



2015-16 Family Handbook

Montessori by the Sea

1603 Gulf Way
St. Pete Beach, FL 33706
Historic Pass-A-Grille
(727) 360-7621

www.montessori-by-sea.org

License Number: C620076

Member of the American Montessori Society and International Montessori Council

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Welcome

It is our goal to work in partnership with parents, children, teachers, board of directors, and all staff to provide the very best education for our students. It is with that purpose in mind that the Family Handbook outlines our school's policies and procedures. Please keep this handbook in a convenient place for future reference. Contact us with any questions or if you need clarification of any of these policies and procedures. We hope your experience with Montessori by the Sea is rewarding and enriching.

Staff Contact Information

Director	Nicole Wilson nicole@montessori-by-sea.org
Primary Lead Teacher	Dorothy Cox Dorothy@montessori-by-sea.org
	Katie Schreiner Katie@montessori-by-sea.org
Elementary Lead Teacher	Stefanie Hoft Stefanie@montessori-by-sea.org
Aftercare Emergency Number	727-333-5808

School History

Montessori by the Sea is a non-profit Montessori school located in historic Pass-A-Grille overlooking the pristine Gulf of Mexico. Montessori by the Sea was established in 1985 as an outreach program of Pass-a-Grille Beach Community Church. The school began with a small Early Childhood classroom in the church building, and quickly grew. We moved into the blue Stern House in 1989. In 2005, we added the lower elementary classroom (ages 6 -9), which resides in the education building of the church.

Mission Statement

The mission of Montessori by the Sea is to provide a non-competitive environment that fosters respect, cooperation, order, and choice, within limits for children from three through nine years old.

Goals and Philosophy

Montessori by the Sea is dedicated to the Montessori philosophy and method of education through the senses. We provide a child-centered curriculum that includes guided discovery through hands-on learning within a multi-age classroom. We strive to instill a sense of wonder about the universe and the child's place in it. Parents. Parent support is key to a quality Montessori education.

The Montessori Educational Program

To aid life, leaving it free, however, to unfold itself, that is the basic task of the educator.
- Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori defined the goal of education as “the development of a complete human being, oriented to the environment and adapted to his or her time, place, and culture.”

At MBTS children of all ages are actively engaged in their learning. The adults in the learning environment act as facilitators of this natural process of learning. We believe that intelligence is not rare and provide an environment that allows children to learn in their own way and to progress at their own rate. The Montessori educational program offers a holistic integrated approach that considers the needs of the whole child.

Freedom with responsibility is an integral component of the Montessori environment. The children are active participants in their learning. The adult is responsible for setting limits in a firm, fair, and consistent manner. Children are free to make choices within those limits. They are responsible for accepting the consequences of their choices which leads to the development of self-discipline.

The Three Year Cycle

Montessori programs are designed on a three year basis with 3 – 6 year olds in the Early Childhood program, 6 – 9 year olds in Lower Elementary. Parents are strongly advised to allow their child to participate in the entire three year program. This allows the child to work in all areas of the curriculum and gain full advantage of his or her time in the Montessori learning environment. It is not until the third year of the program that children begin to synthesize and apply all the knowledge from the previous two years. We encourage you to observe in both the Primary and Lower Elementary programs to fully understand the extent of what our school has to offer.

Non-discriminatory Policy

Montessori by the Sea provides an authentic Montessori education to all children without regard to race, color, gender, nationality, ethnic origins, or religious beliefs.

Cultural Diversity

We celebrate the diversity of all ethnic and religious backgrounds of the children and families in our community. We do not subscribe to any specific religious organizations or practices. We invite all families to share with us their ethnic observances and celebrations.

Student Life

Starting School

At the beginning of the school year, many parents like to escort their child into the classroom. Please do not linger or react with alarm if your child is hesitant about the separation. It is important to reassure your child about where you will be during the day and about what time you will pick him/her up in the afternoon. Some children may be sad for a little while during the first few days, but kind words and reassurance almost always alleviate their fears. Our teachers are wonderful at helping children through these situations. The goal by the second week of school is to say goodbye to children at the gate and allow them to walk with a staff member up to the classroom door.

Here are some other guidelines to set your child up for success:

1. Please leave all toys at home. This prevents having to fight with children over leaving them in the car or at the school door. Children are grumpy when this happens.
2. Please try to bring happy, relaxed children to school by allowing adequate time and a very slow pace in preparing for school.
3. Talk about ground rules with children in a "positive" manner, and practice talking quietly at home.
4. Encourage the ability to distinguish between appropriate indoor behavior and outdoor behavior. This reinforces what is practiced at school.
5. Parent conferences are scheduled twice each year. Please make time in your schedule to attend these conferences. A parent or teacher may schedule an optional third conference.
6. Please avoid tangible rewards for accomplishments children naturally receive pleasure from.
7. Order is very important to children to give them a sense of security and peace. This is something that can be incorporated into your home environment to ease the transition between home and school.

8. Notify the lead teacher if you have a question or concern. A telephone message can be left with the office.

10. Parents are the child's primary teacher. The faculty and staff at Montessori by the Sea can love, support, and encourage parents best by setting excellent examples. We make every effort to address parents' needs as well as the needs of our children. We must also trust one another and share the goal of providing the best educational environment for children to develop.

Arrival and Dismissal

Please adhere to the following arrival protocol.

Elementary - Students should be walked directly to their classroom.

Primary –

- ♦ Enter the alley from 17th Ave. to keep traffic moving in one direction.
- ♦ Pull forward to the ramp. Stay in your car.
- ♦ A staff member will escort your child to the porch.
- ♦ If you need to enter the building, please park in the church parking lot or in a space in front of the playground.

During morning arrival, only written messages will be relayed to teachers.

Half day students are dismissed at 11:30, children staying for lunch are dismissed at 12:30, and full day students at 2:30. If children are picked more than 15 minutes after their assigned pick-up time, the family will incur a \$15 charge. Aftercare is available at a lower drop-in rate with advanced notice, or for a monthly or annual fee. Please contact the office for these rates.

After Care is available from 2:30 – 5:30 PM. Please remember the school closes at 5:30 PM and all children should be picked up by this time. There is a fee of \$1.00 per child, per minute after 5:30 PM, payable at the time of pick-up.

Please adhere to the following dismissal protocol. Following the guidelines of the National Safety Council, staff may only seat children in the **back seat** of your car.

Primary:

- Enter the alley from 17th Ave. to keep traffic moving in one direction.
- Pull up to the walkway where a teacher will help your child into the car.
- Children will remain seated until dismissed by a teacher. Please do not call your child to approach you.
- If you choose to wait outside, please park in the church parking lot.

Elementary:

- Dismissal is from the church parking lot.
- Enter the parking lot from 17th Ave. to keep traffic moving in one direction.
- Pull up to the school entrance where a teacher will escort your child to your car.

It is school policy that children will be released only to their parent/guardian or authorized persons listed on the dismissal record. Please keep this record up to date including car pool arrangements. For your child's protection, staff will ask for identification from anyone unknown to them. Special arrangements require advance notice in the form of a note.

Attendance

Student attendance is essential to academic success. To be successful, students must attend school on a regular basis. Excessive absences by students may jeopardize the student's progress in all areas of the classroom. All school absences, along with the cause of absence, will be recorded and kept current. If your child will be out of school or late arriving for class, please e-mail or call the school office by 8:30 a.m. Students may miss a maximum of (9) days per semester (August – December/January – May).

It is important for students to arrive on time for school each day. School starts promptly at 8:30 a.m. for students in Early Childhood and ends at 2:30. Lower Elementary begins promptly at 8:15 and ends at 2:45 PM. Students who arrive late or leave early miss important instruction, as well as interrupt learning in the classroom. Arriving with the rest of his classmates will help your child adjust more easily to the school day and more quickly become a part of any activities that may already be in progress. We sincerely appreciate your efforts to schedule appointments so that your child will not miss instruction or cause disruption in the classroom.

Clothing Guidelines

Students may dress casually and in a manner that is not distracting, extreme, or disruptive to the educational process. The following standards are established to assist in selecting appropriate apparel for school.

- Students must wear shoes appropriate for running, walking, playing, and climbing on the playground; sneakers are preferred. Platform soles, raised heels, cowboy boots, and flip flops increase a child's chance of slipping and falling and are not appropriate for school wear.
- Sandals must have heel straps.
- Sneakers are required for PE and all off campus activities.

- Shoes with lights or sound are a distraction in the classroom and should be saved for when the child is not in school.
- Please avoid clothing that may be a distraction, such as items printed with characters or excessive decoration.
- Hats and sunglasses shall not be worn in classrooms.
- If your daughter prefers to wear skirts, we recommend wearing shorts underneath.
- Clothing or accessories imprinted with inappropriate messages are not permitted.
- Jewelry should be saved for home as it can easily be lost at school and be a distraction in the classroom.

Primary children need to bring a complete change of clothing including socks and underwear. Label all clothing and bring it to school in a gallon size Ziploc bag with your child's name on it. Replace clothing as needed.

Provide school clothes that allow the child to be independent in dressing and undressing. Belts, buttons, overalls are difficult for young children to use and should be avoided.

Nap Supplies

Children enrolled in the Early Childhood program for a full day have a scheduled rest time after lunch. Please send a small blanket labeled with your child's name and a small pillow. MBTS supplies a cot sheet which will be assigned to an individual child for the school year. Laundry will be sent home at the end of each week and needs to be returned each Monday.

Your child will be provided with a small cloth backpack in which to send nap supplies to school. Please make sure all nap items fit into this bag as we have limited space to store nap supplies. For this same reason, please do not send additional or alternative backpacks.

Lunch

Children bring their lunch to school in a clearly labeled cooler type lunch box. Please provide an icepack in the lunch box. Pizza will be available for purchase each Friday at a cost of \$3. Please note that we do not heat children's lunches.

Good nutrition is the first step to a lifelong wellness program. Lunch is a very important part of this. We count on parents to work with us in teaching children about good health and nutrition. Please read labels and avoids foods with sugar in the first three

ingredients. Please send water, milk, or 100% fruit juice with your child's lunch. Gum and candy are not permitted.

Please make every effort to prepare the contents of your child's lunch in a way that allows the child to independently open containers and beverages. Be sure to include all needed utensils. We encourage you to place foods in reusable or recyclable containers. These containers will be rinsed out by your child and returned home each day. Glass bottles and containers are not permitted at school. All uneaten food that can be contained will be sent home. Please monitor your child's lunchbox to see what your child likes and dislikes and to determine the correct amount of food to pack. We appreciate your care in preparing a healthy lunch.

Birthdays

Montessori classes have a special birthday celebration, called a celebration of life, during which the child tells the class the story of his life. You may want to create a "timeline" with your child. Place one photo from each year of the child's life on a piece of paper. Write a caption for each picture. Older children can write the caption themselves. By taping the pages together, you create a linear representation of the child's life.

You are welcome to send in a special snack in honor of your child's birthday. Please check with your child's teacher in advance to ensure there are no scheduling conflicts. Due to Health Department regulations, we are unable to accept homemade treats. This celebration takes place before lunch, so please make servings small and not too sweet. Your child's teacher will send more detailed information as this special day approaches.

As part of your child's birthday celebration you may choose to present a gift to the classroom, so your child has the opportunity to give as well as receive. Please check with your child's teacher for a list of suggested books, CDs, or plant.

If you are planning a birthday party outside of school, we ask that invitations be sent outside of school.

Field Trips and Outings

Educators will plan educational field trips throughout the school year to enrich the curriculum as well as students' overall educational experience. Notice of upcoming trips will be sent home in advance. Permission slips and any required fees must be returned to school in advance of the trip, or your child may not be able to participate.

Parent volunteers are needed to drive and assist in the supervision of children. To ensure the safety of our children, all drivers must have had a level 2 background screen and submit a copy of their driver's license and automobile insurance card. Instructions for obtaining the Level 2 background screen are available in the school office. Our

school insurance does not cover field trip volunteer drivers. Students will be assigned to each car and may not switch cars to sit with particular friends. **Please do not make any stops going to or from a trip.**

If you volunteer to chaperone on a trip, please stay with the group of children assigned to you. We strongly recommend that you do not bring any younger siblings along when you volunteer for trips. On the day of the trip, you will be given a handout with further suggestions for making the trip a success.

Only third year primary and elementary students will participate in trips that involve driving. Younger students will participate in walking trips to places such as the park, fire station, or beach.

Guiding Principles

As a school founded on Montessori ideals, we believe that every person deserves respect. We expect students and adults to demonstrate kindness, respect, and courtesy toward all community members. Our goal is to establish safe, warm, and caring environments where children learn positive and appropriate ways to handle situations.

Montessori children have freedom within the limits of very clear ground rules. All ground rules are based on the core Montessori value of respect for self, others, and the environment. Rules are kept simple, yet they are explored in great detail. It is never assumed that children understand what it means to be kind and respectful. Social skills are taught through grace and courtesy lessons, which are presented by demonstration, practiced by role play, and modeled by the adults and older children. These set a tone of respect and kindness.

When conflicts arise, children do not have the maturity or experience to put their feelings in perspective. Conflict resolution skills are taught to help the children both validate their feelings and give them the tools to successfully tackle them. Children learn what to do when someone is unkind or unfair and how to discuss conflicts as they arise. When a child repeatedly has difficulty following the expectations for interpersonal conduct, we will bring the child, staff, and parents together to work on a solution. When the school and parents work in partnership, there is greater opportunity for consistency and continuity.

Discipline Policy

At MBTS, we see discipline as helping the children to develop an internal focus and control to enable them to make positive choices. Through the use of the materials, the child develops concentration, and through concentration comes inner discipline. We establish necessary boundaries to give the children methods and techniques to control their own behavior, through consistent modeling and dealing constructively with

problems. We strive for a balance of freedom and structure, linked with a high level of responsibility. That balance is individualized based on the needs of the child. Our goal is an internalized level of obedience, wherein the child behaves because it is the right thing to do, whether or not the teacher is in the room. This is the kind of citizen we hope for in the world. Positive discipline is a process that takes time; it begins at birth, and continues through the four planes of development, until around 25 years of age.

Discipline to us is not something that is done to the child, but is developed within the child. It may not be as immediate as a rewards/ punishment model, but its outcomes run deeper.

Classroom expectations:

1. Everyone must keep their hands to themselves.
2. Everyone must use a quiet indoor voice.
3. Everyone must walk.
4. Everyone must choose appropriate work, use the work, then put the work away ready for the next person.
5. Everyone must work at a table or a floor rug.

Children who are unable to follow these expectations will be redirected or walked through with the problem-solving process.

The problem-solving process:

Stop! I think we have a problem! Adult helps children realize they are in a conflict situation.

What is the problem? The adult through observation and questioning helps children verbalize the problem. This also involves a statement of commitment from all parties involved to come to a peaceable and win-win situation. For example, if two children want to work with the same materials at the same time, we would agree to come to some solution that both were happy with or no one would get to use that piece of material.

What are all the solutions to the problem? The adult guides the children through possible ways to solve the situation.

What is the best solution? The adult guides the children to agreeing on a solution and implementing it.

Is it working? The adult checks back through observation and questioning to make sure that the solution agreed upon is meeting the needs of the children.

This model of problem solving also helps our children learn critical thinking skills. We hope you will also use this model of problem solving with your child. We think you will be amazed at how well a three or four-year-old can be stepped through this process. And it is heartwarming to see a five-year-old use it with no adult guidance!

Disruptive Behavior

The following action will be taken in the case of severely disruptive behavior, which includes but is not limited to: assault, biting, hitting, kicking, fighting, throwing objects, spitting, pushing, pinching, fleeing the environment, name calling or harassment

1. First offense: The teacher will help to mediate the problem-solving process
2. Second offense same day: The child will be asked to sit away from the group or asked to sit next to the teacher or assistant until the child is ready to work again peacefully.
3. Third offense same day: Child will be sent to the office and parent will be called. The child may be sent home. Parent will receive an informal sheet of expectations of the child at home.
4. If a child reaches more than 3 offenses in a 2 week period it may be considered a severely disruptive behavior pattern. A conference will be scheduled to devise a behavior modification plan.

Consequences to severely disruptive behavior that continues over a period of time include, but are not limited to:

- Removal of child from the classroom and sent to the office
- Parents notified and asked to pick up child from school or event
- Conference with parents
- Behavior plan will be developed that may include but is not limited to: recommendations for evaluations, plan of action for when the behavior occurs, journaling of behaviors by parent and teacher, food diary
- Possible dismissal

Biting

If a child bites another child and blood is drawn, the biter will be sent home for the rest of the day. If a child becomes a chronic biter, the parents may be asked to remove their child from the school until the behavior disappears.

MBTS is committed to a safe and peaceful educational environment for all students, employees, volunteers and patrons, free from harassment or intimidation. "Harassment or intimidation" means any intentional written, verbal, or physical act, when the intentional written, verbal, or physical act:

- Physically harms a student or damages the student's property; or

- Has the effect of substantially interfering with a student's education; or
- Is severe, persistent, or pervasive that it creates an intimidating or threatening educational environment; or
- Has the effect of substantially disrupting the orderly operation of the school.

If a child engages in these behaviors, he/she will be sent to the office to conference with the Head of School. Parents will be called and child sent home for that day. If the behavior continues the child will be suspended from school until the behavior disappears.

MBTS forbids the use of corporal punishment as well as harsh and demeaning language or tones of voice to control a child's behavior.

Thank you for helping to provide a safe environment for our children.

Student Health

It is understood that all children will be sick at some time during the school year, and illnesses spread through schools very quickly. Each family will need to have a plan in place to provide sick care for their child.

Children may not attend school when they:

- Have had a fever in the last 24 hours (without the use of fever reducing medication)
- Have had vomiting or diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- Have a sore throat
- Have persistent coughing or sneezing
- Have an unexplained rash
- Have an earache or drainage from the ear
- Have an excessively runny nose with colored mucus
- Have a contagious condition (head lice, strep throat, etc)

The school must be informed as soon as possible of any contagious condition the child may have come in contact with, so the school community may take the necessary action.

Weather permitting; students go outside to play every day. If you feel your child is too sick to go outside, please keep him or her home from school.

Emergency Care

In the event of an emergency, the school will call 911 first, so your child may be transported by ambulance to the nearest medical facility. Parents will be contacted immediately following the 911 call. A teacher will accompany the child in the ambulance, in the event the parent does not arrive in time.

Please remember to keep your emergency contact information up to date. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day.

Medication

Only under extraordinary conditions do we administer medication at school. Please do not send in any medication with your child including cough medicine or drops, topical creams, or over the counter medications such as Tylenol.

When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary to administer medication during school hours, the following procedure must be followed.

- Hand any medication brought to school directly to your child's teacher or the school Director.
- All prescription medication must be in the original bottle that is clearly labeled with the child's name, medication name, time and amount of dosage.
- Parents are responsible for administering the first dosage of any new medication at home.
- An **Authorization to Administer Medication** form must be completed before any medication is given. This is available in the office.
- Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any over the counter medication except as authorized in writing by you and the child's physician.

MBTS Parents

Communication

MBTS recognizes the importance of communication. The school Director and educators are always available by appointment to address parent needs.

Please address all classroom and curriculum questions directly to your child's teacher. Teachers may be reached via e-mail and will respond within 24 hours. You can also call the office to arrange for a meeting with the teacher. During the school hours, it is the teacher's priority to attend to students' needs. Teachers are not available to discuss issues during the hours of 8:15 – 2:45.

During the school year, we will send home newsletters, announcements, notes, and flyers. In an effort to be environmentally friendly, we will transmit as much information as possible via email. Each week, an electronic newsletter will be emailed to all families. Please be sure to take a few minutes to read this as it will keep you informed of everything that is happening at school. In addition meetings will be scheduled throughout the school year to provide parents with pertinent information regarding curriculum, philosophy, and other important topics relating to education.

Grievance Procedure

Any questions or concerns about your child's classroom experience should be first addressed with the teacher. Should you not be able to reach an understanding with the teacher, please contact the Director. The Director will help mediate a meeting between the Parent and Teacher. Concerns about larger school issues and policies should be taken to the Director. Problems that cannot be worked out at the aforementioned level will be taken to the Chairman of the Board. Contact: Susan Holderness at 727-403-1228 or stholderness@yahoo.com.

MBTS encourages parent feedback, involvement, and participation. We advocate honest, respectful exchange between all parties, adult and child alike. We are receptive to constructive feedback. The Montessori philosophy emphasizes honesty and fairness along with cohesion and unity. It discourages unconstructive comments, gossip, or other behaviors that generally do not serve to solve problems or make improvements.

Progress Reports

Formal progress reports are shared twice a year for children in Kindergarten and Elementary. The teachers base these reports on student observations and student work. Emphasis is not placed on achieving a "grade"; instead students work toward understanding of concepts.

Observations

Parents are encouraged to make an appointment with the teacher to observe in the classroom. The best time to observe is during the morning work cycle. You will want to see the class at its normal routine and not responding to the novelty of your presence. Therefore when you visit, please sit in the designated visitor's chair in the classroom. Guidelines for classroom observation will be provided to you at the time of the observation. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation of the children at work. A brief follow-up conference should be scheduled after an observation.

All visitors and volunteers need to sign in and obtain a visitor name tag from the office upon arrival. We ask that parents do not visit the classroom before mid-October. This will give students and teachers an opportunity to acclimate before visitors are present.

Always silence your cell phone when entering any classroom.

Emergency School Closing

There may be occasions when it is necessary to close the school for emergencies, such as a hurricane or flooding. If Pinellas County public schools are closed, MBTS will also be closed. However, there may be an instance where MBTS is closed when the public schools are not. A message concerning school closing will be delivered to the phone number on file with the school as well as sent via e-mail and posted on Facebook. If school is in session at the time of closing, you will be notified by phone and asked to pick up your child early. It is imperative that all emergency contact information be kept up to date.

School Donations/Tax ID #

As an Outreach Program of Pass-a-Grille Beach Community Church, MBTS is a non-profit operating under 501(c) 3 status. All donations made as gifts to the school, over and above tuition and fees, are considered tax-deductible. The Tax ID # for MBTS is 59-1005855. As a small, private non-profit school, donations are always very much appreciated! MBTS will be happy to provide a receipt for any gifts or donations made to the school.

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgement for the 2015-16 Montessori By The Sea Parent Handbook

Please sign this form and return it to the school office. Your signature indicates that you have received the handbook for Montessori by the Sea and have read and understand its policies and procedures.

This handbook contains the policies and procedures of Montessori by the Sea. It is only meant to serve as a reference guide. The school Director and Board reserve the unilateral right to add, delete, or amend these policies provided for in this handbook. Families of students enrolled in Montessori by the Sea should feel free to contact the Director with questions concerning the contents of this handbook.

Parent/Guardian Name: (Please print)_____

Parent/ Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____