

*The policies contained within this handbook have been reviewed and endorsed by the VMS Executive Committee annually.*

## **Villa Montessori School Statement of Philosophy**

The purpose of this organization is to promote the child's full potential through the development of the whole being physically, socially, emotionally and cognitively without regard to race, color, sex, religion, or national origin.

Villa Montessori will challenge the child in an environment of freedom within reasonable limits. Each class with its multi-age group is its own community, within the whole, in which children live and work cooperatively to develop responsible citizenship. Our curriculum equips the children to become responsible citizens with multi-cultural awareness and community involvement.

Our prepared environment with new and challenging activities is designed to move the child from concrete to the abstract and create a positive attitude toward learning. The child will develop a questioning and analytical mind. Creative thinking, problem solving, creative expression, and social skills will develop in the child. The child will gain a love for learning that will last a lifetime.

The school shall be managed in a way that develops and retains a quality staff committed to the care of children and their families. Fiscal responsibility shall be maintained for the future of the school.

## **General Educational Objectives**

### Physical Goals

- 1) The child is provided a healthy and safe environment and follows appropriate ground rules.
- 2) The child masters gross motor coordination necessary to foster grace of movements.
- 3) The child develops fine motor coordination necessary for writing and manipulation of materials.
- 4) The child accepts his physique and masculinity or femininity, and be accepting of others.

### Social Goals

- 1) The child develops the ability to cooperate with adults and peers.
- 2) The child develops a mature sense of justice and fairness.
- 3) The younger child in a multi-age group learns from the examples and demonstrations of the older child.
- 4) The older child in a multi-age group is allowed to clarify and confirm his knowledge and develop the willingness to accept leadership.
- 5) The child demonstrates an awareness of and caring attitude toward the interdependence of man and nations with a desire for cooperation and peace.

- 6) The child demonstrates an awareness of and caring attitude toward the interdependence of people and nature.
- 7) The child accepts of the differences between himself and others.
- 8) The child develops socially acceptable manners and courtesies.

### Emotional Goals

- 1) The child develops a sense of order and an inner security.
- 2) The child develops self-discipline and self-control, as well as develops maturity and a healthy self-esteem.
- 3) The child develops a strong sense of initiative and perseverance and the willingness to try new things.
- 4) The child develops a good self-image and self-confidence as an independent learner.
- 5) The child is able to identify and communicate his feelings effectively, appropriately, and respectfully.
- 6) The child learns to effectively avoid conflict through peer mediation.

### Intellectual or Cognitive Goals

- 1) The child develops good concentration skills.
- 2) The child develops and expands his imagination and a positive, creative attitude toward learning.
- 3) The child develops a sense of aesthetics.
- 4) The child progresses at his own pace in the learning style most successful for him in a noncompetitive atmosphere.
- 5) The child becomes a learner independent of the adult.
- 6) The child acquires a sense of responsibility through completion of the work cycle.
- 7) The child masters the tools or skills needed to pursue knowledge.
- 8) The child demonstrates an understanding of how to locate information and use various media for research.
- 9) The child strives for his own personal excellence, while accepting his level of ability.

## **Programs Offered**

**Infant classes** are offered for children 6 weeks of age to approximately 15 months of age. They are in a nurturing learning environment all day. Special activities are generally offered from 8:45 to 11:45 a.m., but the program fee includes enrollment for any 3-hour period of the day. Child care is offered before or after the child's scheduled class time. Infants are allowed to eat and sleep on their own schedule.

**Infant/toddler classes** are offered for children approximately 15 months through 2 years of age; **toddler classes** are for children 2 years of age through 3 years of age. Class begins promptly at 8:45 a.m. and ends at 11:45 a.m. Students eat lunch from approximately 11:45 to 12:30. Child care is offered before and after the scheduled class time. Children who stay for the extended afternoon usually sleep some or all of the time between 12:30 and 2:30.

Staff will work with parents when the child shows readiness for toilet training. Disposable training pants ("Pull-ups") are not allowed.

**Pre-primary classes** are offered for 3- to 6-year olds (traditionally referred to as pre-school or pre-K classes). Class begins promptly at 8:45 and ends at 11:45. Child care is available before and after the scheduled class time. Pre-primary students who do not sleep and are 4 years old by September 1, 2011 may sign up for the school's extended day program from 1 to 3:30 p.m. A variety of enrichment activities will be offered. Pre-primary students must be signed up for a minimum of three afternoons/week to participate in this program.

Parents of children entering pre-primary classes need to participate in the child's toilet training, if child is not already trained. Disposable training pants ("Pull-ups") are not allowed.

**Elementary classes** are offered for children ages 5 to 12 years old. All elementary classes meet Monday through Friday, 8:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. Families may use child care at any time before class (7:00 a.m. - 8:30 a.m.) and after class (3:30 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.)

VMS will have each grouping of children assigned to a teaching staff that have primary responsibility for working with that group of children. The teaching staff will provide ongoing personal contact, meaningful learning activities, supervision, and immediate care as needed to protect children's well-being.

Due to our school liability policy, any child on the premises will be supervised by an adult and the family will be billed for child care incurred. The school reserves the right to remove a child from the before or after school program if the student habitually misbehaves during child care time.

Families should allow extra time and patience for young children to prepare for school. To assist children in forming a good habit of promptness, we ask that each child arrive promptly, and be ready to settle into work at the beginning of class. Readiness includes having been offered a nutritious meal before morning arrival. The family's promptness and consistency of pick-up add greatly to the young child's peace of mind.

Parents are asked to refrain from using cell phones while dropping off/picking up your child in the classroom in order to fully focus attention on the child. This will aid in the child's transition between you and the classroom.

## **Curriculum**

All classes work within an established curriculum, dedicated to achieving the school's mission. The program at VMS is interpretively based upon the philosophy and

work of Maria Montessori, an Italian educator and physician. Our program is designed to recognize and respond to the development of initiative and self-reliance by encouraging children to do by themselves the things that interest them, but within non-confined areas. Time, resources and content are balanced on all age levels. The school expects that each child work to the best of his/her ability, with the goal of reaching academic excellence.

The child is encouraged to develop a sense of order by completing the work cycle of activity. Multi-age groupings encourage each child to choose work at her developmental level, without fear of failure. Learning materials within each grouping focus on one concept at a time and provide a series of steps of graded difficulty. The teacher makes presentations to her students, individually, in small groups and large groups.

This is a brief outline of curriculum areas. For more complete information, the school reference library has many works by Dr. Montessori and those who have studied her methods. Curriculum maps for each age level are available from the school.

Practical Life for the younger child includes preparatory activities such as dish washing, scrubbing, pouring, bolting, and learning to zip/button/snap, etc. This enables the child to develop his own interior discipline through the use of his hands. The child learns to care for himself and the physical environment. Grace, courtesy, and table manners are also emphasized. Consumer education and home economics expand in the elementary years.

Perceptual Skill Development - These activities heighten sensitivity and provide a base for later experiences in math and science. Through the use of structured activities, the qualities of objects are remembered. Hands-on experiences lead the child's mind to form concepts that lead to reading and math.

Math - Number concepts are presented through materials such as spindle boxes, the bead cabinet and geometric shapes and solids. Math begins with concrete materials and moves the child sensibly into abstract computations.

Language - The child's real and vicarious experiences are broadened, so the vocabulary expands. The child is prepared for writing, for recognizing sounds and for enjoying literature. Elementary students practice writing and speaking for varied purposes, gaining skills in using language as part of other studies.

Science - Children in infant and toddler classes are introduced to natural items and the words used to describe things. Experimentation begins in the pre-primary class. The child learns to classify items and builds a concrete foundation for later studies in elementary.

Geography and Cultural Studies - The child is made aware of the world through physical exploration of maps, land forms, and items from other cultures. This is supplemented by pictures and written materials about the world. This teaching shall assist the child in becoming a part of the global community. Students will participate in charity and community projects to provide practice in social responsibility. Students may become exposed to and celebrate various cultural holidays within the classroom; this participation does not represent a school-wide endorsement of a particular holiday.

Foreign Language – Children are introduced to Spanish as a language. Songs and studies of countries speaking these languages, stories, and conversation combine to interest the child and enhance multicultural understanding. Families with foreign heritage are invited to share their culture.

History - The child develops a sense of history through an interdisciplinary approach. Time lines are used to provide a visual overview of change. The child works within a cycle of historical study, and may choose incidents and concepts of most interest to pursue.

Art - The child participates in practical art experiences designed to interest him/her and invite discovery. The child is exposed to classic art through works in the school.

Music - The child sings, plays rhythm instruments, and listens to classical music for an introduction to the varieties and joys of music. Even the older infant watches and may try rhythm sticks as older members of the class sing and play. The children experience dance by participating in the performance of "The Nutcracker Suite."

Perceptual Motor Development - Learning to control one's body gives a sense of mastery and builds a foundation for participation in athletic ventures. The child practices hand/eye, hand/foot, and eye/foot coordination, and learns the vocabulary of fitness. The child is encouraged to try things and stretch his capabilities.

Consumer/Career Education - The child carries out real life experiences with the goal of being a competent member of society. These exercises help the child grow in his/her ability to understand his/her working environment, ability to adapt to change, solve problems, and think critically. As the child develops communication skills and ability to work within a team setting, he/she develops a sense of ethics, an understanding of human development, and potential careers he/she may want to later pursue.

## **Child Development**

Families often have questions about "normal" child development. VMS has curriculum maps available which

provide this information in detail for children 0-3 years, 3-6 years, and 6-12 years. A brief summary of developmental milestones for children 0-3 years follows:

*By age 3 months, child can:*

- Lift head and chest when laying on stomach
- Follow a moving object or person with eyes
- Grasp a rattle or finger
- Smile at people
- Make cooing/babbling sounds
- Cry in different ways to communicate needs

*By age 6 months, child can:*

- Hold head up and look all around
- Recognize familiar faces and smile
- Coo, giggle, and make lots of sounds
- Push up on hands and knees
- Roll from back to stomach and stomach to back
- Search (look) for sounds, turn head towards sound
- Begin eating first foods
- Begin experiencing separation and stranger anxiety

*By age 9 months, child can:*

- Sit up without much help
- Begin to pull self up and stand with help
- Crawl or scoot forward
- Use thumb and finger to pick up small items
- Recognize and look for familiar people
- Start to imitate and make sounds like real words (Mama, Dada)
- Love to dump toys or things out of containers

*By age 12 months, child can:*

- Stand alone holding on to furniture
- Take beginning steps towards walking alone
- Say a few meaningful words
- Dance or bounce to music
- Respond to own name
- Want parents or caregivers to always be where child can see them
- Show fear or anxiety over unknown people
- Point to a few objects when asked to find
- Begin eating table foods

*By age 18 months, child can:*

- Walk without help
- Climb up and down things
- Stand up and sit down without holding on
- Begin to show a "temper" when child cannot do something
- Understand simple one-step directions
- Use more meaningful single words, gestures, and use words together
- "Cling" to caregivers in new situations

*By age 2 years, child can:*

- Walk, run, and climb without help
- Go up and down stairs without holding on
- Follow a 2-step direction
- Have frequent temper outbursts when mad, tired, or upset

Put 2 and 3 words together in a sentence  
Use about 50 or more words frequently  
Sing songs and say rhymes  
Feed self and drink from a lidless cup  
Resist sharing toys with other children  
Scribble on paper  
Learn to share and take turns

*By age 3 years, child can:*

Jump up and down  
Begin to peddle a riding toy  
Throw and catch a ball  
Sort 2 objects that match  
Play with others and share toys sometimes  
Talk in short sentences and try to tell feelings  
Ask what and why questions  
Name colors  
Follow individual and group directions  
Count to 10

For children over 3 years of age, families are encouraged to see the appropriate VMS curriculum map, available in the school office.

### **Guidance Policies**

The guidance practices of Villa Montessori are a group effort by all staff members. At the heart of a Montessori environment is continual observation of the child and many opportunities for the child to join in group activities. At any time our teachers believe a child may need a referral to an agency or health professional, they consult with the Head of School, then meet with the parents. VMS maintains a current list of child and family support services available in the community, based on the pattern of needs we observe among families and based on what families request (e.g., health, nutrition, support groups, etc.). We are happy to share these resources with families and will help families in locating, contacting, and using community resources that support children's and families' well-being and development.

VMS staff members identify and establish relationships with specialized consultants who can assist children's and families' full participation in our programs. This assistance includes support for children with disabilities, behavioral challenges, or other special needs.

Procedures will address the expected consultant skills, payment, access, availability, and working relationships with staff as well as how the program will arrange with other agencies to use their consultants for the children who are eligible for their services.

Children ages three to five years are screened by Black Hawk Special Education for overall developmental delays or delays/problems in speech or hearing. Children ages three and older are screened by the Illinois Department of Public Health for vision and hearing problems. Further

testing is provided by these agencies at another site if needed. If special needs are identified, the school eagerly works with the family and other professionals who are assisting the child.

### **Language Development**

Students are provided with opportunities for language acquisition that align with the program philosophy, consider family perspectives, and consider community perspectives. Students are provided opportunities to experience oral and written communications in a language that their family uses or understands. Children have varied opportunities to develop competence in verbal and nonverbal communication by responding to questions, communicating needs, thoughts, and experiences; and describing things and events.

VMS is pleased to serve families from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. The school is happy to work with families who do not utilize English as their primary language. VMS staff will work with the child in learning the English language, but it is helpful when the parents also work with the child toward this goal. This can be done in various ways, such as speaking the native language at home, but speaking English outside of the home; designating a specific room inside the home for speaking English, etc. Please don't hesitate to talk to your child's teacher or Renee Detloff, Head of School, for additional guidance on this topic.

Parents/guardians who need information translated should speak to Cindy in the VMS office.

### **Field Trip Policies**

Villa Montessori's field trip policies follow the regulations set by NAEYC and DCFS. Children will have the opportunity to take field trips or participate in activities away from school as is age appropriate. Teaching staff-child ratios will be maintained while on field trips.

Experiences in the community are an integral part of the Villa Montessori learning process. Our flexible schedule allows us to take advantage of opportunities as they develop. Families are alerted to field trips by receipt of a field trip permission slip in the family mailbox, and/or by Villa Voices, the school newsletter. Parents must sign a consent form in order for their child to participate.

Parents available to chaperone field trips are welcomed. Those who do will be responsible for watching their own child(ren) as well as one or two other classmates. Siblings are not permitted to come along on field trips. Siblings enrolled at the school who are left to be cared for at school while the parent attends a field trip will be charged for child care; parents should first receive permission from the child's teacher before leaving the child at school.

The cost of the majority of the field trips is included as part of the pre-primary program. Families will be notified if there is an extra cost for a field trip. Elementary students will be billed for field trips as they occur. Since field trips are considered part of the curriculum, elementary students are expected to participate. We encourage the children to discuss what they have experienced. Families are asked to invite their children to share their experiences.

### **Media Use at Home**

Most experts (including the American Academy of Pediatrics) recommend that there be no more than 1 to 2 hours of quality screen time a day for older children and no screen time for children under 2 years of age. It is further recommended that TV sets, VCRs/DVRs, video games and computers be kept out of children's bedrooms.

Families are urged to closely monitor the content of the media (TV shows, videogames, etc.) seen/used by children. Children often express inappropriate language and behaviors at school when they are experiencing media content that is not age-appropriate.

### **Computer Policy**

All students utilizing the school's computers are expected to comply with the school's computer usage policy. Failure to follow the rules may result in a student being denied the opportunity to use the school's computers. The computer policy was written to safeguard the computer hardware and software, as well as to protect children from accessing inappropriate materials. Specifically, we expect that, when using or accessing the school's computers:

- No person will deliberately or willfully cause or attempt to cause damage to computer equipment or software or assist others in doing the same.
- No person will deliberately access educationally materials or show others how to do the same.
- No person shall give out personal information over the Internet.
- Each person will respect the rights of others to the privacy of the files they store on a computer or a disk and not view those files without the owner's permission or alter or damage such files.
- Each person will respect and uphold copyright laws.
- Each person will follow any other regulations posted in the computer lab or other room where computers are in use.
- Each person will follow the directions of the adult in charge where computers are in use. No person, with the exception of designated VMS technology personnel, shall install software on the school's computers.

### **Governance of the School**

Villa Montessori School is led by a Board of Trustees which provides a collective wisdom that renders guidance and continuity of policy and program. Board members bring a variety of technical expertise to the school. They work within a framework of by-laws, experience with the school, and information provided through an orientation with the Head of School and/or members of the nominating committee.

The Head of School, Renee Detloff, is the chief executive officer, who handles the day-to-day operations of the school. She is aided in these duties by the Business Manager, Maureen Brandle, and Assistant Head of School, Joni Sue Dohmen, who assists with hiring and other faculty decisions.

Villa Montessori is a not-for-profit organization, and the primary function of the financial management of the school is to maintain sufficient funds available for necessary operating expenses. The school is audited annually. Fiscal responsibility shall be maintained to provide for the future of the school, including costs of facilities and retaining highly skilled staff. Tuition and fees paid by current families fund the school's operations. At the direction of the Board, the school does hold an annual fund drive to help the school improve its programs and facilities. Villa Montessori also receives monetary contributions designated by families through the Quad Cities United Way Campaign and the Combined Federal Campaign (CFC).

VMS established an endowment in 2000; the endowment is held at the Community Foundation of the Great River Bend.

In addition to the overview of the Board, the school is accredited and subject to review by the Independent Schools Association of the Central States (ISACS) and the National Association for the Education of Young Children (NAEYC). The school's 0-3 program must also meet the standards of the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services (DCFS). In addition, Villa Montessori is a member of the American Montessori Society (AMS). Elementary education provided by our school is fully transferable to other school systems.

VMS follows the NAEYC Code of Ethics (available in the VMS office) and has adopted the regulations and requirements of DCFS for the infant and toddler program.

VMS staff is actively involved in the community, through participation in various early childhood organizations.

### **Attendance**

Children are expected to regularly attend the program in which they are enrolled. This is for the child's own

welfare; in addition, Illinois law states that children seven years of age and older who do not attend school regularly must be reported as truant to the Regional Office of Education. The state definition of truancy is unexcused absence of more than 10% of school days. An unexcused absence is any time the child is not in class and the parents have not given the teacher prior notice or there is not a note from the child's physician.

Excessive absences or tardies may result in the child not being properly prepared to move to the next age or grade level. Villa Montessori may dismiss a child from school for lack of attendance.

Each child is expected to attend and maintain the schedule for which they have been enrolled for the current year. Please set an example for your child by getting him/her to class on time. Good attendance can help to establish life-long habits.

If a child needs to be brought in much earlier or stay much later (in excess of 30 minutes) than his/her normal schedule, please notify the school ahead of time so we can be prepared to adjust staffing as needed.

Families may request special scheduling accommodations by speaking with the business office staff. If approved, the family will pay a flat \$75 fee per child per school year. Because the school is not licensed for drop in care, families with a "floating" schedule are required to submit to their child's teacher a schedule at least one week in advance.

In the elementary program, a record of the child's absences and tardies will be transferred with the child's records.

### **Classroom Observation**

Everyone requires some time to adapt to a new environment, especially a child. Starting a new school is much like starting a new job. The person feels excited and anxious. Our staff is trained to expect such feelings and to help the children quickly fit into this new environment comfortably.

Current families may visit any area of the facility at any time during the program's regular hours of operation to be reassured of their child's adaptation to the classroom.

A parent education opportunity is available yearly to better develop the ability to observe the child within a Montessori environment. We recommend that parents wait to observe the classroom after the child has attended for at least six weeks, so that the child has had ample opportunity to become familiar with the school. Family members will be asked to observe the classroom through windows located in the teacher's offices.

Parents/grandparents who plan to observe the classroom must sign in at the school office and pick up a name tag.

### **How Children Build a Foundation Based on Skills**

Teachers use multiple sources (including results of informal and formal assessments as well as children's initiations, questions, interests, and misunderstandings) to:

- Identify what children have learned
- Adapt curriculum and teaching to meet children's needs and interests
- Foster children's curiosity
- Extend children's engagement
- Support self-initiated learning

As children learn and acquire new skills, teachers use their knowledge of children's abilities to fine-tune their teaching support. Teachers adjust challenges as children gain competence and understanding.

Teaching staff help children enter into and sustain play.

Teachers support and challenge children's learning during interactions or activities that are teacher initiated and child initiated.

### **Assessment Policies**

*Purpose:* The purpose of assessment is to best enable the child to progress based on his/her own intellect and developmental abilities. VMS is sensitive to the cultural diversity and varying abilities and will only utilize assessment processes that are within the comfort level of the child's family. Teachers refer to curriculum goals and developmental expectations when interpreting assessment information.

*Procedures:* The family is invited to come in for an orientation conference prior to beginning class. Once in class, children are assessed on a daily basis using observation, sampling, and checklists. During the first three months of a child's attendance, all areas of development are initially assessed. Formal conference forms are introduced to the family at the beginning of the first conference. Each category of assessment is explained, as well as the process for scoring and evaluation. Formal conference forms are updated as the child progresses (annotated no less than three times per school year)

Parents are invited to relay concerns or questions to be addressed prior to meeting with the teacher during the conference time with the teacher.

*Conditions:* Children are assessed in their own familiar classrooms with familiar staff. Children are assessed using progressively challenging Montessori materials as they show readiness.

*Timelines:* Daily records are kept on a teacher's log. Portfolios are kept up-to-date daily by the teacher daily. Formal conference reports are done three times per year (fall, winter, spring)

Families are encouraged on a daily basis to communicate any concerns or questions in a written note, personal contact, or a phone call directly to the teacher. Families are also reminded in the bi-monthly publication Villa Voices to share information from home with the teaching staff.

*Use of results:* Parents are given copies of the child's conference form in a person-to-person format. Parents are invited to relay concerns or questions to be addressed prior to meeting with the teacher during the conference time with the teacher. The family is included in the process of determining what future course of learning will be emphasized

Conference forms and individual children's personal and academic records are kept in the teacher's office in a locked file drawer.

Assessments will not be used for comparison of children in individual classrooms.

*Referrals:* Developmental screening and referral for diagnostic assessment is utilized when a child demonstrates or a parent expresses concern that is out of the realm of age appropriate development.

*Individual Interests and Needs:* The "questioning" area on the child's conference form is an indicator of progression or regression that is used by the child's teacher to identify areas of special interest or needs. Individual learning goals are established and an intervention plan for remediation is created as necessary.

*Developmental progress and learning:* The testing scale on the conference form shows progress and learning over the course of a school year.

*Curriculum and adaptation of teaching practice:* This occurs throughout the school year as the children's needs and knowledge base changes. Montessori materials are placed strategically on shelves in the classroom to continuously invite the child to self-challenge.

*Planning program improvement:* Curriculum areas are in an ongoing cycle of review and improvement as part of the standing Trustee committee (Programs), as well as how the curriculum materials are aligned with the curriculum map, syllabus, and assessment forms. This progress is communicated yearly through the annual publication of the curriculum map. An annual survey is distributed each spring requesting family input. The information is input for the ongoing school improvement process that could have impact in the planning process. Parents are also

encouraged to share observations, concerns or ideas with the administration at any time.

*Special Services:* Outside resources are utilized when determining special needs. We facilitate the use of norm-referenced and standardized testing, checklists, etc. when so requested.

VMS uses a self-developed assessment tool based on a combination of expectations of the Illinois early learning standards, NAEYC standards and the time-tested Montessori materials and techniques.

A complete assessment of the child's progress is more accurately attained by the teacher if the child attends VMS at least 3 days/week.

## **Records**

The School adopts and incorporates the provisions of 105 ILCS 5/2-3.12, the Illinois Statute, as well as United States Code, Chapter 20, Section 1231g, the Federal Statute, as its policy regarding the release and dissemination of a student's educational and school records. A copy of the statute is available in the office.

A family's failure to provide legally required information (health records, etc.) to the school in a timely manner may result in dismissal of the child.

## **Enrollment/Admissions**

Students are selected for admission to the school on the basis of academic potential, developmental maturity, school achievement, diversity and gender balance, readiness for the school's program, and appropriateness of the match between the family and the school. Where appropriate, testing is used as a tool to provide information to assist in the assessment of each candidate. In all cases, the school retains the right to determine, in its sole discretion, whether or not to select a student for admission or to re-enroll a student.

It is the policy of the school not to discriminate on the basis of race, sex, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, or physical or mental disability which is unrelated to the ability to work or enjoy the benefits of the school's programs, facilities, or services. All persons are encouraged to apply.

VMS makes efforts to hire and maintain staff with the cultural and racial characteristics of the families we serve. Staff and volunteers who speak the language of the children being served will regularly interact with the children and families as needed.

Re-enrollment for the following school year begins in February for current families, and opens up to the general

public on March 1. To re-enroll your child, it is necessary to attend a re-enrollment meeting with the Head of School. The necessary paperwork and registration fee must also be submitted to assure your child's spot. It is not unusual for fall classes to be full before the start of summer.

Families with children who are moving up to a new program, especially elementary, are encouraged to ask for a personal tour and classroom observation.

Enrollment in the current school year does not guarantee re-enrollment for the coming school year. Receipt of the school's admission materials, tuition worksheet, application, contract, or submission of the application fee does not automatically mean that the child is accepted for enrollment or re-enrollment. An acceptance letter is sent to those families with children accepted for enrollment in the school.

Families of children attending VMS are expected to support the school in achieving the following:

- a positive school spirit
- a strong commitment to moral values and character development
- a commitment to a racially diverse enrollment
- a support of academic achievement
- providing a caring and community environment
- providing overall quality education
- reinforcing a positive attitude about the school in the community

### **Responsibilities of the Parents**

It is the responsibility of parents to be on time for arrival and dismissal, to promptly fulfill financial obligations to VMS, to provide the school with all legally required paperwork (see "Health Records Required" section) and to support the school and child by attending conferences and completing volunteer requirements. Parents are expected to stay informed of goals and policies of the school by reading notices and the school newsletter. It is equally important for parents to ensure the continuation of VMS for their own child by actively helping to build enrollment. Parents are also expected to maintain copies of contracts, worksheets, and monthly statements for their own personal record-keeping.

At the time of enrollment, parents sign a Parent/School Partnership Covenant, which specifies what parents can expect of the school, as well as what the school will expect of the parents. A copy of the covenant is found in the Appendices of this handbook.

Role Models: Parents/guardians serve as role models when they are on school property and should exhibit appropriate behavior for a school setting, which includes: no smoking; no profanity; no running in the school building; no punching or rough-housing.

Communication: Communication with faculty and administration over any concern is the responsibility of parents as well. It is always helpful to place any concerns in writing and then give it to the teacher or administration staff (see Appendix C and Appendix D).

Annual Giving and Fundraising: The enthusiastic participation of parents is essential to any special events or fundraisers sponsored by the school.

Families, trustees, and staff of the school are asked to make a monetary contribution to the school's annual giving fund. These funds support the school's day-to-day operating expenses, are ongoing to keep the school financially sound, and are a measure of community involvement - critical to securing outside grants. Because the school's tuition fees are insufficient to cover the entire cost of educating a child, the shortfall between tuition and actual cost is met by the annual giving campaign and any other special fundraising events. An annual giving goal is established by the Board of Trustees each year and a gift is requested from every family. Each gift is important, regardless of the amount. We aim for 100% participation from the trustees, staff and parents, as an expression of support for the school's faculty and programs. Results from the annual giving program are published. Villa Montessori School is a not-for-profit corporation and contributions to the school are deductible to the extent permitted by law.

Please refer to the Parent/School Partnership Covenant given to you at enrollment for further parent/school expectations (see sample in the Appendices of this handbook).

### **Billing Procedures**

Statements are issued on or around the 10th of the month and payments are due on the first day of the following month by 5:30 p.m. Statements are placed in the child's mailbox; payments may be placed in the box marked "Payments" outside the main office. Each family's account information is treated as confidential. Statements include all tuition; child care used during the previous month; hot lunches and milk used during the previous month. In addition, charges for purchases of items such as the yearbook etc. will appear on the statement.

In case of suspected errors or questions about your statement, families have 60 days from the statement date to contact the school and request a review of the charges. After 60 days, the school will not be responsible for researching and/or correcting charges on a statement.

Additional services required of staff beyond normal procedure may be subject to additional charges.

## Fees

The school provides a Programs and Fees Schedule each year, which outlines in "cafeteria" style the programs offered, and the costs of participation. Tuition is set each year by the Board of Trustees, and is calculated for the actual number of school days.

Tuition and fees are paid for services rendered, and do not provide families with ownership in the school or a guarantee of a specific level of academic performance.

Tuition rates for 2011-12 are as follows:

Infants (6 weeks-2 years).....	\$6.60/hour
Toddlers (2-3 years).....	\$6.20/hour
Pre-primary (3-6 years).....	\$5.95/hour
Elementary (K-6th).....	\$5,125/year

Families with children admitted into the elementary program assume responsibility for payment of the *full year's tuition*.

Refer to your family's tuition worksheet for the various payment options available. An \$87 processing fee is assessed for those families wishing to pay tuition on a monthly basis.

Hot Lunches/Milk: Children in the infant and toddler program (0-3 years) will be billed a hot lunch charge of \$3.50/day if they are being cared for at school during the lunch period (11:45 - 12:15).

Hot lunches may also be purchased for pre-primary and elementary students at a charge of \$3.50/day, including milk. Extra milk may be purchased for 30 cents/carton.

Prices are subject to change with 30 days notice.

Breakfast: Children who need to eat breakfast at school will be charged a \$2 breakfast fee.

Child Care: Child care is billed for children who are at Villa Montessori beyond their normal hours. Hourly rate for child care is the same as the tuition rate for infants, toddlers and pre-primary; elementary is charged at a rate of \$5.21/hour.

The school is open 7:00 a.m. - 5:30 p.m. Families may be charged \$15 for the first 15 minutes a child remains in school past 5:30 p.m.; \$15 will be charged for every 15 minutes thereafter. If the child remains in our care past 5:30 p.m. and a parent/guardian has not contacted the school and school personnel cannot reach the child's emergency contacts, the Department of Children and Family Services and Moline Police Department may be notified. Should this occur more than once, the child may be dismissed from the school.

Child care may also be available on days when school is not in session (e.g., during winter break). A sign up sheet will be available at the mailboxes beforehand so families may sign up for "child care only" days. "Child care only" days are not included in the tuition and charges will appear on the following month's bill.

Families are asked to sign up for any time needed during child care only days at least 24 hours in advance. Families who sign up at least 5 days prior to the start of a "child care only" period will receive a 5% discount on their child care charges for that period; however, the family will be billed for the hours for which they have been signed up.

Families may request an exchange of weeks during a fall, winter or spring break for weeks when school is in session. These must be done in a minimum of one week increments and must have prior approval of the school's business office staff.

## Schedule Changes

If a parent/guardian needs to have the child attend on a day/time when the child is not normally scheduled, a "Request for Additional Day" form should be filled out and given to the child's teacher (see Appendix F). This is for a *one-time* addition to the child's schedule. The teacher will determine if there is space for the child on that day and notify the parent. We are not licensed for drop-in child care and therefore are unable to accommodate children on unscheduled days without prior notification.

Schedule changes are defined as a regular or permanent change to a child's hours or days of attendance. If the child's schedule needs to be changed on a *permanent* basis, a "Change of Schedule" form should be completed (Appendix G). There is no service charge assessed for schedule changes made before July 15, 2011 or any schedule changes which increase the child's hours of attendance. All other schedule changes are assessed fees as follows: \$30 service charge for the first change; \$40 service charge for the second change; \$45 service charge for the third change. While the school strives to be flexible, frequent schedule changes are discouraged because of the disruption it causes the child. Schedule changes which reduce the number of days/hours the child attends for the remainder of the 2011-12 school year are not allowed after March 1, 2012.

Families may request special scheduling accommodations by speaking with the business office staff. If approved, the family will pay a flat \$75 fee per child per school year. Families with a "floating" schedule are required to submit to their child's teacher a schedule at least one week in advance.

## **Withdrawing a Child**

Written notice must be given at least 30 days in advance before withdrawal of a child from VMS (“Notice of Withdrawal” forms are available at the mailboxes; see a sample in the Appendices of this handbook.) In the event that withdrawal is made without such notice, the parent shall assume financial responsibility of one full month of tuition. A \$50 withdrawal fee will be assessed, per child, to the family's account. If a child is withdrawn after March 1, the parent shall assume financial responsibility for each of the monthly tuition payments through the end of the school year.

Withdrawal of an elementary student from the school will not excuse the parent from the duty to pay all of the tuition for the school year.

Once a family has left Villa Montessori School, it is the parents' responsibility to request a refund of any credit balance. If the parents do not request a refund within three months, the credit will be applied to the annual giving fund.

## **Application and Registration Fees**

Non-refundable application/registration fees are \$400 if paid together, upfront; application fee is \$200, registration fee is \$250 if the family wishes to pay application first, followed by registration at a later date. Families with multiple children are given a \$50 discount on the registration fee for the second and any subsequent children.

## **Discounts**

When a family has two siblings enrolled in the school, the family receives a 5 percent discount on tuition for the second child. Families with three or more siblings receive a 10 percent discount.

## **Reimbursements**

Families may request a 50% tuition credit for any full-time (scheduled for at least 35 hours/week) infant, toddler, or pre-primary student who misses class for at least four consecutive school days and presents a note from their family physician.

Full-time students (scheduled for 35+ hours/week) must notify the school 30 days in advance of a planned vacation or extended leave of absence in order to receive 50% tuition credit. Elementary students are not eligible for tuition credit.

## **Accounts Receivable Policy**

Bills are due the first day of the month by 5:30 p.m. If the first of the month falls on a holiday or weekend, payment is due on the last school day prior. Payments will be accepted in the form of cash, check, Master Card or Visa. There may be an additional charge for credit/debit payment options. Overdue bills will be charged a \$25 late fee plus a 2.9% finance charge on outstanding balances. VMS reserves the right to dismiss a family due to failure to make timely payments. A family with a balance of \$500 or above that is over 30 days past due may be subject to dismissal.

The following steps will be taken on past due accounts:

1. When an account is not paid by the 10th of the month, a late statement will be sent. Payment is expected upon receipt.
2. If payment is not submitted, it is the family's responsibility to contact the school immediately for consultation.
3. If no effort is made to contact the school for a consultation or if payment is not received within 30 days after due date, dismissal is considered automatic. The outstanding balance will be turned in for collection.

## **Readiness**

Each year the school will evaluate all children and discuss their progress and plans for entering the next program the following year. We will confer with the parents/guardians to help them evaluate the child's readiness. We will also be available to discuss questions about determining the most suitable source for the child's continuing education.

To aid in the transition from one age level program to another (e.g., toddler to pre-primary), children will have the opportunity to visit the next program for several weeks before actually moving to the next classroom.

Our multi-age classrooms and developmentally appropriate activities allow children who are advanced to pursue academic work beyond their age/grade level. This is especially beneficial for those children who may be developmentally ready for kindergarten, but miss the state's birthday cutoff date for kindergarten entrance. Villa Montessori follows the age requirements set by the states of Illinois and Iowa for kindergarten entrance.

## **School/Home Problems (Discipline and Ground Rules) and Dismissal**

Questions about a child's experiences at school should be directed first to the child's teacher. She is in the best position to answer your questions. She observes each student as an integral part of her role.

The ground rules of the school are: 1) You will respect yourself. 2) You respect others. 3) You will respect the environment. 4) You are expected to attend class.

The purpose of these ground rules is to aid in the development of self respect and respect for others. Any violation of these ground rules will result in the following consequences:

1. The child and teacher(s) talk about the problem and look for the best resolution of it.
2. Parents/Guardians will receive a written notice or a personal call from the teacher. Parents/Guardians must respond by the following school day to make arrangements for a special conference with the teacher(s), which must occur within 24 hours of notification.
  - (a) The conference allows an exchange of ideas about how to help the child. If there is a question about whether the child can function happily in this school, the school may set a limited "probationary" period of one to four weeks to try to work out the problem.
  - (b) Upon prior arrangement with the parents, the child who is unable to control unacceptable/disruptive behavior will be sent home from school if the unacceptable/disruptive behavior occurs. This approach seems to help the child understand that such behavior cannot be allowed. Should a family member or guardian not be available when needed, immediate dismissal will occur.
3. At the end of the probationary time the parents and teacher(s) will hold a personal or telephone conference to decide what further action will best meet the needs of the child, as well as the school community.

If a parent has a concern or question about the classroom procedure or child's progress, the classroom teacher should be consulted. If in the estimation of the parent or teacher, the issue or concern has not been satisfactorily resolved, then the Head of School should be consulted for resolution. The Board of Trustees does not act as a grievance committee and do not supersede decisions made by the Head of School. The Board's role is to remain aware of and responsive to any changes needed by the school for revision or establishment of policies or procedures to help the school function in a positive and successful way via work on the five standing committees.

When a serious problem arises that threatens the well-being of a student, staff member, or the school, or if a child exhibits continuous disruptive behavior, then faculty/administration may recommend that the student be dismissed. If, in the school's view, a family has not exhibited cooperative behavior in supporting the school's administration in regard to the child's education or school community as a whole, the family may be dismissed.

Serious problems which could result in a recommendation of dismissal as aforesaid, include, but not by way of limitation, the following:

- 1) Consistent aggressive or violent behavior, as defined by the school, dependent upon the age of the child.
- 2) Having or using radios, Gameboys, tape recorders, or other sound reproducing equipment, electronic beepers, or cellular phones in school.
- 3) Lying to a staff member or teacher;
- 4) Using profane language/gestures, name calling, etc.
- 5) Bringing in to the school or utilizing in the school gambling games of chance played for money or other tangibles.
- 6) Throwing snowballs on school property.
- 7) Students wearing clothing that violate the school's dress code.
- 8) Conduct or actions by students or their family members which is disruptive, undermining, and subversive to the overall operation of the school.
- 9) Inappropriate behavior violating the anti-harassment policy.

Bringing any life-threatening weapon (e.g., gun, knife, etc.) to school is cause for immediate dismissal.

The Head of School is authorized by the Board of Trustees to carry out the general supervision and management of the school, including dismissal of students.

### **Anti-Harassment Policy**

Villa Montessori School is enriched by the diversity of its members. The School recognizes and respects individual differences in background in regard to culture, race, ethnic origin, religion, gender, and sexual orientation. Each person at Villa Montessori has the right to participate fully in the life of the school without harassment.

In order to provide an environment of mutual respect, tolerance, and sensitivity, it is important that every member of the community recognize certain guidelines for appropriate behavior. Inappropriate behavior, either verbal or physical, that disregards the self-esteem of others is unacceptable. It includes unwelcome physical advances, unwarranted verbal remarks, derogatory statements, or discriminatory comments, and can occur between any two individuals or groups of individuals.

Listed are some examples of inappropriate behavior:

- uninvited pressure for sexual activity, whether explicit or implicit
- obscene or suggestive remarks or jokes, verbal abuse, insults
- display of explicit, offensive, or demeaning materials-hazing, threats
- comments which are demeaning with respect to race, religion, ethnic origin, gender, or sexual orientation
- inappropriate or foul language

## **Communications Policies**

The school uses a variety of formal and informal methods to communicate with families about the program philosophy and curriculum objectives, including educational goals and effective strategies that can be used by families to promote their children's learning. Specific methods of communications include:

*Newsletters:* The school newsletter, Villa Voices, is the official communications piece of the school. It is normally published twice a month during the school year; families are urged to read it completely since it often contains important information not communicated via other means. It is the family's responsibility to read this newsletter as well as any other published information not communicated via other means. It is the family's responsibility to read this newsletter as well as any other published policies, information, etc., in order to stay informed.

*Phone calls:* Class starts at 8:30 a.m. for elementary and 8:45 a.m. in all other classrooms. This may not be the best time for teachers to answer questions or hold lengthy conversations with family members. If you need to speak with a teacher at length, please call the classroom or leave a note.

*Parent/Teacher Conferences:* An orientation conference is scheduled between the teacher and family when a child is new to the classroom. Regular parent/teacher conferences are scheduled during the school year. Parents and guardians are urged to attend. In addition to these conference times, parents may contact their child's teacher to arrange a conference at any time of the year.

*Written communication:* Certain questions or comments that need to be communicated to teachers, administrative staff, etc. are best done in written form (standard forms are available at the mailbox area if you wish to utilize them; see Appendix C and D). Having information in writing will help us to respond more quickly and concisely to any of your concerns.

*Informal Communications:* In addition to more formal communications, we find informal communication vital to achieving our goals for the children. We need to know enough of what's happening in the child's world to adapt our environment to the child's needs as much as possible. If a significant change occurs in the home, the family should alert the child's teacher(s) as soon as possible. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school of changes in phone numbers, address, etc. All information will be kept confidential if the family so desires. (If the change is the birth of a new baby, we like to share the happiness.) If a change affects who may or may not pick up the child, the family should alert the office staff so the child's file may be updated. If legal action is involved, we are required to have a copy of applicable court decisions (i.e. custody decisions) on file.

*School web site:* The school web site is utilized as an advertising tool to reach prospective families. The web site also provides information for current families, such as lunch menu, school calendar, etc., which families can access.

*E-mail:* Families who provide VMS with e-mail addresses will occasionally receive information from the school via e-mail. This is particularly useful when the school needs to contact families quickly, e.g., early school closing due to bad weather, etc. Please notify the school if your e-mail address changes.

Because teachers are busy with the children in the classroom and are rarely at their desk, e-mail is not a recommended method of communication with the teachers. If you need to communicate to your child's teacher quickly, a phone call is generally the best route.

*Correspondence Box:* A receptacle labeled "Payments and Correspondence to the Office" can be found on the wall directly across from the main office door. Correspondence to any VMS staff member, as well as tuition payments, etc. may be left in this box.

*Family Survey:* Surveys are administered, allowing families to participate in a comprehensive evaluation to measure progress towards the school's goals and objectives. Participation in the survey is important to assist the school in making decisions to improve its programs.

## **Mailboxes**

Mailboxes for each family are located by the front door. They are for official school business only. Any communications placed in our families' mailboxes should be first approved by the appropriate staff. Birthday party invitations, presents, solicitations, sales brochures, etc. are not permitted.

Parents/guardians are responsible for checking their mailboxes daily. Teacher's notes, field trip permission forms, the school newsletter and invoices find their way home through this system.

Families are asked to respect the privacy of these mailboxes.

Commonly used forms (sign in/sign out sheets, medication permits, volunteer forms, etc.) are also located near the mailbox area for the convenience of the families.

## **Confidentiality/Privacy Policies**

The staff is instructed to never discuss parents or children with other parents or children. Information or opinions

concerning parents' and/or children's personality, intellect, behavior, financial background, home life, etc., is to be kept confidential. Families should respect each other's rights and privacy. Children's school records are kept in confidence and are only available to the child's parents and teachers. Records are kept in a locked file drawer.

We have a growing number of families with unlisted phone numbers, or who otherwise do not want their home phone numbers to be "mass distributed." In respect to those who wish to retain their privacy (or those who simply wish to control the release of their phone numbers) the school will not hand out phone numbers without first obtaining the family's permission.

### **Health Records Required**

Each child in the infant/toddler, toddler, or pre-primary programs must have a physical on file with the school, dated within the last two years. A physical must be completed upon entrance to the lower elementary program, and again when the child enters fifth grade. The state requires proof of dental examination for children entering kindergarten, second grade, and sixth grade.

***Proof of updated immunizations needs to be submitted to the office for infant and toddler children each time they receive new immunizations.*** This is a DCFS requirement. If a family objects to a child receiving immunizations required by the State of Illinois on religious grounds, the family may submit a statement of objection to the Head of School on a form provided by our school. Either proof of immunization or this signed statement must be on file before a child can enter or continue in Villa Montessori programs. We regret that there can be no exception to this policy and noncompliance may result in dismissal of the child from school.

### **Illness Policies**

A child may not attend school programs and activities when ill. Even if a child's condition is questionable, we ask the family to be cautious and to contact a medical professional before allowing the child to return to our programs. Children may not attend school or child care if they have had a fever of 100° F or over, diarrhea or vomiting within 24 hours. Children who develop symptoms while at school will be sent home and should not be back in school for at least 24 hours. If a child becomes ill at school, staff will first attempt to contact parents; if we cannot reach the parents, staff will contact others named on the child's application for pick-up. If the child is suspected of having a contagious illness, the child will be made comfortable and will be located where new individuals will not be exposed, until the child can be picked up.

Children who receive an out-patient surgical procedure should not return to school the same day. Non-compliance with the illness guidelines will result in a warning and may ultimately be cause for dismissal.

Students who have symptoms of communicable disease will be excluded from school until the disease is no longer contagious. Parents should notify the school when their child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease; the school will issue a note to families to inform them that a contagious illness has been diagnosed in the classroom. If deemed necessary, the school may request a note from the child's physician indicating the child is no longer contagious. Communicable diseases and conditions include, but are not limited to: strep, conjunctivitis (pink eye), impetigo, chicken pox, thrush, and head lice.

If the child requires prolonged recuperation from an illness or injury, and the attending physician recommends he/she stay inside, the physician should send the school a note with instructions for this special care. Families should consider that we go outside every day barring weather extremes; if the child cannot participate in the full range of indoor and outdoor experiences, he/she will usually need to remain home.

### **Chronic Health Challenges**

If the child has or develops a chronic condition requiring special care (i.e., a child with chronic bladder infections who needs to be sent to the bathroom every two hours, or an asthmatic child who must avoid certain allergens), please have the physician send us written instructions. Families are asked to completely and accurately fill out the school's "Health Information Report."

### **Medication**

When the child requires any medication (prescription or over-the-counter) while at school, the family will need to complete a medication permission slip which is available at the mailbox area or in the classroom (see Appendix B). The medication must be in the original container provided by the pharmacy with the child's name on it and dosage information. The permission slip and medication must be delivered by the adult to the room where the child is dropped off. Medications are kept in lockboxes in the classroom's project area.

### **Injury**

In case of a minor injury at school which does not require immediate parental action (e.g., scratch, bump, bruise) the school will provide an accident report in the child's mailbox, to alert the family to the situation. If a family prefers to be immediately called for any and all injuries, please communicate this to the teacher.

In case of an accident at school, the parent/guardian will be called as soon as first aid has been given. If they cannot be reached we will call the first person (other than the parent/guardian) listed on the child's application form. If that person is unavailable, we will call the child's physician. For this reason, we require the parent/guardian to sign an emergency release before the child enters school. If the family's phone numbers change, it is important that the school be notified so that emergency records can be updated. In addition to calling the family, we will provide an accident report.

Just as we provide information to the family about incidents at school, we appreciate information from the family when the child comes to school injured. We need to know if any special precautions or care is required. Note: Teachers and child care providers are mandated by law to report any suspected child abuse.

### **Insurance**

The school's property and liability insurance policy does not cover costs for medical treatment incurred by students due to injuries resulting from normal participation in any school activity, including but not limited to classroom, recess, athletic, and extra-curricular activities, whether or not these activities take place on school property.

### **Food**

State law requires that all children under three years of age in our care during the lunch period must be served a hot lunch by the school. Children are encouraged to feed themselves when they are ready. Pre-primary and elementary children may choose to purchase a hot lunch or bring a sack lunch from home. Parents should be respectful of nutrition requirements of the child, based on the child's age and ability to make wise food choices. Pop or candy will not be allowed for consumption at lunch time and will be sent home. Water or juice bottles are not allowed at school for individual use by students during the day.

Parents should notify the school if the child has food allergies or food restrictions of any kind.

Infants: The parents need to provide all food and drink for infants until they are eating table foods and drinking school milk. Parents will need to provide all bottles and factory-sealed formula, baby food, and cereal. Bottles need to be taken home daily to be disinfected. Once an infant has started on table foods, parents are asked to take home a school lunch menu and circle the foods the child can eat at school.

Whole milk is provided for children in the Monet Room via the snack list. Parents have the option of bringing in additional whole milk for their own child if they choose.

### **Breakfast Policy**

If a child arrives before 7:30 a.m. the family may send a prepared and nutritious breakfast which we will present to the child. Children who need to be fed breakfast at school will be charged a \$2 breakfast fee. Both food and beverage should be provided. If the school must provide milk, the child's account will be billed. There is not an option for breakfast after 7:30 a.m..

### **Snacks**

In the pre-primary, toddler, and infant/toddler classrooms, nutritious foods for snack time are provided by a different family within the class each week. A snack includes 100% fruit juice or milk and a nutritious food such as raw fruit or vegetables, whole grain bread, wholesome crackers and/or natural cheese. Children are encouraged to feed themselves when they are ready. Children are never forced to eat. Children are offered snack in the morning and afternoon, in addition to lunch

Families are generally asked to bring snack once per semester; those who are here during summer session will typically be asked to bring in snack once during summer as well. When it is a family's turn to bring snack, we ask that the child be allowed to help in the selection. The teacher will send home a list with recommended snack items. Please consider the students when purchasing snack and bring in sufficient quantities as requested by the teacher. Items brought in for snack must be pre-packaged; DCFS regulations state that we cannot serve snacks prepared at home (e.g., home-baked foods). Families whose children are in care before or after regular class hours will be asked to provide extra snack items since their children are offered more snacks.

Please bring the snack items in on the Monday of your scheduled snack week. If snack doesn't arrive by Wednesday, the office will bill your account for snack which needs to be purchased - \$35 for part-time students, \$50 if your child is here full days - plus a \$25 surcharge for staff time to go out and purchase snack items. Families who bring less snack than what is requested may also be billed.

Elementary staff will issue its own snack guidelines.

### **Food Allergies**

If a child is allergic to any food or beverage, the family should note it on the Application Form, on the Health Information Report, and directly to the child's teacher. If an allergy develops while the child is enrolled, it is vital to alert our staff immediately. DCFS regulations states that non-milk based formulas require a note from the child's doctor.

## **No Smoking**

Villa Montessori School is a no smoking facility. No smoking is allowed in the building or on school grounds.

## **Outdoor Education Policy**

Children are enriched by time spent outdoors. We have a lovely outdoor environment which we like to enjoy. Our students 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. We welcome questions about this aspect of our curriculum. Families should feel free to ask the child's teacher about outdoor education. Children are expected to go outside on a daily basis. If a child's parent indicates that they are not to go outside, a doctor's excuse will be needed.

Our outdoor area was carefully planned to include an extensive natural environment, which also provides opportunity for gross motor activities and dramatic play.

Teachers will use their best judgment about outdoor time, based on weather conditions. Staff will protect children and adults from exposure to high levels of air pollution from smog or heavy traffic by limiting outdoor and physical activity as a precaution during smog or other air pollution alerts.

If families wish their child to wear sunscreen, it should be applied at home before sending the child to school. If the student stays into the afternoon, parents should send a labeled bottle of sunscreen and sign a sunscreen permit form so that sunscreen may be re-applied at school before going outside in the afternoon.

## **Clothing (outerwear)**

To protect against cold, sun, injury, and insect-borne disease, the school helps ensure that children wear clothing that is dry appropriate for weather conditions.

Children have the opportunity to play in the shade. When in the sun children should have sun-protective clothing and/or sunscreen or sunblock with UVB and UVA protection of SPF 15 or higher (see sunscreen information, above).

Each child should be appropriately dressed to play outside. Boots are needed for fall, winter, and spring. Boots that go over shoes are sometimes difficult for young children to manage, so each family is asked to provide boots that the child can learn to put on and to remove. Waterproof boots, if toasty warm, are ideal. Water repellent boots are acceptable, provided the child understands that his or her boots will NOT keep his or her feet dry if splashed in puddles. Waterproof mittens are also recommended.

In warmer weather, it is recommended that children avoid wearing sandals or other open-toe shoes. Sandals often slip off when the child is running or climbing outdoors, and also contribute to stubbed toes. For all children of walking age, an extra pair of tennis shoes should be kept at school if a child does not wear tennis shoes to school.

Children learning to walk are encouraged to be barefoot. The use of socks with grippers may be useful to keep feet warm.

Elementary children need to have gym shoes on days when fitness class is held.

The child's name must be marked on all outerwear. A "sharpie" marker works well on most items. During mitten season, we especially appreciate each family who checks to be sure the child has EVERY item needed for safe outdoor play. This includes a hat, gloves or mittens, warm coat, snowpants, and boots. A fee of \$2 for school-supplied hats or mittens given to the child (to keep) will be charged if a child has no hats or mittens/gloves for outdoor time during cold weather. Additional action may be taken if a child continues to come to school without proper outerwear.

Please check the "Lost and Found" container near the mailboxes for any lost items, and turn in any "odd" clothing you may discover.

School clothing should be neat, comfortable, and appropriate for the weather. It should also be easy for the child to manage himself, and labeled with the child's name. For the child who is learning to use the toilet, it is especially important that he/she can quickly remove key items.

Families need to be sure their child has a complete set of spare clothing which the child may change into in case of an accident. These will be stored in the classroom. The school is not responsible for providing extra clothing for children who need them.

Parents will be notified if the child consistently comes to school without appropriate clothing for participation in outside activity or physical education classes. Without appropriate clothing, children may be unable to participate in those activities.

## **Clothing - Dress Code**

The dress code is in effect at all times in the building as well as at school-related activities. The dress code is one that allows the child and parents to select their own responsible style of dress. We do insist, however, that the following criteria be met:

1. Students should not wear anything that will impair their health or safety.

2. Students should be neat and clean. The child's appearance (including hair, clothing, foot coverings, etc.) should not distract.

3. Students should not wear anything that is publicly indecent or that would tend to disrupt the educational process.

4. Foot coverings must be worn at all times for children older than infants. Open-toe sandals are discouraged to avoid possible bee stings or stubbed toes. For children of walking age, an extra pair of tennis shoes should be kept at school if a child does not wear tennis shoes to school.

5. Infants learning to walk are encouraged to be barefoot. The use of socks with grippers may be useful to keep feet warm.

6. Students may not wear or display any clothing, jewelry, emblem, badge, symbol, or other items associated with membership or in affiliation with a gang or secret society.

It is recommended that parents dress children in clothing that can take exuberant learning and serious play. The child's day may include activities such as painting, science experiments, and rigorous outdoor play. Clothing should be appropriate for these activities.

Girls may consider having a pair of shorts or leggings to slip under dresses for fitness days or during recess.

The school will not be responsible for any damage done to clothing, or for lost jewelry or hair accessories.

### **Lost and Found**

The "Lost and Found" box is near the mailboxes, although "found" items may remain in the classroom for a day or so. Items unclaimed after a month will be donated to the Salvation Army or Goodwill.

### **Personal Belongings**

Children who sleep at school may bring along a special item to sleep with; however, the item will be set aside until sleep time so that it will not cause disturbances during class time. Cribs (for infants), mats, cots, and blankets are provided by the school for sleep time; no toys may hang from cribs. Due to limited storage space, other items such as pillows, sleeping bags, etc. are not allowed.

Personal items (backpacks, small diaper bags, special "treasures," etc.) will be placed on the child's box so as not to disturb work in the classroom. Car seats may be taken to the child's classroom and stored in the teacher's office. The school is not responsible for the condition or loss of personal items brought to VMS. Teachers or staff may remove and send home any items which are deemed

inappropriate for the classroom. Toy guns or weapons of any kind (including squirt guns) are not allowed.

### **Diapering Supplies/Potty-training**

All diapering supplies for children not yet potty-trained should be brought by the child's parents. School personnel will notify parents when a child is running low on diapers. Families will be charged \$1/diaper for school-supplied diapers if the child has no diapers at school. "Pull-ups" are not allowed for children who are in the process of potty-training.

When parents feel the child is ready to begin the toileting process, please talk to the classroom teacher.

### **Infant Napping Policy**

Infants are placed on their backs to sleep (this is an NAEYC regulation). No toys from home, etc. may be in the crib or hang from the crib.

### **Birthday Parties & Invitations**

We enjoy celebrating each child's birthday with a simple observance and candle lighting ceremony. Due to the number of food-related allergies, treats, muffins, etc. will not be allowed for birthdays. In lieu of providing birthday treats, we ask that parents donate a book or music CD to the child's classroom. (Parents may wish to check with the child's teacher for preferred authors/music styles). Parents who bring a book may wish to make the presentation by reading the book to the entire class.

Children with birthdays in the summer months may celebrate their "half birthday" during the school year with their classroom. However, children should expect to celebrate only one birthday or "half birthday" each year. Children are very aware of being left out. Therefore, in deference to the feelings of all children, party invitations may not be sent at school nor be made in person at school. It isn't always feasible to invite a whole class of children to a party, but inevitably the whole class knows of the event if invitations are offered at school. The feelings of young children are very tender and hurts occur easily.

### **Parent Participation**

Villa Montessori School encourages and appreciates the participation of families. While most after school events are available as options for the family, a few are important to the success of this experience for the child. Parent education meetings about the Montessori philosophy, our methods of working with children, and

other topics of interest, are held throughout the year. We hope each family will attend at least one each year.

Parents are asked to complete 15 hours of volunteer service to the school. Volunteer hours are easy to earn and they help support our school throughout the year. Examples of volunteer hours include: helping with school events; assisting the classroom teacher; being a book parent or room parent; serving on a school committee. Each family keeps track of the hours they have contributed (see Appendix E).

### **Safety Policy**

Periodic fire and tornado drills allow the children to practice safety procedures in the event of an emergency. If a family member arrives to pick up a child in mid-drill, please allow the child to complete it. From time to time, the school also hosts local experts who talk to the children about safety issues. The local fire department and the Illinois Department of Health have served as resources for this safety information and we encourage families to let them know we appreciate this.

The school urges safe use of all playground equipment. It helps the children to have consistent rules enforced by their families when playing on the equipment outside of school hours. If a family is uncertain of the safety rules of the school, they are encouraged to ask any teacher.

### **Security/Signing In and Out**

Blank sign-in sheets are available in the mailbox area by the front door of the school. It is vital that families utilize these. The sign-in/sign-out sheets help ensure your child's security, and are also used to calculate the child care billing. Habitual failure to sign in/out on the appropriate sheets will be cause for additional charges or dismissal. Therefore, it is to the family's benefit to be accurate and consistent in using this form. (Families utilizing the school's teacher escort service at 11:45 a.m. may indicate the time the child left when signing the child in the next day.) Each family should be sure to put the child's name on the sheet (see Appendix A).

### **Transportation Policy**

Transportation to and from school is the responsibility of the family. Current state law requires all children to be in approved safety restraints, either a car seat or safety belt.

### **Parking**

Families are asked to park in a parking spot in the lot in front of the school and to enter through the front doors. The front drive-through (marked off with paint) is

designed for fire department use, bus pull-up and group dismissal times and is not intended for routine family parking. Families who habitually park in "no parking" areas may be subject to a fine. Except in an emergency to pick up an ill or injured child, no car should be left unattended in the drive-through.

### **Drop Off/Pick Up Procedures**

It is the adult's responsibility to assure that the child arrives to school on time and is picked up promptly. Children younger than elementary should be brought to the classroom with an adult. DCFS licensing requires all children to wash hands, upon arrival, before joining their classmates. All visitors must wash hands upon entering also.

Adults dropping off children in the classroom are asked to use quiet voices and not interrupt the work cycle of children already in the room. Family members are asked to refrain from cell phone use when dropping off/picking up in order to more fully focus on the child. This will help in easing the child's transition between you and the classroom.

Anyone entering the Monet classroom (infants) must remove shoes. Foot coverings are provided for individuals who have bare feet. (This is an NAEYC requirement.) For safety reasons, older siblings must remain by the class door and not wander through the Monet room.

It takes time for young children to become accustomed to a new setting. Staff members have been trained to deal with separation anxiety. Staff members are willing to assist families in this process; please let us know if you would like guidance or reassurance.

The adult needs to be certain the child is within a staff member's sight before being left. The child's well-being is our main concern, but we cannot be certain of it if we don't know the child is in the building. Each child in our care who is old enough to do so must report to his teacher or caregiver before leaving with an authorized adult. Authorized people are those you have listed on your child's application form, and only those individuals can pick up your child. Staff members will ask to see identification if the person picking up the child is someone they do not recognize. Additions and deletions to the child's authorized pick up list must be done in writing; a form is available at the mailboxes (see Appendices for a sample).

Once the child is with this adult, the staff will no longer be responsible for the child's well-being. Therefore, the person who picks up the child should keep the child in sight, and adhere to the school's ground rules and policies until off school premises. A child's inappropriate behavior witnessed by staff members will be corrected as long as the child is on school property.

For the child's own safety, if staff members observe a child who is unattended, either inside or outside the building, the child will be directed to the appropriate child care classroom.

Families picking up pre-primary children at 11:45 a.m. may utilize the school's valet service to pick up the child in the drive through without having to leave the car.

### **Solicitation**

The school does not permit soliciting, peddling, or the canvassing of employees or families during working hours. No school building, facility, or class list may be used for this purpose. The only exception is for school-sponsored fundraisers.

### **Babysitting**

It is against school policy for staff members to provide babysitting services after hours to VMS families; therefore, families should refrain from asking staff members to baby-sit. Staff members may be subject to dismissal if in violation.

### **Snow and Storm Days**

We strive to be open every day of the school year, regardless of weather. However, we do not wish to endanger the safety of our staff and families if weather conditions make travel inadvisable. Villa Montessori School will utilize the Moline/ Rock Island/United Township schools as a guideline for determining weather related school closings. In the event that heavy snow or ice is forecasted for later in the day, the school may announce an early dismissal. There is no tuition reimbursement for weather-related school closings.

Listen to TV and radio stations for cancellation information; generally, KWQC-TV Channel 6 is usually the first station notified, with WQAD-TV and CBS4QC (WHBF) following.

### **Emergency Procedures**

The school has an "Emergency Procedures Plan" which covers a wide variety of emergency situations, including those that are weather-related. This plan was created with guidance from federal, state, and law enforcement personnel. The school practices emergency drills, e.g., fire drill, tornado drill, etc. Please see a staff member if you have questions.

### **Visitors/Observers Policy**

All visitors are expected to enter the school through the front doors and to report to the office immediately. At the office, visitors check in and a staff member guides them to their destination. Visitors are not allowed to walk through the building unescorted by a staff member. Name badges are available from the office and should be worn. Any visitor who is not recognized by the staff can expect to be stopped and politely questioned. The school reserves the right to stop a visitor at the office and not allow further access to the school.

Families of students may visit any area of the facility at any time during the programs' regular hours of operation. The school asks that parents or guardians check with the teacher beforehand if an extended visit to the classroom is planned. The presence of another adult in the classroom can sometimes be disruptive to the children and parents are asked to defer to the teacher's judgment. Parents or guardians visiting or observing the classroom need to sign in at the school office and obtain a name badge.

If parents/guardians plan to be in the school for an extended period of time (for instance, to perform volunteer work within the classroom) we ask that they notify the office upon arrival, where a name badge will be given to them. Long-term volunteers may be required to undergo a background check, per DCFS regulations.

Tours by high school and college students, and by families considering enrolling their children, are a common occurrence. We enjoy sharing our environment and philosophy with others and find that discussion is needed to aid them in understanding our goals. Tours for families in the process of selecting a school are conducted by administrative staff, so our current students are not deprived of valuable time with their teachers.

Villa Montessori School is home to the Montessori Heartland Teacher Education Center, which serves adult students from across the Midwest. As part of their training, these adult students will occasionally spend time observing in VMS classrooms.

### **Pets/Animals Policy**

The school follows DCFS and NAEYC guidelines for class pets, as well as any animals that are brought into the school. Please be aware that, because of the ages of children we serve, the guidelines are quite stringent. Class pets or visiting animals must have proof that they are fully immunized and teaching staff supervise all interactions between children and animals/pets. Children who are allergic to any type of animal are not exposed to that animal.



## Quick Answers to Common Questions

*What should I do if my child is sick or not attending school today?*

Call the school at 309-764-7047 to inform staff of your child's absence. Please phone in absences no later than one hour after your child was due to arrive at school.

*When are bills due?*

Bills are always due the first day of the month, regardless of whether or not it is a school day. If the first of the month is a holiday, occurs on the weekend, or during a break period, please make sure your tuition is turned in to us before then. A flat \$25 late fee plus finance charges are assessed when tuition is received by the school after the first of the month.

*Who should I talk to if I have a question on my bill?*

Talk to Maureen Brandle, business manager, or Chris Curless, office assistant. Please speak to them before the bill is due, as late fees will begin to accumulate after the first of the month. See "Billing Procedures" on page 10 for more information.

*My child needs to take medication while at school. What should I do?*

Pick up a medication permit form from your child's teacher or from the mailbox area. Fill out the form and give it to your child's teacher (See Appendix B).

*What should I do if I need to have someone different pick up my child?*

The only people we will allow to pick up your child are those you have listed as "authorized persons" on your child's application form. If you need to change or add to this list, please do so in writing; we have a form, "Addition/Deletion to Child's Pick Up List" specifically for this purpose. If it's an emergency, please phone the school office to let us know who will be picking up your child. That person should be prepared to show identification to school personnel.

*Who should I talk to if I have questions regarding my child's class performance, behavior, routine, etc.?*

Talk directly to your child's teacher. The teacher is the one who has the most direct contact with your child and is the one who determines the classroom routine. If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the classroom teacher, or if you are having a problem with your child's teacher, please talk to Renee Detloff, head of school.

*If I need a receipt for a payment I am making to the school, what should I do?*

If you come into the office to make the payment, just tell us you need a receipt and we'll issue you one on the spot. If you mail your check or place it in the drop off box in the hallway, attach a note to your check, indicating that you need a receipt. We'll place your receipt in your mailbox.

*What is the school's tax ID number? I need it for my flex plan and/or income taxes.*

The number is: 36-3200060.

07/13/11