

# Undercroft

Montessori School • est. 1964



## 2022-2023 PARENT HANDBOOK

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*"The education of even a small child, therefore, does not aim at preparing him for school, but for life.*

**-Dr. Maria Montessori**

# Welcome to Undercroft Montessori School!

To both new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year! We are so happy you are part of our Undercroft community. Over the course of this year your children will grow in a Montessori environment designed to cultivate qualities of independence, confidence, competence, leadership and a love of learning.

Parents are important teachers in the lives of their children and we are honored to partner with you in support of your child's learning and development. The strength of that partnership is an important foundation for your child's success in school. We are committed to our relationships with parents and rely on your communication, support, and involvement to ensure a successful experience for your child.

As we begin Undercroft's 59<sup>th</sup> year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things Undercroft has to offer.

Please review carefully the information included in this handbook. It is intended to acquaint you with the policies and procedures of the school. It is important that you read it thoroughly.

This summer, we will review and update our pandemic plan, which summarizes the strategies we will employ to safeguard the health and well-being of our school community in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. This plan remains a living document, and will be subject to change throughout the year as we respond to changing guidelines for schools, as well as changing circumstances related to the pandemic in the greater community. When policies in this Parent Handbook are contradicted by the UMS Plan for Safe Reopening, the Plan for Safe Reopening supersedes this Parent Handbook.

We are delighted you have chosen our school for your child and look forward to working together to provide a rich opportunity for your child's growth and development.

Warm regards,



Nancy Davis  
Head of School

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# Mission Statement

*Undercroft was founded in 1964 by parents who wanted to bring Montessori education to Tulsa. Undercroft is the first and only accredited Montessori school in Oklahoma.*

## Our Mission:

Undercroft Montessori School provides an authentic Montessori education. We are committed to academic excellence; independence in thought and action; critical and collaborative thinking and; compassion and respect for self, community and the world.

## Our Philosophy:

The Montessori approach to education takes its name from Italian physician and educator, Dr. Maria Montessori. Developed over a century ago, her discoveries regarding how children develop and learn are supported by modern scientific research. Undercroft Montessori School is among thousands of Montessori schools around the world.

Dr. Montessori discovered:

- Students' education and development largely result from their own efforts
- Students possess a deep desire to explore their environment with all of their senses
- Students require freedom to move and choose their own activities
- Students have innate desire for purposeful work
- Students' environment plays a significant role in providing information and opportunities for exploration



## Our Values:

Members of the Undercroft community value and are committed to:

- Nurture the spirit of the child
- Foster personal responsibility for learning and life choices
- Provide a prepared environment supporting individual students' developmental needs at each level
- Demonstrate community and global awareness, global citizenship and social responsibility
- Promote peace
- Celebrate and honor diversity
- Recognize and cultivate the whole child; physical, emotional, social and intellectual
- Respect our staff and fully trained guides; dedicated, compassionate and committed to ongoing professional development
- Build strong and active partnerships among students, parents and staff
- Thrive as a mutually respectful and supportive community

# Nondiscrimination Policy

Undercroft Montessori School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sex, national or ethnic origin, genetic information, disability, age or any other class protected by law, in administration of its policies, practices or procedures, including admission of students, tuition assistance, and educational services.

## School Hours

### Arrival Carpool Time<sup>1</sup>:

Early Childhood	7:55 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.
Elementary & Middle School	7:55 a.m. – 8:15 a.m.

Please try to arrive promptly by 7:55 a.m. to assure your child will arrive to school on time. Guides will leave carpool and return to their classrooms no later than 8:15 a.m.

### Hours in Classrooms:

Half Day Early Childhood Classes	7:55 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Full Day Students, All Levels	7:55 a.m. to 3:15 p.m.

### Departure Carpool Times<sup>2</sup>:

Half Day Early Childhood Classes	11:30 a.m. – 11:35 a.m.
Early Childhood Full Day Sessions	3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Elementary	3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.
Middle School	3:15 p.m. – 3:30 p.m.

Please try to arrive promptly for carpool within the time periods stated above. Morning early childhood students not picked up by 11:35 will be brought to the office to wait. Students not picked up by 3:30 will be brought to after care.

Before School Care Program	7:30 a.m. to 7:55 a.m.
After School Care Program	3:15 p.m. to 5:30 p.m.
School Office Hours	7:55 a.m. to 5:30 p.m.

## Messages and Phone Calls

To reduce interruptions to the classrooms, all phone calls for teaching staff during office hours must be made through the Main Office number (918) 622-2890. Administrative staff will convey urgent messages immediately upon receipt to teaching staff; all non-urgent calls for teaching staff will be directed to their voice mail. Calls will be returned after school and/or within 24 hours. **Please do not call or text guides cell phones during the school day.**

Messages may be left (via voice mail) at the main office when the office is closed or when the staff is temporarily away from the office.

The Before & After School Care programs can be reached through the main office number until 5:30 p.m., and through the auto attendant directory extension.

The office FAX number is (918) 622-3203. Other addresses are included in the school's Parent Directory in the parent login portion of our website.

## After Hours Emergency Phone Calls

After hours emergency calls can be made to the Head of School's cell phone at 847-331-0767.

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<sup>1</sup> Please see policies concerning tardiness in Section VIII.

<sup>2</sup> Please see policies concerning late pick up in Section VIII.



## **I. Undercroft Montessori School**

### **History and Current Background of the School**

Montessori education is based on principles established a century ago by the Italian physician Dr. Maria Montessori. It found broad acceptance in the developed nations of the world and has been practiced in the United States for over 100 years. The Montessori approach is based on sound foundations in the behavioral and biological sciences. It is receiving increased recognition as a highly successful alternative to conventional educational methods. Montessorians have no common religious or political orientation. They are bound together only by their commitment to an educational philosophy based on natural human development that fosters a love of learning, self-reliance and self-respect.

Undercroft Montessori School was founded in 1964 as a nonprofit corporation by a group of Tulsa parents seeking the advantages of this unique approach for their own children. Today, there is every reason for optimism about the future of Undercroft and that of Montessori education in general.

Originally housed in the undercroft (basement) at Trinity Episcopal Church, Undercroft has expanded and improved. In 1967 the School purchased a building and land, establishing its home at its present location. In the fall of 1998 Undercroft elementary classes moved into a new building. In 2008, new construction replaced the 1967 "temporary" west building. With these expanded facilities, Undercroft quickly grew from its opening enrollment of 30 preschool children to its present enrollment of around 230 from age 3 through 8<sup>th</sup> grade.

Under the direction of the specially trained Montessori teaching staff, the students of Undercroft Montessori School are offered the full range of programs in practical life and sensorial development, language development, mathematics, geometry, science, geography, history, Spanish, music, creative arts, and physical fitness.

### **The Organization of the School**

Undercroft Montessori School is a nonprofit corporation owned by all parents of students presently enrolled in the school. The board of directors is the policy making body of the school corporation.

Board members are elected at the Annual Corporation Meeting each April to serve the school for a two-year term of office. Members of the board of directors may or may not be parents of students enrolled at the school.

*See organization chart on page 4.*

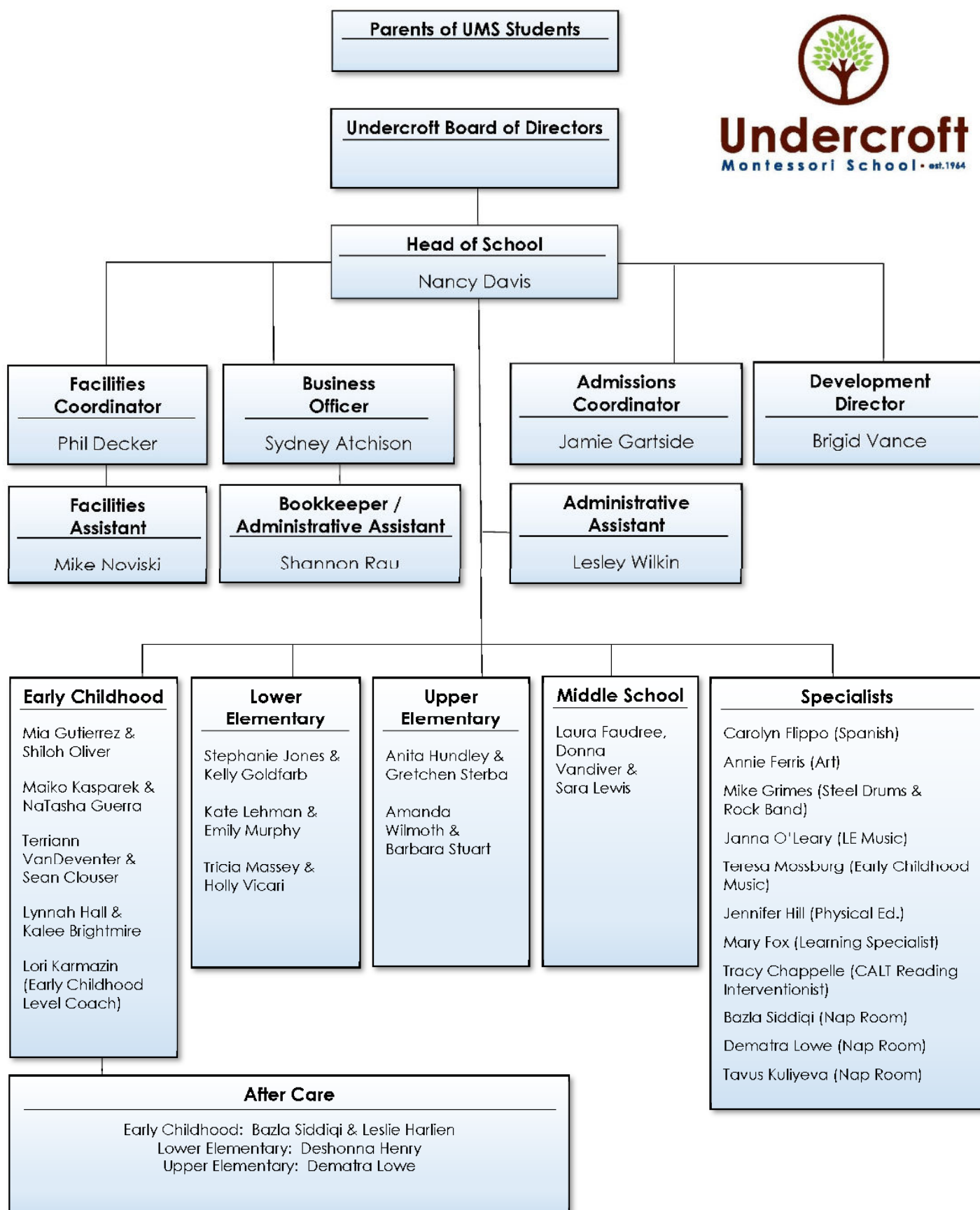
## Accreditation

Undercroft Montessori School is accredited through the American Montessori Society [AMS]. This accreditation affirms our school meets a standard of excellence recognized by educators and Montessorians worldwide.



**AMERICAN MONTESSORI SOCIETY**  
education that transforms lives  
Accredited Member School





## Functions of the Board of Directors

The functions of the Board of Directors include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Hold in trust the past foundational beginnings of the School, the present daily provision of the School, and the future development of programs as well as the School's physical plant;
- Formulate the general policies for the School's operation in accordance with the School's Statement of Mission;
- Hire, evaluate, and lend organizational support to the Head of School chosen to lead the School and Board educationally, organizationally and philosophically;
- Provide the necessary facilities and educational and administrative equipment for the operation of the School;
- Oversee the sound financial management of the School;
- Provide a financial assistance program;
- Conduct fundraising efforts to assist the growth and development of the School;
- Assist the School's public relations program to help inform the community of the School's unique educational character.

The School strives to function at a high level of achievement; therefore, it depends on the mutual efforts of all its volunteering members. Parents and staff are encouraged to volunteer their services to board committees.

Filling the role of a Parent Teacher Organization, the Community Building Committee (CBC) is led by a member(s) of the Board of Directors and includes the Head of School, Staff members, Room Parents and all parents, and friends of Undercroft. The CBC is charged with the task of building and supporting the sense of community among the families attending Undercroft Montessori School. Through CBC activities, we hope to foster a sense of belonging and camaraderie throughout the school.

Non-voting attendees at Board meetings include staff representatives to the Board, the Head of School, and others who may be invited to share their expertise.

The Board of Directors typically meets monthly on the 2<sup>nd</sup> Tuesday. Board meetings are open and parents are always welcome to attend. If parents want to address the Board, contact the Board Secretary in writing prior to the 1<sup>st</sup> Monday of each month. The Board will not consider concerns and appeals without going through the Concerns and Appeals process.

## Parent Concerns and Appeals

Any parent (or legal guardian) who has a concern about the school or classroom practices shall follow the procedures below:

- |         |  |
|---------|--|
| Step 1. | Contact the appropriate guide directly via e-mail to schedule a meeting with the guide. Provide in writing your concerns and discuss them with the guide at the scheduled meeting. The guide will respond in writing within one week.                            |
| Step 2. | If the concerns persist or remain unresolved, contact the office to schedule a meeting with the Head of School. Provide in writing the concerns and discuss these concerns at the scheduled meeting. The Head of School will respond in writing within one week. |
| Step 3. | If the matter is not resolved to the parent's satisfaction, the parent may contact the President of the Board of Directors in writing. The Board will respond in writing to the parent within 30 days.   |

## II. Admissions & Enrollment

### Procedures

Admission to Undercroft Montessori School is open to children who are 3 through 14 years old. These ages are approximate as they depend on the individual child's readiness and development. Parents desiring to apply for the admission of their child are required to:

- Visit and observe the school's learning environments and study the school's information packet to familiarize themselves with the philosophy and nature of the school
- Complete the *Application for Admission* form and the *Authorization for Release of Information* form and return them to the school office along with a non-refundable application fee as described on the form. Transferring students must provide Undercroft with records and recommendations from previous schools
- Schedule an introduction to the classroom environment through the office for their child with one of the Montessori guides (teachers)
- Elementary applicants also have a shadow experience in the classroom

The Admissions Coordinator will, after consultation with the interviewing guide(s), notify parents of a student's acceptance.

Decisions are based on the child's apparent readiness, recommendations and records from previous schools and the availability of space within the learning environments. Consideration is given to the balance of ages and genders in each classroom as well as the date of the application. Prior Montessori experience is also a consideration. Siblings of children currently or



previously enrolled at Undercroft will receive limited preference for acceptance. Siblings will not be automatically placed with the guide of an older child or in the same class as a sibling.

Prior Montessori experience is preferred for students entering the elementary or middle school program. Please note our program is progressive, built on successive 3-year spirals of curriculum. Children who begin their Montessori education early in life (age

3) receive the most benefit; therefore, placement of an older child occurs less frequently. We encourage commitment to the entire program, from early childhood through middle school, to reap the full benefits of the Montessori curriculum.

### Student Placement

The Head of School determines student placement within the learning environments at Undercroft. Students are placed in classrooms according to the best interests of the individual student and the class. A balance of ages, genders, learning characteristics and temperaments within each class is sought.

Parents with placement concerns should bring them directly to the attention of the Head of

School. Although input is welcomed requests cannot be guaranteed. Contracts cannot be cancelled based on classroom placement or staffing decisions.

### III. Financial Information

Tuition costs and fees are listed in the School Tuition Contract and posted on the website.

#### Supply Fee

The Supply Fee is due with the return of a signed contract. The supply fee is non-refundable. If the full year is not attended, the supply fee will be forfeited to the school.

#### Tuition Payments

Tuition payments for all payment plans (plan A, B & C) will be made via ACH Debit on the due date. Exceptions will be made for those wanting to pay by check or cash. The check must be received 7 days prior to the due date and an ACH Debit will not occur. When paying by check, please include the student's name(s) on the check in the memo section. **Our bank deposit scanner reads black and blue ink only; please write all checks in black or blue ink only.** All credit card payments will be subject to a 4% convenience fee.

ACH Debits will be made on the 1<sup>st</sup> of each month. If the 1<sup>st</sup> falls on a holiday or weekend, the debit will be made on the next banking day. If the first installment of tuition is not received on or before August 1, 2022, the school retains the right to cancel the pupil's enrollment.

#### Late Fees

There will be a \$35.00 late fee for late tuition payments. Past due balances will be subject to the late fee each month. A \$35.00 fee will be assessed to any check or ACH payment returned due to insufficient funds. If multiple instances of insufficient funds occur, cash payment may be required for the remainder of the year. **Please notify the Business Officer as soon as possible if you are having difficulty making any payment.**

#### Delinquent Accounts

The pupil may be, at the sole discretion of the school, deemed to have withdrawn when an account is past due. If there have been late payment problems in the past, a 20-day contingency is added to the contract, which will result in immediate withdrawal. Under no circumstances, without prior payment arrangements, will the pupil be permitted to remain should the account become 60 days past due. At the discretion of the Business Officer, Head of School, and/or Treasurer of the Board of Directors, any account more than 60 days past due may be turned over to a third party for collection. In the event the contract is not paid when due and is collected by a third party, the parents are responsible for any collection and court fees incurred. Additionally, the school reserves the right to withhold student records until tuition accounts are paid in full.

#### Student Withdrawal

Cancellation of a tuition contract for the upcoming (2022-2023) school year must have been made in writing prior to May 1, 2022. After May 1, 2022, the tuition contract is binding and tuition is due for the entire school year unless a request for withdrawal is granted by the Head of School.

Parental requests to withdraw a student from enrollment must be submitted in the form of a written notification to the Head of School. The unused balance of tuition paid or due will be refunded or

forgiven *only* if enrollment remains at or above 230 after the student's actual removal. If the school removes a student because it believes the child is not suited to the school (this does not include behavior or disciplinary issues which are disruptive to the school), parents may be relieved of any further obligation to pay future tuition or fees under the contract in the sole discretion of the school.

No enrollment contract may be voided due to class placement. Application fees and supply fees are nonrefundable. Furthermore, no refunds will be made for extended absences.

## Tuition Assistance

Tuition Assistance in the form of tuition reduction is available on a limited basis to families who have been enrolled at Undercroft for at least one year and have a financial need. Applications are available in the business office, and must be submitted to the school, usually in April, each year for awards made the following year. A committee consisting of members of the Board of Directors, Business Officer, and the Head of School is responsible for awarding all tuition assistance. Decisions for tuition assistance for the 2022-2023 school year were made in April 2022.

## Fundraising

As an independent, nonprofit educational corporation, Undercroft's primary source of revenue is tuition, which covers the majority of operating costs for the school, each year. However, tuition, alone cannot fund major projects and initiatives that enhance the quality of our programs and facilities. For these, we rely on two major fundraising initiatives, each year: Annual Fund in the fall and fUNDERaiser in the spring.

**Annual Fund** campaigns in recent years have enabled us to develop our natural Playscape, adding new features like an irrigation system, electricity and lighting, play structures, shade sails and plantings, an LED sign, information technology for students and staff, a campus-wide PA system, security cameras, and new school buses.



Our community has the opportunity to support the Annual Fund each fall. The board of directors establishes a financial goal, and the primary goal is always 100% participation from board, staff and enrolled families. Having 100% participation by families, staff and board in Annual Fund shows community solidarity and a continuing commitment to the strength and financial health of our school. All contributions, no matter the size, help to accomplish the goal of full community support of the Annual Fund campaign.

**fUNDERaiser** is a community celebration and fundraising event for parents and friends of Undercroft. Planned mainly by our Community Building Committee, fUNDERaiser features a themed costume party, student art auction, silent and online auction, paddle raise, and more ways to give and get involved. Our community is invited to help solicit donations of services and items from favorite businesses and vendors. Funds raised are used to purchase classroom materials, technology and furniture, directly benefiting our students.

For questions about the Annual Fund or fUNDERaiser and how you can become involved, please contact Brigid Vance, Development Director, at [Brigid.Vance@Undercroft.org](mailto:Brigid.Vance@Undercroft.org).

## Other Fundraising Activities:

- **AmazonSmile** Amazon will donate 0.5% of the price of your eligible AmazonSmile purchases to Undercroft Montessori School whenever you shop on AmazonSmile. AmazonSmile is the same Amazon you know. Same products, same prices, same service. Name Undercroft Montessori School as your AmazonSmile charity today! <http://smile.amazon.com/ch/73-6099978>
- **Bake Sales** are hosted by the Community Building Committee on Folks' Day.
- **Book Fair** in the fall is hosted by our middle school students. Funds raised go to support the middle school and the student managed middle school business accounts.
- **Earth Day Flower Sale** in April affords families a great opportunity to beautify their homes and raise funds for the Playscape or classroom gardens.
- **Pizza Movie Nights** are hosted throughout the year to raise funds for individual classes or specific school-wide projects. Students love to spend an evening in their PJs at school with classmates, guides, games, and a movie. Parents love a night out, knowing their children are in good hands.
- **Peace, Love and Honey** is our middle school business program. Pure raw honey from Roark Acres Honey Farms is sold by our middle school students. Funds raised go to support the middle school and the student managed middle school business accounts. The business program raises money for middle school adventure trips as part of their curriculum. Honey forms are available in the office or you may order online at <http://undercroft.org/honey-store>.
- **Spirit Nights** are opportunities to support Undercroft through local businesses on particular days or evenings. Visit the specified restaurants or businesses on the scheduled date for a portion of sales to come back to our school.

## IV. Parent Information

### Communication

Parent/faculty relations are very important. Outside of regularly scheduled reporting times, parents are encouraged to communicate with the staff and administration as needed. Appointments for in-person meetings are easily scheduled through your child's guide. E-mail correspondence is also welcome.

Additional methods used for parent information and communication regarding the Montessori philosophy and childhood learning include:

- Weekly classroom e-mail updates
- Lectures, parent meetings, open houses, and parent workshops. The quarterly school newsletter, *UNDERcurrents*, and website will provide the dates, places, and times
- The school website, [www.undercroft.org](http://www.undercroft.org), is a great source of information, including the calendar, news and upcoming events, feature stories and more
- "Weekly Reminders," our administrative e-mail update sent on Friday afternoons from the office, which contains updates and reminders about school-wide events and activities
- Facebook
- Transparent Classroom
- *UNDERcurrents*, our quarterly school newsletter, contains information regarding school activities. The newsletter is sent home with the students and emailed.
- The school's parent and professional library includes books, magazines, and articles on the Montessori philosophy and current educational research. These may be checked out

from the office.

- Other notices are sent home with the students during the school year or placed in the U.S. Mail as necessary. Parents should check their children's papers to be certain they have received all school messages. When in doubt, parents are encouraged to call the school office.

## Visitor Policy

Parents are welcome to visit the observation rooms in the west building without scheduling an appointment. Parents wishing to visit their child's class should schedule an appointment with their child's guide. Visits by parents or other guests to the campus or classrooms (other than their own



child's classroom) require prior approval by the Head of School or a designated representative. Approval to visit one part of the campus does not imply approval to visit other parts of the campus. An authorized member of the school's staff will accompany persons touring the campus.

Visitors must check in at the school office, sign the visitor's log, and obtain a visitor's badge to wear. If no prior arrangement has been made, approval to visit may be granted by the Head of School or a designated representative at that time.

## Custody

UMS cannot, by law, refuse a parent access to his or her child, or refuse to release a child to his or her parent, without a court order instructing UMS not to provide such access to, or release the child to, his or her parent. Please provide the office with a copy of a court order if you are instructing us not to release your child to his or her parent. It is the responsibility of the parents to keep the student's file current with the most recent court decrees. Action by the school is limited, by law, to instructions in the current court order UMS has on file.

## Observations in a Classroom

Parent observations are encouraged. It is hoped parents and others interested in Undercroft Montessori School will find time spent observing the Montessori and specialists' classrooms both enjoyable and enlightening.

- Upon arriving for either a scheduled in-class observation or for an unscheduled observation through the observation window, visitors, including parents, must register in the visitor's log in the office and pick up a "Visitor" identification badge.
- Guidelines apply to any observation setting, whether in Montessori or specials classes, or observing outside at "free play".
- Checked-in visitors are welcome to observe through the viewing window of any classroom at any time with no appointment necessary.
- A handout detailing observation instructions is available to all visitors.
- In-class parent observations may be scheduled from the first week of October through the second Friday in May by calling the office and guide. Make your appointment at least 48 hours in advance because only two adults may visit in a classroom at any given time.
- After signing in, in-class observers will be escorted to the classroom.
- After quietly entering, observers should take a seat in the adult chairs provided.
- Observers are invited to make written notes and record any questions they may have. In order that visitors may observe a normal classroom day, the following requests are

respectfully made:

- Try to avoid engaging students through eye contact or conversation.
- If a student engages the visitor in conversation, be as brief as possible.
- Of course, if their child shows a need, observing parents may talk with their own child and acknowledge the child's work.
- For an optimal observation, one should avoid engaging one's own child in conversation just as one would with any other student.

Observe the class as a whole.

- Note the variety of activities.
- Observe the social interaction among the students.
- Are students working alone, or with other students?
- How does the mood of the classroom vary from time to time?

Focus on one or two students.

- Is the student independent in choosing work and in using his/her work?
- Does the student concentrate on one piece of work for a long time?
- Is the student orderly in using the materials?
- Note the cycle of work from beginning to end.

Observe the guide and assistant.

- When and in what way do they teach?
- When do they act as a resource, as a link between student and materials?
- How is order maintained in the classroom?

Although the guide or teacher may be unable to talk with the visitor or parent during class time, she will be happy to confer later at a mutually agreed upon time. A visit with the Head of School with questions is always welcomed.

## Parent Conferences

Conferences with your child's guide are an important part of the total educational process. Please see the school calendar for conference dates. Please note these dates in your calendar and plan in advance your participation in your child's parent/guide conference. It can be tempting for parents to use these days to schedule vacations, asking guides to schedule alternate conference times. However, this results in lost planning time for the guides, or requires them to schedule conference times after their regular work hours, and we ask parents to make every effort to work within the schedule for regular conference times set in the calendar. In addition to these regularly scheduled conferences, parents are encouraged to call and schedule informal conferences with their child's guide if needed.

Parent/guide conferences are generally scheduled for a thirty-minute period. If additional time is needed, it can be requested at the time the appointment is made.

## Field Trips

Field trips and in-school demonstrations are scheduled when appropriate for the students during the school year. At the early childhood level, field trips are infrequent because emphasis is placed on creating regularity, security and normalization in the classroom. As the student matures, field trip frequency increases with the elementary and middle school levels. The students develop initiative and independence while learning about life in their community.

Undercroft requires a permission slip be signed by a parent or guardian and returned to the school office before a student can accompany his/her class on a field trip.

The school will notify parents of the plans and details for each field trip in advance.



If a student forgets the permission slip, he/she will visit another classroom for the duration of the trip. If parents do not want their child to participate in a specific trip, arrangements must be made. The parents can either arrange for the student's care away from school or request that the guide make alternate arrangements on campus for the duration of the field trip.

Field trips provide an opportunity for additional involvement for parents wishing to volunteer. Parents wishing to volunteer to assist with a field trip shall follow the Volunteer Guidelines provided with the

permission slip.

## Motor Vehicle Record / Background Check

Undercroft Montessori School requires any volunteer who will have close, potentially unsupervised contact with a student to submit to and clear a background check. Volunteers who will be driving for field trips must submit to and clear both a background check and a Motor Vehicles Record search prior to transporting students to or from a school sponsored event.

Background and MVR search waiver forms are available in the office and must be completed at least one week before transporting children to a school sponsored event.

## Personal Belongings / Lost and Found

Personal belongings such as toys and special treasures from home must not be brought to school, except as special items for "show and tell" (with the guide's consent).

Any unfamiliar items brought home from school by a child should be returned. They may be part of the school equipment or belong to another student.

Label all personal items to increase the chances they will be returned to the proper owner.

Parents may check Lost and Found at any time. There are two locations for Lost and Found: in the west building, just inside the front entry vestibule, and in the east building inside the vestibule "Lost and Found" items not claimed are distributed to charitable organizations or others who can use them at the end of each semester.

## Clothing

Clothing should be washable, durable, comfortable, and appropriate to the season. Even the youngest of students are encouraged to dress and undress themselves. Clothing with fastenings the child can open and close is a big help. Self-care is an important Montessori principle.

The students often work on the floor and at "messy" activities and they regularly spend time outside when the weather permits. The student who is unduly concerned about wear and tear to clothing doesn't feel free to participate fully in all school activities.

The school reserves the right to prohibit articles of clothing or shoes if it finds such articles pose a risk to the safety of the children or cause excessive distraction from the learning environment.

Shorts under dresses are encouraged. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are required to increase student safety on the playground. Closed-toed shoes with rubber soles provide necessary

traction on the playground equipment and pea gravel. Shoes with wheels (such as "Heelys") are not permitted. Cowboy boots and flip flops are not permitted for early childhood students. Shoes *with light up features, which can be distracting in the learning environment, will not be permitted for early childhood students. Early childhood students who arrive with shoes that are not permitted will be provided slippers to use while in the classroom.*

Students, especially those attending early childhood classes, are discouraged from wearing clothing displaying prominent characters or designs due to the unnecessary distractions that can be caused. To reduce student distraction from the learning environment, clothing determined to be distracting will be turned "inside-out" upon arrival at school.

It is recommended that early childhood children not wear jewelry to school.

Hats and sunscreen are suggested as protection for outdoor activities and field trips. Sunscreen should be applied at home before school. A labeled bottle can be sent to the classroom for reapplication as needed. A Medication Form must be completed and can be found in the office, website, or requested via email.

All items of clothing that can be removed at school should be clearly labeled with the student's name. Placing a distinctive mark, such as a flower, beside a child's name will help the younger student recognize his or her own clothing.

Each early childhood level student needs to have a complete change of clothing at school, including underwear and socks. More than one change is recommended for those children who may require them. The clothing should be packed in a large zip-lock bag with the student's name on it. This should be brought to class during the first week of school. Students in After Care will require a second set of extra clothing. Clothing should be exchanged as the seasons change or a child has a significant growth spurt.

We encourage parents to always make certain their children are appropriately dressed for weather and to remember how quickly it can change in Oklahoma.



## Requesting Records

The administrative office requires 1-week notice when requesting a child's records. Parents' signature must accompany paperwork requesting records.

## V. Discipline Policy

Creating a positive, enjoyable learning experience of which a student wants to be a part provides true discipline. Each student is respected as an individual. Correcting of students is intended to develop self-direction and self-control with awareness of others. A student is redirected to more acceptable behaviors or activities. This policy provides a framework and guidance to the parents, guides and Head of School; however, final disciplinary action will be based on individual circumstances.

Discipline and an atmosphere of order are maintained in the learning environments. Students will not be subjected to discipline that is severe, humiliating, or frightening. Discipline will not be associated with food, rest, or toileting. Spanking or any other form of physical punishment is prohibited. Self-discipline is viewed as an aid to independence.

Parents will be notified in writing on the day of an incident or as soon as it is known. They will always receive verbal contact, but it may be during or after the inquiry, depending on what is appropriate to the situation. This discipline policy is included on the back of the Incident Report. Students are guided to resolve conflicts by example, prompts, suggestion, discussion, and tactful intervention in order to help them learn to solve their own problems. The Montessori curriculum has an extensive set of tools for conflict resolution and peace making for the student as well as the classroom community. Basic rules and expectations are regularly discussed with the students. A child will be given the opportunity to take a break from a situation when needed. Or, a student may be asked to leave a situation for a brief period. Destruction of property, harming of self, or physical / psychological harm of others will not be allowed. In extreme circumstances, a student may be physically removed from an area or restrained by the staff. When this is necessary, it will be done as minimally as possible.

If a discipline or behavior problem of a PERSISTENT, BUT NOT DANGEROUS OR SERIOUSLY OUT-OF-CONTROL nature occurs, the guide will speak with the parents to discuss it. Possible causes for the problem and strategies to overcome it will be considered. Another conference with the student's parents to review the situation may be set at that time. The parents and guide will work together to solve the problem. If the parent or guide is still not satisfied, then the guide or the parents may request a conference with the Head of School. If, after the conference, further action is required, the Head of School may place the student on probation. The student will be placed on probation for an agreed upon time, depending on the seriousness of the problem. At the conclusion of the probationary period, the parents will once again meet with the guide, any other involved faculty members, and the Head of School to make a decision regarding any further action needed to best help the school meet the student's and his/her classmates' needs.

PSYCHOLOGICALLY/PHYSICALLY UNSAFE OR SERIOUSLY OUT-OF-CONTROL BEHAVIOR on the part of a student may necessitate immediate removal from the classroom or school until the problem can be resolved. SUSPENSIONS AND EXPULSIONS in these cases are entirely at the discretion of the Head of School. Since no appropriate place for in-house suspension exists, parents or their specified contacts in case of emergency will be notified to immediately pick up the student.

## VI. Anti-Bullying Policy

Harassment, intimidation and bullying, whether through gestures, written or verbal expression, electronic communication or physical acts will not be permitted on school grounds, in school vehicles, at school-sponsored activities or at school-sanctioned events. Such behavior includes: direct physical contact, such as hitting or shoving; verbal assaults, such as teasing or name-calling; and social isolation or manipulation, and should be reported immediately to a guide, staff member or Head of School. Any necessary action will be taken according to the Discipline Policy.

## VII. Student Health and Safety

### Health Forms

Current health forms are required for all students. Oklahoma law requires every student to have appropriate immunizations. It is the parent's responsibility to not only keep a student's immunizations current but to also keep that student's records current in the school office or uploaded to the parent portal on our website. Certificate of Exemption forms must be presented when immunizations are not elected. You can obtain a Certificate of Exemption from the school office or from the parent portal on our website.

It is the responsibility of the parent to keep all new health related information current in the school office. Information regarding new illnesses, allergies, or disorders and booster immunizations must be updated in the school office for the safety of the student.

### Illnesses and Injuries at School

Students who complain of illness will be brought to the office so the administration can notify the parents. Students with a fever above 100 degrees or with a suspected communicable disease will be brought to the office and parents will be notified. Students who are not well enough to function in a classroom need to be picked up from school even if they are not running a fever.



Mishaps resulting in injury will be treated immediately with basic first aid techniques. In the case of serious injury, the student's individual emergency information on file in the school office is consulted and the parents are called. In the case of a serious injury, an ambulance will be called at the discretion of staff, even if parents can be reached by phone. It is imperative that the office be kept up to date regarding emergency contact information. Minor injuries will be cleaned with soap and water. Ice will be applied if indicated. An accident form will be filled out concerning each incident and sent home to the parents.

### Communicable Disease Policy

Children should be given time to regain their strength and resistance before returning to school after an illness. To protect other students from possible infection, children should not attend school with any of the following:

- Unable to participate in normal classroom activities
- Fever of 100 degrees or more without the aid of medication; should be free of fever for at least 24 hours before returning to school
- Diarrhea or vomiting; should be free of diarrhea or vomiting for at least 24 hours before returning to school, unless determined by physician that it is not due to communicable disease
- Eye drainage, unless medical exam indicates a child may return to school

It is suggested that parents investigate choices for care for their sick child at a time when the child is not ill. There is usually little warning of impending illness, allowing scant time for making alternate arrangements.

We ask all parents to inform the school immediately about the existence of any communicable disease or condition, which might require special precautions be taken with respect to the



student, his or her schoolmates and staff. These illnesses include, but are not limited to hepatitis, tuberculosis, AIDS, meningitis, and communicable diseases such as strep throat, influenza, measles, chicken pox, "pink eye," and lice infestation. When the school has been alerted to a confirmed case of communicable illness or condition, the office will send notices to families of children in the same class so they may be alert to symptoms in their own child. Working together, we can help mitigate the spread of communicable diseases and conditions.

## Medicines

- No medication can be administered without a completed Medication Form, available in the school office or on our website.
- All medications must be in the original, labeled pharmacy container with your child's name on it. This rule is for clarification in case of an allergic reaction and to help prevent any mistakes in medications. Upon parent request, most pharmacies will provide an additional labeled container to be given to the school.
- Medicines, including inhalants, must be delivered directly to the office by the parent – never sent with the student.
- Over the counter pain medications, for dispensing on an as-needed basis, occasionally needed by older students, must be provided in the original container along with a signed Medication Form.
- All medications must be given to an adult. No medications are to be in lunch boxes. If you want your child to have vitamins or nonprescription drugs, please administer them at home.

If an adult other than the parent delivers the medication to the school, a signed note from the parent stating the times and dosages prescribed and granting the school permission to administer the medicine must be provided.

Consult your physician for recommendations on ways to avoid the dispensing of medicines at school. For instance, medication dispensed three times a day can be administered before school, after school, and bedtime.

## Toileting Policy

### **Children enrolled in our early childhood program must be toilet trained before attending school.**

Children must be wearing underwear with very few accidents. A child having accidents daily would not be considered toilet trained. When an adult is busy changing a child's soiled clothing, it is taking away from learning time for all students and removes one adult from the direct supervision of and interaction with the rest of the class.

We understand even toilet trained children will occasionally have toileting accidents. By definition, "accidents" are unusual incidents and should happen infrequently. In these instances, our guides will help children change their clothes, encouraging independence as much as

possible. A toilet trained child is a child who can:

- Communicate to the teachers that he/she needs to go to the restroom before they need to go
- Alert him/herself to stop what he/she is doing, to go and use the bathroom
- Pull down his/her clothes and get them back up without assistance
- Wipe him/herself after using the toilet (With minimal assistance for 3 year olds)
- Wash and dry hands
- Postpone going if they must wait for someone who is in the bathroom or if we are away from the classroom
- Awaken during nap time should they need to use the bathroom

Our early childhood guides are accustomed to reminding young children throughout the day and always before nap time if they need to use the bathroom. It is not uncommon for a child who is fully toilet trained to have a setback when he/she is in a new environment. Our guides are aware of this and will assist the children when necessary. Please dress your child in clothing that they can manage easily in the bathroom. Please send a complete change of clothes appropriate for the season to be left at school in case of accidents, and returned at the end of the school year. Parents will be notified if a child has a toileting accident. Soiled clothes will be placed in a compostable bag inside the child's school bag. Parents should send a fresh change of clothes to school the following day.



## Playground / Playscape Safety Rules

Our Playscape is a unique asset that has enriched our children's experience. Following are general safety guidelines: At least two staff will supervise children on the Playscape/playground at all times, and will be stationed so they are able to supervise each child effectively. If the number of staff is too small to supervise the entire Playscape, children will be limited to using only the areas available staff is able to effectively supervise.

- Entry into the Sand Canyon is limited to the slide and climbing into the low end of the Canyon. Children may dig in the sand of the canyon, not in between the rocks in the walls of the canyon.
- Slide down the slides rather than walking up the slides. Sliding should be done on one's bottom.
- People slide down the slide, not rocks, sand or dirt.
- Balls are thrown instead of rocks, sand, or snow.
- Jungle gyms and climbing bars are for climbing, not fences or trees.
- Get on the swings from the back and take turns. One person to a swing. Swinging should be back and forth rather than sideways. No walking in front of a swing in use.
- Karate and other similar activities have an appropriate place to be performed. The playground/Playscape is not that place.
- Students may not carry other students.
- No imaginary weapon play is allowed.

- Elementary and middle school students may use their own skateboards and scooters for use on the skateboard rink on the Playscape only when parents have a signed waiver. Students must bring and wear their helmets when using scooters or skateboards

## Animals on Campus

Care of classroom animals is part of a well-designed Montessori curriculum. The level of care required by the animals will be age appropriate.

A list of classroom pets will be provided to each family. It is the parent's responsibility to notify the child's guide of any allergies or particular concerns regarding the classroom animals.

There will be no dogs or cats on campus without administrative approval. Family pets cannot be brought on campus as "show and tell" visitors without prior approval of the guide. Animals visiting from organizations such as the city zoo must also have prior approval from administration.

## Alcohol

No alcohol will be consumed at gatherings on campus when there are students under the age of 21 present.

## Firearms

In keeping with federal law, guns are never allowed on the grounds of a school.

## Tobacco Policy

Tobacco use is prohibited on school property, including in personal and/or school vehicles, 24 hours a day, and seven days a week. This policy applies equally to all employees, vendors, visitors and students, and includes all forms of tobacco at all school sponsored events.

## Cell Phone Policy

Student Cell Phone Use on Campus:

If students bring a personal cell phone to school, it must be kept in their locker or school bag and turned off during the school day. Students wishing to use their phones during the school day must seek permission from the guide or adult in charge.

# VIII. ARRIVAL AND DEPARTURE

## Procedures

When possible, parents must schedule all appointments after school. Students will not be dismissed earlier than the end of the session except in cases of emergency or with special arrangements. All students must be picked up at the front office if departing early for the day.

Detailed carpool procedures will be outlined below, as well as distributed and discussed at Parent Orientations. Undercroft continues to place a high value on the safety of our students, faculty and staff. The speed limit in our parking lot is 5 miles per hour. **Children are present** at all times of the day, and can be difficult to see from the driver's perspective. Slowing down is one of the best preventive measures. We appreciate your cooperation in keeping our campus safe by driving slow and being mindful of your surroundings.

For your child's protection, we will not release a child to someone other than a custodial parent or individuals designated on the Student Information Sheet unless written authorization is provided

to the school. We will ask for photo identification of the person picking up your child.

## Carpool Procedures

- Please be kind and courteous.
- The speed limit in our parking lot is 5 miles per hour.
- Please pass through the lot in single file formation and do not pass other vehicles in line.
- There are **three** gates in our lot:
  - The MIDDLE gate is for ENTRY only. (EXCEPTION: after 4:30 p.m., enter & exit through middle gate as East & West gates will be locked).
  - The WEST gate is for EXIT from the Early Childhood / Lower Elementary Building
  - The EAST gate is for EXIT from the Upper Elementary / Middle School Building.
- **Families coming through the west building carpool (lower elementary and early childhood), please come from Hudson** and turn right into our entrance gate (see map below). This will reduce the number of cars crossing lanes to enter our parking lot.
- **Families coming through the east building carpool (upper elementary and middle school), please come from Sheridan** (see map below) and turn left into our entrance gate. **When exiting, please turn right going out of the east gate.** This will reduce the number of cars crossing lanes to enter our parking lot.
- When lining up, please close the gap between you and the car in front of you to help get more cars off the street.
- Please refrain from using your cell phones, even when waiting in line. It's important to be attentive to traffic, cues from staff, and the children when in the carpool line both inside our gates and on the street.
- Please have your children ready to exit the car **curbside** when you pull up.
- Any animal inside of a vehicle in carpool must be crated, harnessed, or otherwise restrained so as to prevent the animal from exiting the vehicle or from coming into contact with Undercroft staff, employees, students, or other visitors.

### Drop-Off:

**Carpool Drop-off Time is 7:55 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. for the entire campus.**

- Early Childhood and Lower Elementary students will be dropped off in front of the Early Childhood / Lower Elementary Building from 7:55 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. Parents will enter through the middle gate, turn right, and exit through the west gate.
- Upper Elementary and Middle School students will be dropped off in front of the Upper Elementary / Middle School Building from 7:55 a.m. to 8:15 a.m. Parents will enter through the middle gate, turn left, and exit through the east gate. Note: Upper Elementary and Middle School students can be dropped off with their younger sibling(s) and walk to their own building. Parents will enter through the middle gate and exit through the west gate.

### Pick-Up: Place last name placards in front windshield.

**Carpool Pick-up Time is 3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. for the entire campus (half day at 11:30 a.m.)**

- Early Childhood half day students will be picked up from 11:30 a.m. to 11:35 a.m. Early childhood **half day** students not picked up by 11:35 will be brought to the office to wait.
- Early Childhood full day and Lower Elementary students will be picked up from 3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Parents will enter through the middle gate, turn right, and exit through the west gate. Students not picked up by 3:30 will be brought to after care.
- Upper Elementary and Middle School students will be picked up from 3:15 p.m. to 3:30 p.m. Parents will enter through the middle gate, turn left, and exit through the east gate. Note: Parents with both Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary students should come through upper elementary pick-up at 3:15. Students not picked up by 3:30 will be brought to after care.

We understand it takes time for everyone to establish a strong routine for dropping off and picking up students each day, and hope you will find these tips helpful.

# UMS Carpool Map

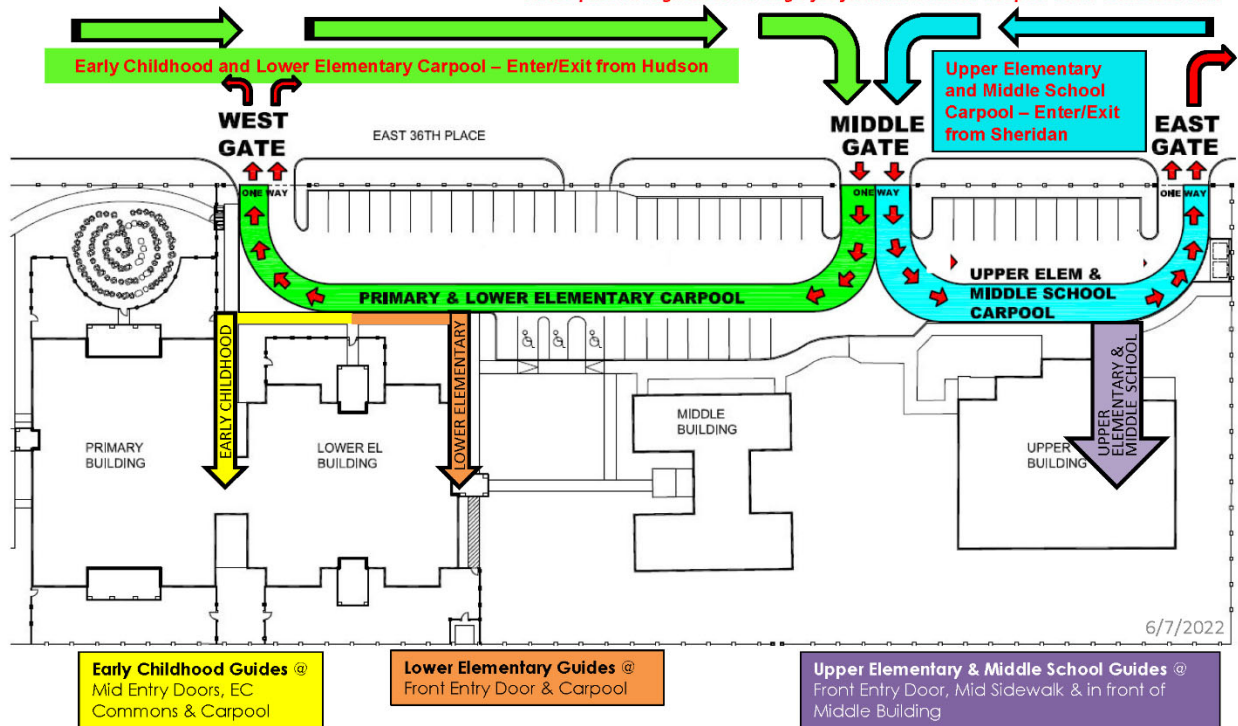
7:55 - 8:15 a.m. All School Morning Drop-off

11:30 - 11:35 a.m. Early Childhood Mid-Day Pick-up

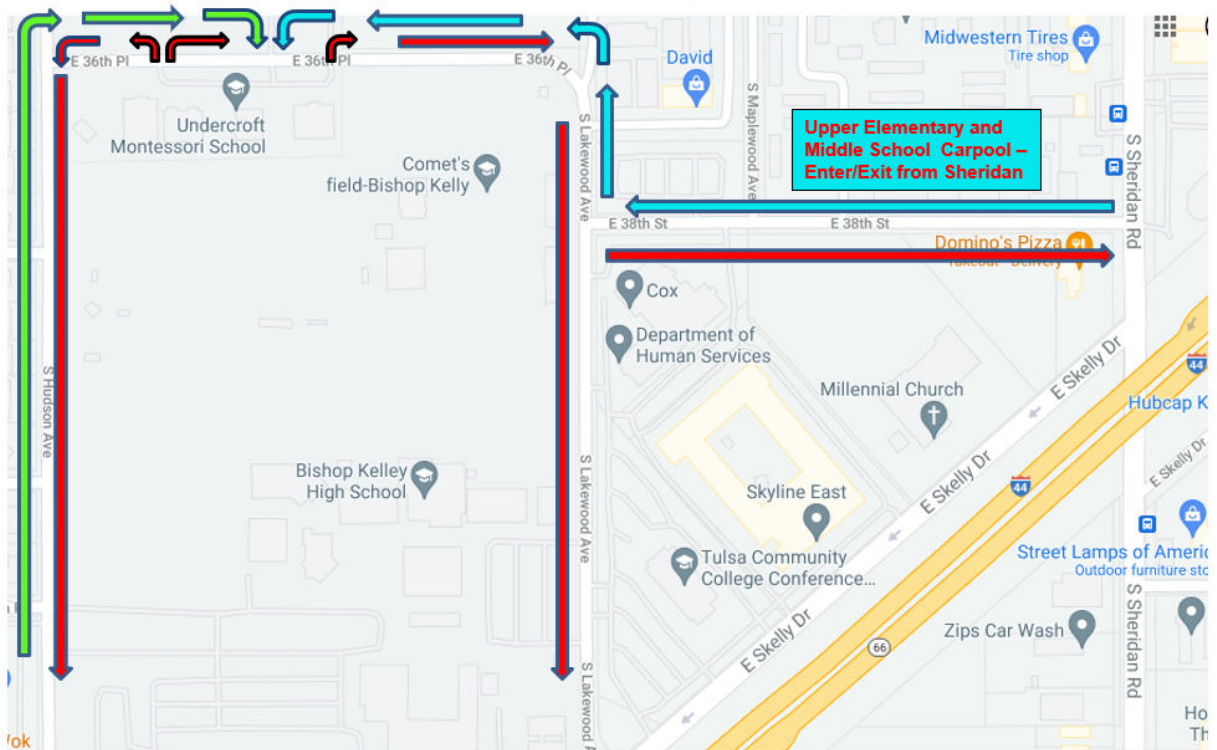
3:15 - 3:30 p.m. All School Afternoon Pick-up

**Place last name placards in front windshield.**

*Please pass through the lot in single file formation and do not pass other vehicles in line.*



**Early Childhood and Lower Elementary Carpool – Come From Hudson**



## Attendance and Tardiness

The Montessori classroom follows a regular daily pattern that is disrupted by late arrivals. Good attendance ensures each student gets the full advantage of the highly enriched program at Undercroft.

To show proper respect to all adults and students in the classrooms and to develop the important life skill of reliability, students are expected to be at school on time by 8:15 a.m. In order to minimize interruptions to the classroom students arriving after 8:15 a.m. should report to the office, and will be escorted to class by a member of the office staff.



A tardy is given to any student entering the classroom after 8:15 a.m. An early dismissal is given to any student leaving prior to the end of the school day. An absence is counted for any student not attending at least one-half of a given day. Absences, late arrivals and early dismissals are marked 'excused' for illness, medical or therapeutic appointments, and religious holidays. An excused absence, late arrival or early dismissal is still an absence, late arrival and early dismissal, and will show up on progress reports as such. Parents may request a more detailed attendance report showing which absences, late arrivals and early dismissals were 'excused' from the office.

The classroom guide will communicate with parents as concerns arise about attendance, particularly when excessive absence or tardiness is affecting the student's success in school. Parents should be aware that excessive absence or tardiness diminish the number of instructional days in a school year for a student, and can have an impact on decisions to advance a student to the next level at Undercroft as well as affect a student's acceptance into other schools.

## Before and After School Care Programs

Before and After Care School Programs are available for enrollment on a monthly basis. In addition, spaces are available in Before Care & After Care with *prior arrangement only either by contract, contract addendum or, in the case of drop in, a reservation may be made by calling the office.* This drop-in space can be reserved up to one week in advance for a flat fee of \$6.00 per day for Before Care and \$15.00 per day for After Care. Before Care and After Care drop-in fees will be withdrawn monthly via ACH on the 10<sup>th</sup> of each month. Families will receive an invoice on the 6<sup>th</sup> of each month, which will serve as notification of the amount to be withdrawn. If either of these days fall on a weekend or holiday, it will be processed on the next business or banking day. Further information on the programs can be obtained from the office.

Enrollment in an After-School Enrichment Class does not entitle a student to attend After Care. A prior reservation, dependent upon availability of space, must be made as well as payment of \$15.00. Enrichment tuition is separate from After Care fees.

## Late Pick-up Policy

*It is essential for the well-being of each student to be picked up promptly from school or after-school care.* However, the school recognizes that due to traffic or other unexpected emergencies, a parent may arrive late. Early childhood half day children not picked up by 11:35 will be brought to the office to wait to be picked up; early childhood full day children not picked

up by 3:30 p.m. will go to the After-Care Program. Elementary students not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will go to the After-Care Program. Middle school students not picked up by 3:30 p.m. will go to the upper elementary After Care program. Please notify the school, if possible, when a late situation arises.

In order to be reasonable and flexible, Undercroft allows each family two free late pick-ups (under 15 minutes) after regular school hours, per school year. A charge of \$15 per student will be added to the parents' account for a stay in After Care.

**STUDENTS MUST BE PICKED UP BY 5:30 p.m. from the After-Care program. For each child not picked up by 5:30 p.m., a \$10.00 late pick-up fee will be charged for the first minute, with an additional \$1.00 per minute thereafter per student. Repeated late pick-ups after 5:30 will result in loss of After Care privileges.**

## After School Enrichment Programs

A variety of after school enrichment programs are available on campus. The offerings vary each year adding fun, fitness and balance to their educational experience. Enrichment pick up locations will vary by building: Students enrolled for enrichment classes offered in the east building will pick up their child outside in front of the east building. Students enrolled for enrichment classes in the Fine Arts Building will pick their child up outside the main entrance of the Fine Arts Building. Students enrolled for enrichment classes offered in the west building will pick up their child outside mid entry of the west building at the carpool benches only. **(Parents please park your car and come to the enrichment specialist to sign your kids out.)**

Students remaining after the end of their enrichment class pick up time, will go to after care. Parents will be billed the current drop-in rate for any student delivered to after care.



## IX. SCHOOL CLOSINGS

### Vacations and Holidays

School closings for vacations and holidays are coordinated as closely as possible with Tulsa Public Schools and other local independent and public-school calendars. Please see the school calendar for school closing dates.

Non-sectarian holidays are observed at school at the discretion of the classroom guides and in keeping with the anti-discrimination policy of the school.

### Inclement Weather

When school is closed due to inclement weather, Undercroft will notify parents by the following means:

- Phone call and/or text message from Blackboard Connect call system. Please keep us informed throughout the year of any changes in your phone contact information
- Email
- Local news stations, channels 2, 6 & 8
- Undercroft's website, [www.undercroft.org](http://www.undercroft.org).

If Undercroft is closed for the morning session, it will remain closed for the afternoon session, regardless of improved conditions by the afternoon. Road conditions in your town or particular neighborhood can be hazardous even on days the school is open. Parents should use their own discretion about bringing their children to school under potentially hazardous circumstances.

## X. MEALS AND SNACKS

### Peanut and Tree-Nut Policy

Undercroft Montessori School strives to maintain a tree nut free environment to protect students with severe allergies, and avoids purchasing snack items that contain peanuts or tree nuts. The school cannot guarantee purchases will be free of peanut oil or similar ingredients or processed in a plant that is totally nut-free.

Sensitive/allergic students' families may need to provide their own snacks, if Undercroft cannot fully meet their dietary restrictions.

**All families are required to eliminate peanut and tree nut products from their students' lunches in deference to those endangered by allergic reactions to these products. Special dietary conflicts caused by this policy should be discussed on an individual basis with the administration and the guide.**

An alternative lunch item, when available, is provided to students that mistakenly bring a lunch containing peanuts or nuts. If an alternative is not available or a child has special dietary considerations, the student will be asked to eat lunch away from allergic children and take special care to clean hands, tray and table well.

Staff Appreciation Lunches, Bake Sales and Potluck dinners must also meet the peanut and tree-nut free policy of Undercroft.

### Lunches

Parents should inform the office and the student's guide in writing of any food or drink ALLERGIES or any SPECIAL DIETARY needs. Please indicate any allergies on the Student Information form and if severe, complete a *Food Allergy & Anaphylaxis Emergency Care Plan* form available in the office or on our website.

A packed lunch should be sent in the morning with the students who stay all day. Students' names must be clearly marked on their lunch boxes. Please send items that require no refrigeration or use the type of lunch box that keeps food cold. Students need to pack eating utensils in their lunches when needed.



The study of nutrition is part of the curriculum. Students will learn how to choose a well-balanced diet with sufficient, but not excessive, caloric content that is low in sugar, salt, and fat with minimal preservatives and adequate fiber. Students should be encouraged to help shop for and prepare their own lunches and snack items with good nutrition in mind.

Candy, gum, caffeinated or carbonated beverages, and highly sweetened foods are highly discouraged in students' lunches or snacks.

All students eat lunch in their own classrooms, supervised by the classroom guides. Guides will communicate with parents when there is a concern about a student's eating habits or the contents of lunches. Younger students usually will be asked to take home any uneaten portions of their meals so parents will know what foods their children are not eating.

Beginning in October, parents may make arrangements to join their child for lunch at school. Such arrangements should be scheduled with the guide 24 hours in advance to prevent classroom overcrowding or possible scheduling conflicts, such as a field trip.

## Participatory Snack Program

### Early Childhood Program

Parents are invited to provide snack items for their child's class for one week per semester. This is a voluntary program. The donation of snack is tax deductible as a non-cash gift. Room Parents will contact parents to schedule a convenient week to provide snacks. Snacks can be as simple as fresh fruits and vegetables. The children may also incorporate snack preparation and serving as a part of their Practical Life and Grace and Courtesy exercises. Suggestions for snacks will come from the classroom guides, and parents should feel free to speak with their child's guide if they wish to provide a recipe and ingredients. Parents may also share in the snack preparation and serving with their child by making arrangements with the classroom guide.

### Lower and Upper Elementary Programs

Elementary students bring their own snacks with them to school. Please be sure to pack a nutritious snack in your child's lunch.

### Middle School Program

Snacks are provided for middle school students, who often cook class snacks as part of their practical life/cooking curriculum.

## Birthday Celebrations

If your child does not participate in the celebration of birthdays, please notify your child's guide.

Birthday celebrations at school are brief and low key. In the **EARLY CHILDHOOD** classrooms a short ceremony is held in which the birthday child receives a special badge and a birthday song. The students count "the number of times the earth has gone around the sun" since the child was born. A timeline that features a picture of the child at each age is shared with the class. Parents may provide birthday snacks for the class if they wish. Highly sweetened snacks are discouraged. Consult your child's guide about what would be considered an appropriate snack.

**ELEMENTARY** birthdays can be recognized at either lunch or morning/afternoon group meeting time. Parents may provide birthday snacks for the class if they wish. Again, highly sweetened snacks are discouraged. Consult your child's guide about what would be considered an appropriate snack.

A voluntary donation to the classroom of a gift certificate to a bookstore is always welcomed as

a way to honor the birthday of a student as well as expanding our library collection.

Parents of children whose birthdates are outside of the school year may consult the student's guide to learn how that classroom celebrates summer and other out-of-session birthdays.

If a home party is planned for a student, invitations should not be handed out at school unless everyone is invited. Likewise, if a student is attending a party after school, gifts should not be sent to school with the student. In the past, these situations have proven upsetting for those who are not invited. Invitations mailed to the homes and weekend parties help avoid hurt feelings.



# Montessori Curriculum: Early childhood Level

## PRACTICAL LIFE

Activities developing **control of movement** (gross and fine motor), focus and concentration, including games like the 'silence game' and 'walking the line'

**Care of the indoor environment** – e.g.: squeezing a sponge, setting and washing a table, folding, sweeping, mopping, dusting, polishing, flower arranging, pouring, opening and closing (latches, bottles, jars, doors), cutting, rolling a rug, caring for plants and animals, preparing food (cutting, spreading, straining, etc.)

**Care of the outdoor environment** - (ecology) e.g.: planting and gardening, weeding, sweeping

**Care of the person** – e.g.: dressing frames, hand washing, hanging coat, blowing nose, eating snack or lunch, cleaning spots on clothes

**Social relations (grace and courtesy exercises)** – e.g.: answering the phone, greeting a visitor, using manners at snack and meal time, saying please and thank you, offering someone something, passing objects, walking behind someone, taking turns, using respectful language

## SENSORIAL DISCRIMINATION

### Visual sense

1. Size—e.g.: cylinder blocks, pink tower, broad stair, red rods, bi- and trinomial cubes, square of Pythagoras
2. Shape—geometric shapes – circles, rectangles, polygons up to ten sides, triangles (equilateral, scalene, obtuse), quadrilateral figures, irregular curved figures
3. Color—primary, secondary, tertiary colors; shades, hues, tints

### Tactile sense

1. Texture (rough-smooth)
2. Baric (weight)
3. Temperature
4. Stereognostic (recognition of 3 dimensional shapes by touch)

### Taste

1. Sweet, sour, salty
2. Matching

### Smell (matching)

### Hearing

1. Intensity of sound
2. Pitch

## LANGUAGE

### Tracking Left-Right, Top-Bottom

Vocabulary enrichment throughout the curriculum, expression of ideas, listening to and telling stories, poetry, reports, descriptions of objects and pictures

### Pre-writing and writing:

Development of fine motor skills and pencil grip, finger tracing sandpaper letters, movable alphabet, tracing metal insets, handwriting (manuscript)

### Pre-reading and reading:

Sequencing, matching, finishing a series, classification by attributes, association of phonetic sound with sandpaper letters, initial consonant sounds, final consonant sounds, blends, digraphs, short and long vowel patterns, phonetic word patterns, non-phonetic or puzzle words, phonetic readers and reading storybooks

### Reading classification:

Naming objects in the environment, classification and definition cards,

### Function of words:

Verbs, nouns, articles, adjectives conjunctions, prepositions, adverbs

### Reading analysis:

Simple sentences

## MATHEMATICS

### Quantity and Numeration:

1-10, and teens using number rods, sandpaper numerals, spindle boxes, numerals and counters

### The Decimal system:

Quantities and numeration to the thousands using Golden Bead materials and cards

### Basic operations

Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division using a variety of concrete materials

### Linear and skip counting

Tens and teens, linear counting, skip counting

**Transitional exercises\*:** Small bead frame, large bead frame \*towards abstracting operations

### Fractions:

Introduction and basic operations, using fraction materials

## CULTURAL SUBJECTS

### Geography:

Sandpaper globe (land and water), continents globe, hemispheres puzzle map, continents puzzle map, U.S. puzzle map, land and water forms

### Science:

Living vs. nonliving

Botany—caring for plants, nature walks, names and parts of plants, experiments, gardening  
Zoology—caring for animals, nature walks, names and parts, basic classification of vertebrates  
Simple science experiments

### Music:

Listening, movement to music  
Singing  
Ear training (bells, solmization beat, rhythm, pitch),  
Instrumental music  
Writing and reading music

### Spanish:

Vocabulary and basic conversational

### Art:

Illustration of class work, basic media and techniques, styles and self-expression

### Physical Education:

Fitness exercises, elements of games

# Montessori Curriculum: Lower Elementary Level

## PRACTICAL LIFE

Community ecology projects  
 Going out (field trips and visits by outside specialists)  
 Conflict resolution skills  
 Grace and courtesy  
 Class government and constitutions  
 Applied economics (student management projects)  
 Keyboard and computer skills  
 Animal care  
 Plant care  
 Classroom jobs  
**Music**  
 Analysis and composition of music: complex songs and orchestration, composition and performance, choir  
**Art**  
 Complex art techniques, advanced analysis and history  
**Physical Fitness**  
 Nutrition, swimming, fitness and complex games with emphasis on skills, teamwork, sportsmanship over competition

## LANGUAGE

**Phonics and word patterns**, spelling phonetic readers, basal readers, sight words  
**Word study** (alphabetical order, compound words, capitalization rules, contractions, affixes, etc.)  
**Grammar and syntax**: parts of speech, function of words  
**Sentence analysis**  
**Spoken language**: listening and speaking skills, reports, drama, debates  
**Reading comprehension**: analogies, author's purpose, cause and effect, fantasy and reality, fiction/non fiction, vocabulary in context, sequence of events, predicting outcomes, drawing conclusions, summarizing, recalling details, etc.  
**Writing**: gathering information, hypothesizing, outline, composition, editing, types of writing (poetry, story, journal, report, dialogue, descriptive, etc.)  
 Study skills: dictionary, encyclopedia, almanac, atlas, parts of a book, library skills, note taking, research and reference skills  
 Style: child's own, authors, analysis  
 Literature: folk tales, fables, myths, biographies, historical and science fiction  
 Spanish  
 Handwriting/Penmanship  
 Vocabulary

## MATHEMATICS & GEOMETRY

**Numeration and quantity**: cardinal and ordinal numbers, place value, exchanging, estimating, rounding, odd and even, greater than/less than, prime numbers, Roman numerals, square numbers 1-10, binomials and trinomials  
**Mastery of operations** and memorization of math facts, story problems, commutative, associative and distributive laws  
**Fractions**: advanced operations, story problems, equivalence  
**Money**: quantity, value, counting, story problems  
 Graphing, patterning, estimating, rounding  
**GEOMETRY**: Geometric solids  
 Construction of shapes  
**Closed plane figures**: circles, rectangles, triangles, polygons, quadrilaterals, curved figures  
**Classified Nomenclature**: Lines: types, parts and positions of lines  
 Angles: parts, types and angle positions, complimentary and supplementary angles  
 Plane figures: types and parts of each type  
 Congruency, Similarity, Equivalence  
 Perimeter, area, volume  
 Measurement of angles, use of ruler, compass, protractor  
 Geometry word problems

## HISTORY

**Great Lessons**: Story of the Universe, Story of the Coming of Life, Story of the Coming of Man, Story of Language, Story of Math  
**Concept of Time**: calendar work, timeline of a child's life, months of the year, seasons of the year, days of the week, the year and its parts, clock studies (hours, minutes, seconds, half past, quarter past/quarter to, mastery of telling time  
**Past, Present, Future**  
**Age of the Earth**  
**Timeline of Life**: from the Precambrian period to the Quaternary Period  
**Fundamental Needs of People**: clothing, nutrition, transportation, shelter, defense, communication, physical health, religion and philosophy, social acceptance, art and music  
 Physical Health: five senses, basic anatomy, systems of the body, food pyramid and basic nutrition  
**Society and Civilizations**: study of civilizations, research, history of child's country

## GEOGRAPHY

**Geography**  
 Globe and Map studies, including map making, map reading, scale, orientation, relief, contour, latitude and longitude, cardinal directions, legends and keys  
**Continents and oceans** of the world  
**Continent research**: countries, capitals, flags, animals, biomes  
 Pin-maps (countries, capitals, mountains, rivers, lakes)  
**Land and water forms**  
**Biome research**: desert, woodlands, rain forest, ocean, wetlands, tundra, grasslands, savanna  
**Universe, solar system, earth**: solar energy and the earth, movements of the earth, the atmosphere, wind  
**Ecology**: energy chains, biosphere, atmosphere, natural cycles, the endangered spaceship earth, recycling activities  
**Earth Science**: geological timeline, classification and use of minerals, plate tectonics, erosion, oceans, weather, clouds, precipitation  
 Physical Science: magnetic, non-magnetic, temperatures, matter, gases, weight, measurement, forces, simple tools, electricity, gravity, buoyancy, balance

## ZOOLOGY

**Vertebrates**: parts of a fish, parts of an amphibian, parts of a reptile, parts of a bird, parts of a mammal  
**The animal kingdom**: animal stories, animal research, how animals satisfy their needs  
**Types of vertebrates**: types of fish, amphibians, reptiles, birds, mammals, animal riddle stories  
 Invertebrates: parts of a protozoa, porifera, cnidarians, echinoderm, annelid, mollusk, arthropod, nematode, platyhelminth  
**Classification of the Animal Kingdom**: main characteristics of vertebrates and invertebrates, animal classification chart, timeline of life research

## BOTANY

Living/Non-Living  
 Five Kingdoms  
 Food Chain  
**Classified Nomenclature**: Plant: parts, types and research  
 Root: parts, types and research  
 Stem: parts, types and research  
 Leaf: parts, types and research  
 Seed: parts, types and research  
 Fruit: parts, types and research  
 Flower: parts, types and research  
 Other Botany Activities: fruits and vegetables, leaf cabinet, plant pictures and labels, plant classification chart

# Montessori Curriculum: Upper Elementary Level

PRACTICAL LIFE	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS & GEOMETRY	HISTORY	GEOGRAPHY	SCIENCE
Harvesting and marketing	Advanced grammar and sentence analysis	<b>Numeration and quantity:</b> decimals, integers, square numbers 1-10, binomials and trinomials	<b>Archeological Dig</b> <b>Fossil Dig</b> <b>Review Time Line of Life:</b> from the Precambrian period to the Quaternary Period	<b>Functional Geography</b> Work of air, work of water, work of maps	<b>ZOOLOGY:</b> <b>Living/Non-Living</b> <b>Five Kingdoms</b> <b>Gifts of Phyla</b> <b>Animal Systems:</b> Mamalia, Aves, Reptilia, Fish, Amphibia, Invertebrate <b>Chinese Boxes:</b> Mamalia, Aves, Reptilia, Fish, Amphibia, Invertebrate <b>Plant</b> <b>Fungi</b> <b>Protist</b> <b>Monera</b>  <b>BOTANY:</b> Nomenclatures and experiments
Community ecology projects	Spelling and vocabulary development	<b>Mastery of advanced operations:</b> memorization of facts, multiples, squaring, square roots, cubing, cube roots, problem solving	<b>History of Mankind:</b> Hominids, Patterns of Migration; World Ancient Civilizations, including Egyptian, Greek, Roman, Middle Ages, Explorers, Early America, Colonial Times	<b>Physical Geography:</b> world maps, continents, oceans, rivers, lakes, mountains, deserts, plants, animals, economy <b>United States, Oklahoma, Tulsa:</b> state names and capitals, bodies of water, mountains and deserts, animals and plants, economy <b>Cultural Geography:</b> Africa, Antarctica, Asia, Europe, North America, Australia, South America (maps, research, reports)	
Student planned field trips and visits by outside specialists	Word study: capitalization, commas, quotation marks, hyphens, apostrophes, possessives, dictionary, thesaurus, antonyms, proofreading, punctuation	<b>Decimals:</b> operations, conversion to fraction, fraction of decimal, rounding, ratios/cross products, percent, decimal to percent, fraction to decimal %, rate problems, base problems, percentage problems <b>Fractions:</b> advanced operations, improper fractions, mixed numbers, equivalency, reducing, common factors, word problems <b>Pre-Algebra and logic:</b> problem solving strategies			
Conflict resolution skills and Peace Curriculum	Spoken language: listening and speaking skills, reports, drama, debates	<b>Ancient Civilization</b> and mathematics of the Egyptians, Greeks and Romans			
Grace and courtesy	Reading comprehension: sequence, cause and effect, predicting outcomes, context clues, noting details, main idea, inferences, sentences, drawing conclusions;	<b>GEOMETRY:</b> <b>Finding areas of closed plane figures:</b> quadrilaterals, parallelograms, triangles, polygons, curved figures <b>Circles:</b> circumference, area, sector, volume			
Class government and constitutions	Writing: sentences, paragraphs, descriptive, narrative, comparative, persuasive, 'how to', personal and business letters, poetry (haiku, sonnet, couplet, quatrain, cinquain), newspaper, journal	<b>Congruency, Similarity, Equivalence</b>  Perimeter, area, volume			
Applied economics (student management projects)	Literature: folk tales, fables, myths, biographies, historical and science fiction; 'reading circles' to discuss plot, character development, setting, etc. in context of literature	Measurement of angles, compass work; constructions; Pythagorean Theorem			
Computer skills	Spanish				
Plant and Animal Care	Latin				
Handling Money	Handwriting/Penmanship				
Classroom Jobs					
<b>Music</b> Steel Drums Bands, percussion, teamwork, analysis and composition of music					
<b>Art</b> Complex art techniques, advanced analysis and history					
<b>Physical Fitness</b> Nutrition, swimming, fitness and complex games with emphasis on skills, teamwork, sportsmanship over competition					

# Montessori Curriculum: Middle School Level

SCIENCE	LANGUAGE	MATHEMATICS & GEOMETRY	HISTORY & GEOGRAPHY	SPECIALS & ELECTIVES	PRACTICAL LIFE	PERSONAL WORLD
<p><b>Scientific method</b></p> <p><b>Scientific observation</b></p> <p><b>Reporting and interpreting data</b></p> <p><b>BIOLOGY</b></p> <p>Connections between all living things</p> <p>Cells: plant and animals</p> <p>Cell Cycle</p> <p>Characteristics and needs of living things</p> <p>Classification systems: vertebrates vs. invertebrates</p> <p>Study of microorganisms</p> <p>Genetics and DNA</p> <p>Ecosystems and population growth</p> <p>Conservation of earth's resources</p> <p>Pollution</p> <p><b>PHYSICAL SCIENCE</b></p> <p>Forces: Newton's Laws of motion, gravity, friction, electromagnetism</p> <p>Speed, acceleration, velocity</p> <p>Atomic structure: atoms, elements, compounds</p> <p>Chemical properties</p> <p>Kinetic and potential energy</p> <p>Thermodynamics and transfer of energy</p> <p>Types of energy (fossil fuels vs. alternative energy)</p> <p>Waves and energy</p> <p>Simple machines</p>	<p><b>Study of Vocabulary:</b> word origins and etymology</p> <p><b>Conventions:</b> commas, colons, titles, paragraphing, parentheses, hyphens, dashes, semi-colons, proofreading, punctuation</p> <p><b>Spoken language:</b> listening and speaking skills, presentation skills, meeting leadership</p> <p><b>Reading comprehension:</b> poetry, short essays, novels focused on each cycle theme, and various personal choice novels.</p> <p><b>Writing:</b> writing workshops and daily practice writing in the areas of personal choice, science, social studies and health; short research papers; lab reports, creative writing pieces; poetry; apprentice famous writers; lengthy research paper; reflective essay. Peers and guides evaluate each published piece of writing using a writing rubric based on 6+1 Writing Process.</p> <p><b>Literature:</b> literary elements; making connections to self, text, media and world; sub-text; intertextuality; gender and social norms, group literature discussions and writing about reading strategies.</p> <p><b>Socratic Seminar:</b> The goal of a Socratic seminar is for students to help one another understand the ideas, issues and values reflected in a specific text and to make connections to other works.</p>	<p><b>Pre-Algebra:</b></p> <p>Decimals: operations, conversion to fraction, fraction of decimal, rounding, ratios/cross products, percent, decimal to percent, fraction to decimal %, rate problems, base problems, percentage problems</p> <p>Fractions: improper fractions, mixed numbers, equivalency, reducing, common factors, mean, median, mode and range</p> <p>Advanced operations: memorization of facts, multiples, squaring, square roots, cubing, cube roots, real world word problem solving</p> <p><b>Algebra:</b> grouping symbols, properties and solving equalities &amp; inequalities, solving equations, equations with exponents, sequence &amp; series, evaluation expressions with powers, polynomials, difference of squares, factoring patterns, quadratics by factoring/formula, direct and indirect variation, calculating power, work, potential, &amp; kinetic energy, coordinate plane, slope, graphing equations function, domain</p> <p><b>Geometry:</b> finding the volume and surface area of 2-D and 3-D shapes, measuring and constructing geometric figures, geometry in architecture, determining interior angles of polygons, discovering Euler's formula</p>	<p><b>American History:</b> American Revolution, US Constitution, waves of immigration, Native Americans, industrial Revolution (history, causes, effects, inventions, inventors)</p> <p><b>Exploration:</b> Explorers (past and present), North America, other continents, space</p> <p><b>Social Studies:</b> economic systems, The Stock Market, overpopulation, war, peace initiatives, other local and global issues, social injustice</p> <p><b>Tulsa, Ok:</b> History of Tulsa and historical landmarks</p> <p><b>Physical Geography:</b> world maps, continents, oceans, rivers, lakes, mountains, deserts</p> <p><b>Cultural Geography:</b> Geographical needs of people</p>	<p><b>MUSIC</b></p> <p>Rock band, experimental band</p> <p><b>ART</b></p> <p>Art journal: personal record of images; made by drawing, sketching, doodling, painting, stamping and collage; Sculpture: paper mache, paper topography and clay, multi-media; Painting: Acrylic techniques; Drawing: techniques for portrait and still life.</p> <p><b>PHYSICAL FITNESS</b></p> <p>Improving speed and endurance in the one mile run; understanding/skills in games such as football, soccer, frisbee, and kickball; sportsmanship, positive team building; upper body and core strengthening through sit-ups and push-ups.</p> <p><b>SPANISH</b></p> <p>Adjectives, prepositions, and present progressive verbs, Irregular verbs, present continuous tense, and beginning level direct object pronouns in context of short story</p>	<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills</b></p> <p><b>Information Literacy skills:</b> Microsoft Outlook for email and calendar, Word, Power Point, Excel, internal drives, shared drives, online textbooks, Khan Academy online research, MLA citations, understanding bias &amp; perspective, critical reading, propaganda</p> <p><b>Media:</b> presentations with Power Point, Prezi, i-movie; analyzing and evaluating advertising, documentary films, TED Talks.</p> <p><b>Home economics:</b> planning, shopping, preparing and serving a weekly meal; cleaning, plant and pet care; raising chickens; planting a garden, student planned three-day away and adventure trips</p> <p><b>Independent research projects</b></p> <p><b>Classroom Business:</b> Budgeting, handling money, creating purchase orders, reporting/balancing income and expenses, customer service</p> <p><b>Community Service:</b> Blue Thumb – Coal Creek monitoring &amp; conservation; Tulsa Children's Museum; Tulsa Public Library</p>	<p><b>21<sup>st</sup> Century Skills</b></p> <p><b>Life Skills:</b> Flexibility, Initiative, Social Skills, Productivity, Leadership</p> <p><b>Learning Skills:</b> Critical thinking, creative thinking, collaborating, communicating, conflict resolution</p> <p>Heroic Journey</p> <p>Mindfulness: emotional regulation, stress management</p> <p>Grace and courtesy</p> <p>Brain Structures &amp; Neurotransmitters</p> <p>Rites of Passage</p> <p>Kohlberg's 6 Stages of Moral Development</p> <p>Morality and Self-Actualization</p> <p>Seven Habits of Highly Effective Teens</p> <p>Native American Medicine Wheel</p>

## Guidelines for Independent School Parents

Independent schools are blessed with parents who are invested in the success of their children. Quite literally, independent schools could not offer the quality of education service and sense of community they do if not for parental involvement as volunteers, committee members and supporters.

Many parents enrolling in independent schools do so as newcomers to private education, and as such, may be unsure about their roles in the school community. They may wonder, "What do I get for my tuition dollars?" or "How can I best work with the teachers and administration so my child gets the most out of school?"

The following guidelines are straight-talk offered as support for the parent as well as administrators and teachers.

Parents can best work for the benefit of their children if they:

Understand enrollment means more than service for a fee. Membership in a school community means forming a long-term relationship with the school. In essence, schools say to you, "Yes, we will educate your child through thick and thin. We will serve him or her over the coming years." That's a commitment schools do not take lightly. While enrollment is renewed yearly on a business-like basis, schools see membership in the community as an idealistic blend of contract and covenant, a delicate web of trust that holds parents, child, teachers, and administration together. The Home and School relationship exists only with one proviso: that the school's educational service and the child's educational needs remain a good fit.

Recognize that enrollment means entrusting your child to the professional expertise and devoted care of the school's personnel. Independent school administrators and teachers know what they are doing. They are not perfect and don't claim to be. But they are experienced and well-intentioned; they genuinely care about your child. They do their jobs not for the money but because they love kids and believe in the ideals of education. While teachers and administrators should be expected to explain methods, discuss philosophy, include constituencies in decision-making, and be open to honest discussion, they do not have to justify their existence or defend every action, decision, or policy.

Understand and accept values upon which a school operates. You should explore a school's values with admissions people and other administrators and teachers, asking questions like:

- How does the school balance individuality with group harmony?
- What values are central to your discipline policy?
- How will the school's core values remain unchanged as my child develops and passes through the divisions of the school?
- What values are behind the grading system and practice of testing?
- What does the school believe about competition in the classroom and on the playing field?
- What kind of events does the school sponsor for fund-raising, and what are the values inherent in those activities?
- How are curricular, disciplinary, policy and financial decisions made, and what values do those processes reflect?

Parents cannot pressure schools to change their values nor do schools govern by public opinion.

If you and the school honestly seek together what's best for your child, then you and your child's teachers and administrators shall not stray far from the school's core values. The harmony of values prevents a clash of beliefs that often spells tragedy for the child, the family, and the school. When disappointments or disagreements place you and the school on opposite sides of an issue, your child is always left in the middle.

Use channels of communication appropriately. It is the job of administrators to make those channels understood, clear, and open. It is also their job to help you in a school; otherwise the school would suffer from an implosion of individual opinion. When you have a question or a problem, be it logistic (Can Sara leave school five minutes early on Tuesdays for her piano lesson?) or philosophical (Why can't the third grade play interscholastic football?), you ought to know where to go for a response. Angry or fearful parents, who break the channels, going directly to the head or a board member, tend to tear apart the web of relationship and ultimately dis-serve their child, who inevitably absorbs their frustration and attitudes. While you may get rumor or second-hand information about school issues from the pick-up line or in the parking lot, you will get the best information if you seek it out through the proper channels.

Accept the timing of the school's bureaucratic clock. Schools often take a long time to make a decision, fix a problem, find a solution, or reach a compromise. This is because independent schools tend to be conservative institutions. Also, school time can seem slow to impatient parents because many school personnel are involved in the decision-making process, and those people spend most of their day educating children. Sometimes you may feel worried or frustrated or entitled to faster service; adults today are not used to waiting, particularly when the welfare of their children is at stake. But, schools need time and your patience if they are to truly honor your child and do what is in her or his best interest.

Understand a teacher's job and its scope of responsibility. Teachers are not surrogate parents or drill sergeants or licensed therapists. The modern teacher is a guide and coach with expertise in an area of subject matter and a deep devotion to children. Independent schools take great care to hire the very best faculty they can; they look for qualifications such as rapport with children, knowledge of subject area, appropriate training, communication skills, and positive energy. Teachers are usually given a lot of say about what and how they teach within guidelines set by the division and/or department. The autonomy, combined with smaller classes, supportive parents, and stimulating colleagues, is the independent school recipe for excellent and inspired classroom instruction.

Understand the duties and scope of authority of an administrator's job. The head carries ultimate responsibility for the educational quality, tone, and personnel of the school. The head delegates responsibility for particular areas of the school to other administrators such as division heads and assistant heads. Administrators help govern the daily operation of the school. They attend many meetings throughout the day and week and confer with students, teachers, and parents. They articulate the school's mission and values both on campus and in the community, and they help write and enforce policy. Administrators oversee personnel, policy, mission, and finance. Administrators also handle emergencies, resolve problems, manage the flow of information, and answer questions. The Board, another part of the leadership of the school, oversees administration and is ultimately responsible for the present and future well-being of the school. The Board usually hires a head and entrusts to her or him the daily operations of the school.

Understand the role of the parent. You are indispensable to the school. You provide money in the form of tuition and gifts, you provide energy and time on fund-raising projects and teacher support, and you make your expertise available. You are responsible for supporting your child's education at home by complementing the methods and values and philosophy the school espouses. You are given a voice in many decision-making processes through a parent council or school committee. Depending on your school the Board may engage you as a member.

Know and believe the mission of the school and its promises to children. Most schools promise the following:

- To educate your child.
- To provide a safe environment in which he or she can develop appropriate social and academic skills.
- To emphasize values like scholastic excellence, civic involvement, personal responsibility, respect of self and others, emotional well-being, and creative expression.

Upon this common ground, every school builds a unique mission, and it's the school's job to articulate the mission clearly. Parents who misunderstand the mission or seek to change it or who challenge its values almost always create unhappiness and interfere with the learning of their child. When choosing a school, you should do so for reasons of philosophic and academic fit. The wrong reasons for enrolling a child in a school all center on parents and include:

- To improve your family's reputation.
- To guarantee your child's acceptance in the next school of choice.
- To mold your child in your own image.
- To live vicariously through your child.
- To increase your self-esteem.
- To buy your child good grades and success.

Schools promise none of these outcomes. The consequences of mis-enrollment usually surface sooner rather than later; unhappiness with the school, poor student performance, a clash of values, rumor-spreading that leads to taking sides, and nameless accusations that lead to war.

Honestly examine your expectations for the school. Independent schools create wonderful educational communities. They encourage a sense of belonging and even a feeling of family, but schools are not families. They are too big, their resources are too limited, and their purpose is too narrow to be a true family. The 1980's and 90's have already seen schools stretch the definition of what comprises an education. While schools may provide breakfast and lunch, child care, counseling, and friendship to students, in addition to their education program, they cannot make learning disabilities disappear or heal broken or dysfunctional families or teach children to be moral. Enrollment in an independent school is an *educational* decision. Independent schools can't and shouldn't pretend to do it all; but what they do, they do well. You play a vital role in your child's development by maintaining reasonable expectation for what your school can do and by providing a home in which your child can learn the crucial life lessons not found in the school's curriculum.

(Laurence Boggess—writing in the November 1994, "Administrivia")

Montessori Position Paper  
**Authentic Montessori Community**  
Houston Montessori Center  
Elisabeth Coe, Ph.D., Director

Private and public school Montessori programs are being implemented at an unprecedented rate. They began primarily as early childhood and elementary school programs, but are now expanding into charter schools, infant-toddler programs, middle schools, and high schools. With this rapid expansion, many factors have created tensions among administration, faculty members and sometimes parents in Montessori schools. Among these factors are administrators with little Montessori knowledge and the high focus on testing. In strong and successful Montessori school programs, this tension has been overcome with a collaborative approach. Administrators need support in understanding the true reason for Montessori academic success--a physical, social, and emotionally safe environment. This environment consists of more than academic materials, record keeping, and assessments. It is the result of highly educated teachers who have thorough knowledge of child development and understand how students learn, what motivates progress, and how to observe students and make a match between a student's skills and optimal challenge in the curriculum. This position paper, outlining the basic cultural values of a Montessori classroom, is submitted to support administrators, Montessori teachers, parents, and Montessori teacher educators. Its focus is on the way an authentic Montessori community looks, acts, and feels:

**How it looks:**

- The classroom environment should be an environment designed primarily for students with traditional teacher items kept to a minimum. Large desks, chairs, personal mementos are best kept in an office or other space.
- The environment is clean and esthetically pleasing, free from unnecessary visual distractions and clutter.
- The teachers and children move around the classroom slowly and quietly with a sense of purpose.
- The teachers meet the children at eye level in order to communicate.
- Communication is open and authentic; body language is consistent with verbal messages.
- Teachers are seen as supportive of success and constructive in their assessments.
- Teachers frequently take time to observe the class as a whole and to reflect on their observations in order to personalize the curriculum for individual learners' skills and learning styles and offer the right amount of challenge.
- As a result of their observations, teachers are able to anticipate problems and intervene before disruption occurs. At the same time, teachers do not intervene if students can solve their own problems.
- Students do not spend their time waiting unproductively.

**How it Sounds:**

- Teachers and students go up to people they are addressing and speak softly in a natural way.
- Teachers and students speak positively and with respect to one another.
- Encouragement is highly valued because it gives positive feedback to progress at any level.
- Choices and alternatives are offered within acceptable limits.
- Problems are solved more by listening rather than by talking. There is a structured method of problem solving.
- Personal silence is valued as a way to concentrate, reflect, and develop the "inner voice"

necessary for metacognition. At the same time, dialogue with peers and teachers is a valuable learning tool. Small group and individual lessons are done quietly and at the student's eye level.

- Interruptions are kept to an absolute minimum.

#### **What it feels like:**

- Learning is joyful and self-calming.
- The teachers and students feel socially, emotionally, and physically safe.
- With the introduction of new information, teachers learn to value their own and their students' disequilibria when it precedes valuable growth and learning.
- There is a mutual trust built into the community based on commitment to consistency in the ideas that everyone belongs, no one is excluded.
- The teachers and students assume consistency and dependability are the cornerstones of the trust they feel.
- The teachers and students know that choices are available and that poor choices result in consequences. Choices can be in the form of multiple intelligence, learning style, content, order, and timing. Students are encouraged to make choices that are acceptable to the larger community.

In order for this to happen, administrators must actively seek knowledge of Montessori philosophy and human development. A course through an accredited Montessori teacher education program will enable them to:

1. Set reasonable standards for teachers and students that they can understand and achieve within a reasonable time frame.
2. Use teacher assessment formats that are harmonious with Montessori philosophy.
3. Allow unbroken work periods of two to three hours for completion of tasks.
4. Keep interruptions to the teachers and students to a minimum with announcements only at certain pre-scheduled times of the day.
5. Encourage progress for the student-body as a whole, while avoiding competitions and rewards for the few.
6. Speak naturally but softly when addressing children and teachers in the classroom and hallways.
7. Use positive messages that involve positive choices.
8. Maintain an aesthetic, visually pleasant environment that is maintained daily.
9. Ask questions; listen to replies, encourage participation in problem solving.
10. Learn to trust the teachers and students by considering them as members of the community who will adhere to the larger community standards.
11. Establish a physical, social, and emotionally safe environment in order for academic successes to be realized.

Maria Montessori describes the essence of a healthy school environment as follows:

*"What we all desire for ourselves, namely not to be disturbed in our work, not to find hindrances to our efforts, to have good friends ready to help us in times of need, to see them rejoice with us, to be on terms of equality with them, to be able to confide and trust in them--this is what we need for happy companionship. In the same way children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of the greater possibilities of their future. What we desire, they desire also."*