted as required by the State Fire Department.
- All children will be instructed on emergency evacuation procedures.

State Law

Our staff members are advocates for children. We must, by law, report child neglect/endangerment/abuse. It is considered child endangerment to transport a child in a vehicle while under the influence of drugs or alcohol. Please DO NOT PUT US IN THIS SITUATION!

Thank you.

Sharing

We encourage children to share items of educational value with classmates. We request they be clearly marked with the child's name. These materials include rock or leaf collections, bird nests, books, tapes or postcards. Animals will not be allowed for this sharing period unless first discussed with the teacher. Instead, a photo of a pet is welcome and your child may verbally share in this way. We cannot accept toys or personal treasures. This includes money, or toy guns. Please discuss this policy in advance with your child to avoid disappointment.

We have items in our classroom that may look like "toys" that are used for language exercises. If anything should accidentally be carried home in a pocket, please return it immediately to the school. In addition, we also have very small block-like materials and puzzle pieces that are very attractive and also extremely expensive and difficult to replace. Please help us keep these items at school!

The children learn quickly about the "community" of a Montessori school and the need to protect all these items for everyone's use and enjoyment.

Clothing

Your child should wear washable and comfortable clothes. Clothes that can easily be managed by the child are necessary. Your child is learning to, or has learned to dress him/herself and we want the children to feel independent and not frustrated about clothing that will require adult assistance. Your child should have a change of clothes to leave at school. These should be LABELED with the child's name, as should all sweaters, sweatshirts, and jackets. Shoes should be comfortable but give good support. Sandals may be worn inside, but tennis shoes are needed for outside play.

Birthdays

Most children enjoy sharing this special event with their classmates. We encourage you to come and join in the "Celebration of Life." You may bring a *treat** to share with the class. Many children enjoy donating a book to the classroom in honor of their birthday.

The Celebration of Life is information that you and your child can write and illustrate with photographs. The format may be a picture book or a time line. This short story of a child's life will be read while s/he walks around a circle with a globe in hand. A lighted candle is placed in the center of the circle to represent the sun. Each rotation or year of your child's life is represented by a few sentences telling about his/her life.
EXAMPLE:

Mary was born in San Francisco four years ago today. She was a happy, healthy baby. This picture is of her first trip on a cable car. She loved going up and down the hills. Her first Birthday was celebrated with her grandparents out at the park.

Second year: See how much she has grown and look at all the nice curly hair she has! She learned to walk and talk and we took her to visit her cousins in Arizona. These are her cousins and this is their back yard.

Third year: We moved out to Phoenix just before Mary's third birthday and she has a new baby brother whose name is Mark. See what a great big sister she is! Here she is helping mommy take care of Mark.

Each year the child is in the school we ask the parents to add to this brief history. The children love to show and tell on this very special day and we appreciate your help and participation.

*This treat should be non-edible, eg. a pencil, a keychain, stickers, etc.

Snacks

The staff at Dynamite Montessori appreciates the support and cooperation of parents as the primary teachers of good nutrition, proper manners and good eating habits.

We have many opportunities for children to continue this education at school. Young children need healthy food for growth and energy. Small children also have small stomachs that can't hold much food but need to be refilled frequently. In keeping with this pattern of physical need and development, we offer an opportunity for children to prepare and eat their own snack daily. The snack table is set up for children to come and enjoy their food with a friend. This is available to children during their work time. They choose the time and frequency of snack. If we observe patterns of eating outside the "normal" range of behavior for any length of time we will notify the parents.

The guidelines of snack foods provided are those suggested by the **Arizona Department of Health Services.** Please see our menu which is posted on the bulletin board. Although we will be providing the snack foods for the children, we do welcome contributions made by parents. Please check with the staff if you would like to help in this manner.

Lunch

Lunch and recess occurs approximately from 11:30 to 1:00.

Those children staying the entire day will bring a lunch from home in a SOFT LUNCH BAG CLEARLY LABELED.

All lunches are stored in the refrigerator unless clearly marked that they contain a hot thermos. We will not allow, nor provide, microwaving for reheating or cooking of foods. This takes too much time away from the staff's lunch time and necessary supervision of children.

Children want and need to be independent, so please think carefully about the foods you prepare and the containers they are sent in. We ask that you please place all foods into containers that can be resealed. For example, yogurt and applesauce could be transferred into Tupperware. Many children are unable to finish their lunches and we want them to return all unfinished food to their lunch bags. If they should want something later in the afternoon they will be allowed to retrieve their lunch bags and finish their lunches. We have found this is to be the best way to avoid food being thrown away as well as letting parents know exactly what their children do eat and how much.

Good eating habits started early in life will stay with children their lifetime. Please pack nutritious lunches. No candy or gum is allowed at school. Please go easy on the cookies! No sodas or cool-aid are allowed, only 100% fruit juices, milk, soy beverages, etc. We encourage you to have your child help in the preparation of his/her lunch. The more involved they are in the process, the better the eating habits.

Our policy is a LOW SUGAR one.

Accident Policy

If a child has a minor injury while in school, he/she will be treated with 1st aid. If a more serious injury occurs, 1st aid will also be given and the parent notified. A written incident report will be filed. Accidents of a very serious nature will be handled as a 911 Emergency call. There-after the parents will be notified immediately.
If a child needs to be transported to a hospital, he/she will be taken to the one the medical professionals decide upon.