



Montessori Day School of Brooklyn

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MDS FAMILY HANDBOOK

2010-2011

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Education is not something that the teacher does, but it is a natural process that develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but by virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. Our educational aim with very young children must be to aid the spontaneous development of the mental, spiritual and physical personality.

– Dr. Maria Montessori

I. WELCOME TO OUR SCHOOL

The faculty and administration of the Montessori Day School of Brooklyn want to thank you for having made the wonderful choice of joining our school community. This family handbook provides an overview of the most important policies and procedures of our school.

This family handbook is always evolving. We welcome your comments and feedback.

A. Mission and Affiliations

The mission of our school is to provide an affordable, high quality pre-school education that is guided by the Montessori teaching principles. Our goal is to foster in our children a strong sense of independence, creativity, respect for self and others, an appreciation of diversity in people and a deep love of learning.

Our school is a community that prides itself on its respect for –and celebration of– diversity. Our families and staff come from a number of cultures, speak a number of different languages, celebrate different religions, are gay and straight, and generally, reflect all the faces of Brooklyn. This respect for and commitment to diversity is reflected not only in our hiring and employment practices, but also in our admissions policy. We also maintain and are always seeking to enhance our financial assistance/scholarship program to assist families with limited financial resources.

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn is licensed by the New York City Board of Health and is affiliated with the American Montessori Society. We are also a member of the Parents' League and Brooklyn Early Childhood Director's Association.

B. Our History

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn began in 1977 as a drop-in program for working families of the YWCA. The program became a member of the American Montessori Society in 1982 and has been a centerpiece of the community ever since. We have developed an excellent reputation for providing high-quality preschool education and care.

In September 2003 our Parent Teacher Association decided to create a new non-profit organization to operate as an independent school housed at the YWCA. The School was reborn as the Brooklyn Montessori, LTD. In January 2007, in order to accommodate the YWCA's decision to create more space for low income housing for women in downtown Brooklyn, the school moved from its original location to two new sites: a primary location on Washington Avenue in Prospect Heights and a subsidiary location at Grace Church on 7th Avenue in Park Slope. In September 2010, MDS moved to our current location, 237 Park Place and achieved our goal of reuniting the school.

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn continues as a labor of love for families, teachers and community members. Now, as in our past, the Montessori Day School continues its strong tradition of providing positive early childhood education. We welcome you to our extraordinary community.

C. The Montessori Philosophy

Our school is built on the observations, principles, and methods developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1955) almost one hundred years ago. We also incorporate current early childhood education research and practices into our curriculum. The Montessori principles include the following:

- **The early years:** The ages from birth to six years are critical years for brain development. Modern scientific research has reinforced Dr. Montessori's observation from the early 20th century.
- **The whole child approach:** The primary goal of a Montessori pre-school is to help each child experience the joy of learning and reach his or her full potential through activities that promote physical, social, emotional and cognitive development.
- **Respect, independence, inner discipline:** Children are treated with respect and are helped to respect each other, their teachers, their work and their environment.
- **The prepared environment:** The teacher creates an environment with classroom, materials and social interactions that encourages and supports each child's natural curiosity.
- **The materials:** Dr. Montessori's observation of the activities children repeat and enjoy led her to design self-correcting materials that promote conceptual understanding.
- **The teacher:** The Montessori teacher is first a meticulous observer of an individual child and his/her particular learning style. He or she is then a designer of a nurturing and stimulating environment, a demonstrator, a role model, as well as a resource for the children in her/his class.
- **Freedom within clear limits:** Children are free to work at their own pace with materials they choose, either alone or with others. They gain inner discipline and self-esteem to become life-long learners and problem solvers.
- **Teachers and children organize daily group discussions and projects.** Children are encouraged to share, take turns and work together. "Use your words" is a frequently heard phrase.
- **A continuum of learning:** Children are absorbing language and literacy, math and measurements, science and close observation, art and drama at their own pace from the youngest to the oldest class.

D. Classroom Curricula

MDS teachers work together so that as children pass through the classes during the years they are in the school, they build on their experiences in each classroom. Each classroom maintains a statement of the skills and goals on which the class focuses for the school year. This statement is distributed to parents at the beginning of the year and is referred to often at various points throughout the school year. Each month, the teachers of every classroom distribute a calendar to all parents of their classroom identifying the themes, special projects and daily activities for the month.

E. School Governance

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn is a parent/teacher managed section 501(c) (3) nonprofit pre-school/day care facility. The school is governed by a Board of Directors that is made up of current and alumnae parents, the current PTA president, as well as two teacher representatives— all of whom work with the school administration to ensure that the school functions in the most efficient manner possible for the benefit of the school community.

The Board operates according to a set of Bylaws that sets forth all the governance procedures for the school. Much of the Board's work is done through committees, which are made up of Board members, parents, alumnae parents and teachers. The Board meets on a monthly basis from about 6:30 – 8:30 p.m... In addition, Board committees meet separately in person and converse by phone and email. Currently, the members of the Board have backgrounds in law, finance, fundraising, non-profit management, education and other professional disciplines. Members serve on the Board for three (3) year terms, which are staggered to permit institutional continuity. Two teachers, the PTA president and the Executive Director of the School also serve as non-voting, ex-officio members of the Board.

New Board members are elected at the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors that is held on the first Monday in January of each year (or a date as set by the current Board). The only qualification to be nominated for a seat on the MDS Board of Directors is that you must have a child currently enrolled at the school. You must also be willing to attend monthly Board meetings and serve on at least one committee. The Board is always looking for parents to assist in the support of the school. All parents – even if new to the school—are strongly encouraged to introduce themselves to the members of the Board and consider joining the Board or assisting on a Board committee.

The school's organizational chart, with brief descriptions of the responsibilities of key staff, is attached hereto as **Appendix 1**. A list of the current members of the Board of Directors is attached hereto as **Appendix 2**. A list of Board committees is attached as **Appendix 3**.

II. GUIDELINES FOR OUR PROGRAM

A. Faculty and Administration

Each of our classrooms is staffed by a head teacher and two assistant teachers who work as a team. If you have any questions, concerns, or suggestions for any classroom, please feel free to speak with any one of your child's teachers.

The school's administrative staff is composed of an Executive Director, an Assistant Executive Director, a Business Manager and an Office Manager who are available to parents in our office between the hours of 8:00 a.m. and 6:00 p.m.

B. School Hours / Extended Day

The school is open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Children may be enrolled for a full day session from 8:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m. or an extended day until 6:00 p.m. Children enrolled on a full day schedule should be picked up between 3:45 p.m. and 4 p.m. Children enrolled on an extended day schedule should be picked up between 5:45 p.m. and 6:00 p.m. Late pick-ups are strongly discouraged because they can cause disruption for both teachers and children. The school assesses late fees when a child is picked up late, as set forth in Section VI(c) 2 below.

In the event that you need extended care for a full day session child, please call the office as early as possible and the office will notify the teachers. You will then be asked to fill out an additional hours form and pay a fee of \$10 per hour.

C. Contact Information

The school administrators can be reached from 8 a.m. until 6 p.m. at 718.398.2322. The fax number is 718.398.2112.

You can reach the administration at the following email addresses:

- ▶ **Executive Director:** mdsdirector@verizon.net
- ▶ **Assistant Executive Director:** susans@montessoridayschool.org
- ▶ **Business Manager:** businessmanager@montessoridayschool.org
- ▶ **Office Manager:** officemgr@montessoridayschool.org

Correspondence from the school administration, board, and parent committees are placed in student mail pouches and posted on the school's list-serve. Families are strongly encouraged to visit our website and to join the school's list-serve. You can join the school's list serve by sending an email to MDSBrooklyn-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Please see Section IV (E) (p. X) for a description of the school's other methods of communication.

D. Calendar / Vacation Day Camp

The school calendar for the following year is published and distributed to families during the preceding summer. The calendar is also posted on the school website. The calendar generally follows the Department of Education (public school) calendar in terms of days when the school is closed.

As a convenience to families, the school offers a day camp for students during the Mid-Winter break in February, the Spring break in April and during the Summer months for an additional fee.

E. The Parent-Teacher Association (PTA)

For over thirty (30) years, the School's PTA has been the anchor (and glue!) of the school. Despite their busy schedules, Montessori Day school parents and teachers are actively engaged in our school, contributing their enthusiasm, energy, ideas, and skills in many ways.

Throughout the year, the PTA holds meetings for the parents and teachers and organizes social and other special events. The PTA also coordinates fundraising efforts to assist teachers with special classroom materials and professional development opportunities. Every September, the PTA organizes and presents a "Next Schools Night" workshop in which alumnae parents share advice and experiences regarding the various Pre-K and Kindergarten options in the city.

Much of the work of the PTA is also done through committees—such as the Events, Enrichment and Fundraising Committees. Notices of PTA committee meetings and events are put in student

mailbags, posted outside classrooms and in the school newsletter. They are also available for download on the list-serve. The PTA budget is funded by mandatory dues in the amount of \$65 per year paid by each family. Parents are strongly encouraged to join the PTA.

Through the collaborative efforts of the parents and teachers, the school strives to be a supportive and welcoming community, a valued parenting resource and a place where families build lifelong friendships. We are pleased that you have become part of our community.

III. CLASSROOM GUIDELINES

A. Phase-In

The school has designed a phase-in schedule to facilitate the smoothest possible transition for new children entering the school in the fall. We recommend that all children—regardless of schedule—follow the full 5-day phase-in period for the first week of school.

Generally, the recommended phase-in process is for parents/guardians to bring their child to the classroom, and, when instructed by the teachers, say goodbye and leave the classroom. They are then asked to remain in a nearby location. Parents/guardians are asked to leave the classroom because it is difficult for children to completely acclimate to their surroundings when their parents or the parents of other children remain in the classroom. You are asked to remain in a nearby location, however, so that if your child needs your support, the teachers will be able to find you so that you may return to the classroom. The following is the recommended phase-in schedule for new students:

First Day: Monday, Sept. 13: 9:00-10:00 a.m.

You (as parent/guardian) stay in (or near) the classroom, as directed by the teachers.

Second Day: Tuesday, Sept. 14: 9:00-11:00 a.m.

Please bring snacks for your child. You will stay nearby so that you can return to the classroom if the teachers feel that your child needs this support. The teachers will tell you if your child is ready for you to leave the school premises.

Third Day: Wednesday, Sept 15: 9:00am-12:30p.m. (until nap)

Please bring snacks and lunch for your child. You will stay nearby so that you can return to the classroom if the teachers feel that your child needs this support. Again, the teachers will tell you when your child is ready for you to leave the school premises.

Fourth Day: Thursday, Sept 16: 9:00-3:45p.m.

Please bring snacks, lunch and bed linens, as this is the first day your child will stay through nap. It is unlikely that you will be asked to stay after drop off, but please be prepared to stay if the teachers recommend that you do so.

Fifth Day: Friday, Sept 17: 9:00-full day.

Please bring snacks lunch and bed linens, as your child will stay through nap. It is unlikely that you will be asked to stay after drop off, but please be prepared to stay if the teachers recommend that you do so.

The transition time varies from child to child. Many children adjust quickly, but some may require a longer phase-in period. *Please understand that to ensure a smooth transition for your child, you may be asked to stay near the school after drop off longer than the first week.*

Also, please know that this first week can be very stressful for parents and guardians saying good-bye to their child, as well. We encourage you to share and discuss your feelings and experiences with your child's teachers or any school administrator.

B. Transition to New Classes

There are also transition procedures for our continuing children who enter new classrooms in the fall. The school prepares children who are entering a new classroom in the Fall by exposing that child to the new classroom and new teachers during the preceding summer term. Some children attending the summer program will move into their new classrooms at the beginning of the summer. Teachers introduce these children to their new rooms with frequent visits during late June.

During the first week of the new school year, you are encouraged to stay with your child in the new classroom for short periods at drop off.

C. What To Bring To School

1. Lunch and Snacks: You will need to provide lunch and beverages every day in a child-sized lunchbox or backpack that is clearly labeled with your child's name. You should send a lunch, two (2) drinks and two (2) snacks (or three (3) snacks if your child stays for an extended day). There is a refrigerator in every class for the safe storage of perishables, as well as a microwave for heating food.

Please bring food that is healthy and low in sugar. Healthy food choices include fresh and dried fruit, crackers, cheese, vegetables and yogurt. Candy, soft drinks, sweet desserts, or unhealthy snacks are strongly discouraged. Please do not send nuts of any kind (or any foods made from nuts) as many children are allergic to all types of nuts.

Please also send re-usable plates/bowls, cups, napkins, spoons and forks (clearly labeled with your child's name) that can be washed for your child to use each day. This practice will eliminate the waste of paper and plastic and help your child learn to preserve the earth's resources. Please also send all food and drinks in unbreakable containers.

Pursuant to the Montessori principle of fostering independence in children, your child will be encouraged to put away—or assist teachers in putting away—their food in the refrigerator and other designated areas.

2. Clothing: Your child should have three (3) complete changes of *seasonally appropriate* clothing as well as an extra pair of shoes or sneakers at all times.

Younger children who wear diapers need at least one full package of diapers and a large container of wipes, which are to be replaced as needed. Older children who are partially or completely potty trained should have *at least* four (4) sets of underwear in case an accident occurs. In order to assist children in developing their self-help skills, all clothing should be easy to pull down, take off and put on.

Parents are encouraged to dress their children in comfortable clothing for school. Please remember that your child will be involved in active outdoor play as well as a variety of wonderful (albeit sometimes messy!) art activities and their clothing should not be a hindrance to such activities. Children should also wear comfortable rubber soled shoes or sneakers with laces, zippers, buckles or Velcro. Flip flops and shoes with heels should remain at home. Please label all of your child's clothing and shoes with your child's name.

At drop off, please help your child hang his or her coat in his or her cubby. At the end of the day, please check your child's cubby and take home any soiled or wet clothing. Also, be aware of seasonal changes and supply suitable clothing including a sweater or sweatshirt in the winter or hat in the summer.

Please note that, despite the best efforts of staff, sometimes children's clothing articles are lost or damaged. The school is unable to replace or repair these items.

3. Linens: The Montessori Day School and the Department of Health require that all children rest each day after lunch. Each child needs a fitted crib sheet and a blanket (or flat sheet) for his/her cot. Pillows and any type of quilted blankets are not permitted. Please label each of these items with your child's name and place them in a pillowcase or other cloth bag in your child's cubby. Please do not send plastic bags as plastic bags can pose a danger in a classroom. These items must be taken home every Friday (or your child's last day each week if s/he attends part-time) and washed and returned the next week.

4. Medications and Ointments: Teachers are not permitted to administer medicine to any child at this time. If your child has a need for medication at school, please see the Executive Director.

Upon completion and submission of a Written Medication Consent Form, teachers may apply diaper rash cream or sunscreen on a child. Please label such ointments with your child's name; these items will be stored in the classroom by the teachers.

5. Transitional Items: In order to avoid problems involving sharing or the loss of a toy, the school discourages families from bringing a child's toys to school. If a child feels strongly about having a particular item with them at school—such as a special stuffed animal that helps him/her to sleep at naptime—please leave such item in the child's cubby and let the teacher know. Any item brought to the school should be labeled with your child's name.

6. Summary of Items to Bring to School Each Day: The following items should be brought to school each day:

1. Healthy lunch and snacks (if pick up is 6 p.m. child, extra snacks and drinks)
2. Re-usable plates and utensils
3. Cloth napkin with lunchbox

7. Summary of Items to Leave at School Each Week The following items should be replenished in your child's cubby on a weekly basis

1. Clean linens
2. Diapers and wipes (if appropriate)
3. Three (3) sets of seasonally-appropriate clothing

In addition, your child's teachers may provide you with a list of items that your child will need for the year for that classroom, such as a three ring binder in which to keep your child's art work, white t-shirts or a disposable camera. Your child's teacher will provide you with a list of any such items at the beginning of the year.

D. Drop-off

In the morning, the teachers' primary responsibility is welcoming and helping children to enter and feel comfortable in the classroom. Morning drop-off procedures vary depending on the age of the child, the time of the year and the particular teachers. In general, you should bring your child to his/her classroom door where the teacher will welcome you both. Unless the teacher invites you into the room, you should say your good-byes at the door. While families may drop off children between 8 a.m. and 9:30 a.m., the school encourages families to drop off their child no later than 9:15 a.m. because later drop offs may disrupt the classroom schedule.

Pursuant to Montessori teaching principles, each classroom day begins at approximately 9:15 a.m. with Circle Time. During Circle Time, the children will greet each other and plan for the day's activities. Because interruptions during Circle Time can be very disruptive to children, children may not

enter the classroom during this time. If a child arrives during Circle Time, he or she will need to wait at the door with their parent or guardian until Circle Time is finished.

Children are generally not allowed into the class after 9:45 a.m. except with a doctor's note or with the approval of the Executive Director.

It is difficult for teachers to speak at length with parents during the hustle-bustle of drop-off time. Quick information from you, such as "We had a bad sleep night," "We have a new babysitter," "The cat just died," is helpful for the teachers. Teachers have placed a notebook and pen outside their classrooms for you to let them know less immediate or more complicated information. Teachers will get back to you as soon as possible.

E. Pick-Up

You must pick up your child promptly at your contracted pick up time. If your child is scheduled for a full day, you must pick up your child between 3:45 p.m. and 4:00 p.m. If your child is scheduled for an extended day, you must pick up your child no later than 6:00 p.m.

When a parent or guardian is late without notice for the pick-up of a full day child, this lateness causes a disruption for other children. If a child on an extended day schedule is picked up late, this results in a teacher having to work past their scheduled workday. Because of the difficulties and inconveniences caused by late pickups, families will be charged a late fee of **\$1 per minute** for every minute they are delayed in picking up their child.

If you have an emergency and cannot pick up your child at the scheduled time, please call the school office as far in advance as possible so that arrangements can be made. As noted in Section VI, we are happy to provide extended day care for a full day schedule child, but this should be arranged as soon as possible prior to the pick up time.

Please note that the school is not available for free play after dismissal. No children or parents are permitted on the premises after the last staff member leaves for the day.

F. Communications With Teachers

It is very important for parents and teachers to share observations, questions and desires with each other about your child's experience and development. Parents must understand, however, that drop off and pick up are generally not times when teachers have much time to discuss an issue, as they are responsible for children in their care. There are, though, a number of formal and informal communication methods used by teachers and parents at our school. These methods are as follows:

▶ **Mailbox:** Each child has a mailbox in which teachers will send home messages and notices.

▶ **Bulletin Board:** Each classroom has bulletin board where the week's activities are posted, as well as news about upcoming classroom events. Please check your child's mailbox and the entrance area bulletin board daily for these notices!

▶ **Daily Notebooks:** Each class has a daily notebook where parents may write the teachers a note about something they would like the teacher to know about that day.

▶ **Formal Parent-Teacher Conferences:** These meetings are held twice a year— once in the fall (Election Day) and once in the spring (the Friday of Memorial Day weekend). Your child's teachers will post a sign-up sheet in advance of these times. At these conferences, your child's teachers will go over in detail with you your child's development and general experience at the

school. If your child's teachers have reason to believe that your child might benefit from outside or further evaluation, they will discuss such a possibility with you.

If you have any question or concern about your child's development or experience at the school, we encourage you to speak directly with one of your child's teachers. If after meeting with your child's teachers you feel that you need additional discussion, please let the Head Teacher know and then speak with the Executive Director.

If your child is sick, will be late or absent from school for some other reason, please call the school office, and a school administrator will make sure that the message gets to your child's teachers. If your child is absent from school for reasons of a contagious illness or after an absence of three (3) days or longer, please obtain a note from your child's physician verifying that your child may return to school.

G. Classroom Visits

The Montessori Day School welcomes parents as vital partners in their children's school experience. We welcome you to discuss with your child's teachers any particular skill, hobby or cultural background you would like to share with your child's class. Parents have led sing-alongs, painting and photography workshops, read stories and led different ethnic and cultural celebrations with their children's classes. This is a wonderful part of our school culture and we look forward to your participation.

Once the school year is underway, class routines are established and the children have settled in, the school welcomes you to visit your child's classroom. Please schedule your visit with your teachers in advance, so that they can coordinate with other visits that we receive from teaching professionals, students and prospective parents. The teachers will explain the procedures for best observing your child's class and activities in his/her particular classroom. Please remember that during any such visit, you won't be able to engage teachers in lengthy conversations, but you will certainly be able to speak to the teachers after the visit is over. We suggest that you note your impressions of the class and any questions you want clarified by the teachers or office staff and arrange to discuss them soon after your visit.

H. Discipline of Children

Consistent with Montessori principles, we are committed to disciplinary methods that respect children's inherent instincts for harmony, order, cooperation and love towards their environment. Montessori teachers support children's self-discipline, assuring their compliance and cooperation with necessary procedures and proper behavior through positive methods. For example, through the use of clear directions, reasoning, distraction, reflective language and questioning, children are encouraged to make positive choices. Some of our teachers say with pride that "You can always spot a Montessori child on the playground!" because of how well our methods instill self-discipline and respect for oneself and others.

Corporal punishment of any kind is strictly prohibited at the Montessori Day School.

The School's "Discipline of Children" Policy is posted in the classrooms for your review. A copy is attached hereto as **Appendix 4**.

IV. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS

A. Daily Classroom Schedule

Every class has a regular schedule that includes "Circle Time," "work" cycles, recreation, and enrichment programs. Circle Time usually takes place during the nine o'clock hour. It is very important that your child arrives on time for the morning circle. This activity helps your child focus and brings all of

the children of the day together as they carry out the plan for the day's activities. It is very disruptive to the other children and the teachers when you bring your child late.

Work cycles, other circle times, lunch and naps are scheduled, but will vary depending on the age of the children, their concentration spans and the particular flow of the day. After naptime, each class will have an activity that includes a neighborhood walk, trip to the playground or outdoor space -weather permitting. They may also pay a visit to another classroom where your child can explore a new environment of Montessori works, see friends and make new friends. When children go to another room or a park at the beginning or end of the day, the teachers post a notice on the door to let you know where you can find them.

Teachers routinely post or send home highlights of current activities or calendars with their coming plans, themes, or projects to help parents know what their children have been or will be doing. Please use this information as the basis of discussion with your child so that s/he may share his/her new world with you.

B. Enrichment Programs

The Montessori Day School also offers a variety of special enrichment programs for children, including classes in Movement, Music, Yoga and Spanish for all students year round... Piano, Theatre and Soccer may also be available. Soon after the beginning of each school year, you will be told of the days on which your child's class is scheduled for each program. Children who attend the school on a part-time basis will receive at least one of these programs. Their participation in a specific activity on a specific day is not guaranteed, as circumstances may require that schedules be changed on short notice. These enrichment classes are described below:

► **Movement:** The weekly movement class aims to develop a life-long love of physical fitness and imaginative, creative, movement in our children. Each class meets once a week. Girls should wear pants rather than dresses or skirts on the day they have movement since they do lots of somersaulting and acrobatics. All children will need ballet slippers for use in Movement class and for any productions that may take place during the year.

► **Music:** A music teacher comes weekly to each class and engages children in songs, rhythms, finger play, movement and dance exercises. Teachers also add other musical activities in their classrooms throughout the year. As part of the school's commitment to diversity, the music includes songs from a wide range of different languages and cultures. Please let us know if you play an instrument and would like to be included in a music activity.

► **Spanish:** In response to widespread interest by both teachers and parents, the Montessori Day School has added Spanish to its enrichment program. In this program, children are exposed to Spanish words and songs in fun and creative ways.

► **Yoga:** Children participate in a weekly yoga class with a certified yoga instructor. Children learn relaxing yoga breaths and yoga poses such the "lizard," "cat" and "tree." On yoga days, please dress your child in comfortable clothes that allow for freedom of movement.

► **Soccer:** During the Summer term, all children participate in a weekly soccer class with **Super Soccer Stars** at either Mount Prospect Park or Prospect Park. **Super Soccer Stars** is a leading sports instruction program in Brooklyn that specializes in teaching the fundamentals of soccer as well as building self-confidence in children and helping children develop teamwork skills in a fun and non-competitive manner.

► **Piano:** The school has an arrangement with the **Piano School of New York** to provide piano lessons in the late afternoon to older children (children 3 and above), who elect this program, at an additional, reduced cost.

C. Field Trips

As an extension of the classroom activities, teachers plan field trips to our neighboring cultural sites such as the Botanic Garden, the Brooklyn Library, the Prospect Park Zoo, the Brooklyn Children's Museum and the Brooklyn Museum of Art.

Upon enrollment, parents sign a Consent Form authorizing teachers to take children on neighborhood walking trips. For longer outings (such as ones that require public transportation or a school bus), parents are given specific individual permission slips before each trip. If you have a specific interest in a trip, please talk with your child's teacher.

On certain trips, the school contracts with a school bus company to transport the children.

D. Celebrations and Special Gatherings

You are welcome to celebrate your child's birthday at school. Please arrange this event ahead of time with your child's teacher so that they can have the classroom and the children ready and prepared for your arrival.

In general, we suggest that you provide pizza for lunch or cupcakes with low sugar content (no nuts!) for snack just after naptime. We also suggest that you keep the celebration very simple and avoid gift bags, toys, etc. Also, if you are bringing a treat for the children such as cake or ice-cream, please remember to ask the teachers if there is any child with special dietary needs so that arrangements can be made to have something for such a child.

If you plan to have a party outside of the classroom and do not plan to invite everyone in your child's class, it is very important that you do not dispense invitations in your child's classroom or at drop off or pickup. We feel strongly about this rule because children's feelings may be hurt.

The school celebrates several holidays and events throughout the year when children, their families and teachers come together to sing, eat and share their joy. These events—such as the Thanksgiving Feast, Family Day and the Winter Sing Along—are listed on the school calendar and teachers will remind you as the event draws near. You may be asked to contribute some seasonal food. Additionally, individual classes will arrange special events such as potluck dinners at a family's home or brunch at a family-friendly restaurant. Please make sure that your contact information in the office is always up to date so that you don't miss out on any of the fun.

E. School Communications

Open and constant communication between classrooms and among all the teachers, parents and administrators is a value and a goal of our school. In addition to the methods for teacher/parent communication described in Section III (F), the school has the following other types of communication methods:

► **Classroom List-Serves:** All of the classrooms have their own list-serves where classroom issues and activities are shared. Please contact a teacher or a class parent for details on how to join.

► **School List-Serve:** The school has a list-serve for the whole school community, including alumnae families: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/MDSBrooklyn/>. You can get on the MDS list-serve by sending an email to MDSBrooklyn-subscribe@yahoogroups.com. Following verification, your name will be added to the list-serve. Not only does the school post notices about upcoming activities and events, but MDS families are also free to post questions and notices about issues and events that they feel may be important or useful to other MDS families.

► **The School Newsletter:** The school publishes a monthly newsletter called “The MDS Monthly Buzz” which contains news and information about the school, classroom activities, the teachers, the Board of Directors and the PTA, as well as articles about child rearing in general, various aspects of the Montessori Method and philosophy, and other topics of interest to the MDS community.

V. HEALTH AND SAFETY

A. Medical Information

The Department of Health requires every child to have an up-to-date **Medical and Immunization Record** form on file at the School. This document must be completed by a physician less than ninety (90) days before enrollment. Once enrolled, children must have annual check-ups.

Parents must also inform the school in writing about any conditions that your child may have, such as asthma, allergies, nosebleeds or any specific dietary restrictions or requirements. You must give this information to the School in writing before your child attends the school for the first time.

For the safety and health of all the children, please note that all children are required to be fully immunized as per the New York City Department of Health immunization schedule. If you have a religious objection to immunizations, please contact the office.

B. Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pick-Ups

Upon enrollment, you must complete an **Emergency Contact/Authorized Pick-Up Form** and return it the office before your child is allowed to attend class. This form gives us the names, addresses, and telephone numbers of your child’s pediatrician, your preferred hospital, and reliable people—other than the parents—to contact if there is an emergency. On this form, you will also list every adult who is authorized to pick up your child from school. In the event that someone from your Emergency Contact/Authorized Pick-Up list has to pick up your child, they will be required to show photo identification. It is essential that you keep all of this information up to date. Please notify us in person and/or in writing of any changes.

In the event that you wish to have your child picked up from school by someone not on your Emergency Contact/Authorized Pick-Up Form, you must write and sign a note with the name of the person and the date of the pick-up and fax this note to the school before the pick-up time. Note that such a fax must also include a copy of your identification or some other verification that the parent or guardian has, in fact, authorized this new pick-up person. This person will also be required to show photo identification at the school.

C. Sick Children

We know that it is difficult for working parents to arrange child care for a sick child, but you must keep your child home if s/he is sick or not fully recovered from an illness. Please call the school and let us know that your child is sick and not coming to school. Children who have the following illnesses must be kept at home:

1. Significant fever. A significant fever is defined as:
 - Oral temperature above 101 degrees Fahrenheit
 - Rectal temperature above 102 degrees Fahrenheit; or
 - Auxiliary (armpit) temperature above 100 degrees Fahrenheit
2. Persistent diarrhea, defined as three or more stools in a 24-hour period or diarrhea accompanied with blood in the stool.

3. Undiagnosed rash, except diaper rash.
4. Vomiting two or more times in the previous 24-hour period or any vomiting accompanied by symptoms of dehydration or other signs of illness.
5. Other possible illness. Until a child has been examined by a physician and deemed healthy for school, a child must remain at home if s/he exhibits symptoms such as lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, persistent abdominal pain, discolored urine, refusal to eat or drink, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing, pink eyes or other unusual signs.

If a child becomes ill during the day, the parent will be notified, and the child will be placed in a comfortable place in the classroom or office to await pick-up. The school will advise the parent of the illness and its severity as perceived by staff.

If the child seems seriously ill or includes any of the above symptoms, we will ask the parent or an authorized escort to come right away and take the child home or to a doctor to provide appropriate medical attention. No child will be allowed to return to school until all signs of the fever, diarrhea, or severe coughing are gone. A child must exhibit 24-hour of symptom-free behavior or a doctor's note is required for return to the program.

If the illness is determined to be one that is contagious, the school will ask the parent to inform the school within 24 hours and let us know the name of child's particular illness so that we can alert other parents (we will not disclose the name of the particular child). These illnesses include—but are not limited to—the following: chickenpox, conjunctivitis, diphtheria, food poisoning, lice, hepatitis, hemophilus influenza type B infection, impetigo, measles, meningitis (all types), meningococcal disease, mumps, pertussis (whooping cough), poliomyelitis, rubella (German measles), salmonella, streptococcal disease (including scarlet fever) and/or tuberculosis. The school requires a doctor's note explaining the contagious condition and stating that the child is no longer contagious before we can allow your child back into the classroom.

D. Lice

If your child has lice, you must keep your child home until the lice has been completely removed. To return to school, you must present the school with a note from a medical or lice professional verifying that the child is lice-free.

Consistent with DOH guidelines and standard operating procedures at other schools in the community, the school has contracted with a lice professional to come in and check all the children for the presence of lice upon the school's return from vacation (about 4 times over the course of the school year) as well as following any report that lice has been found on a child in a classroom. Teachers also periodically perform checks of children. The school keeps detailed information about the control of lice in the office for your review.

E. Accident Procedures

If your child has a non-emergency accident—such as a bump or bruise—the teacher will tell you about it and give you a copy of an **Accident Report** when you pick up your child. This **Accident Report** will state the time and date of the event, a description of the action taken by the teacher and the time/method of how the parent was notified.

If your child has a serious accident, the school immediately will contact you or whomever you have listed on your emergency form. Someone at the school will take your child to the doctor or hospital using choices you have listed on your child's medical consent form whenever possible. You are expected to meet the school's staff or class teacher at the doctor's office or hospital. A seriously injured or ill child

will be taken to New York Methodist Hospital at 506 Sixth Street (at 7th Avenue) in Park Slope. The telephone number at the hospital is 718.780.3000.

F. Medication Procedures

If you have given your child any kind of medication before bringing her or him to school, you must inform the teachers. Do not under any circumstances put any medication into your child's lunchbox or in their food or beverages.

If your child requires any kind of short-term medication, please consult with your child's doctor if the medicine can be given in the morning before you leave home and/or after you pick your child up. At present, our teachers are not permitted to administer medication to the children. This includes all prescription and over-the-counter medications. The only exception is over the counter topical creams, sunscreens and ointments, which simply requires the completion of a ***Written Medical Consent Form***, which parents complete upon enrollment. If your child must receive medication during the school day, please contact the Executive Director in order to schedule a time for a parent/guardian to arrive to administer the dosage. If your child has a chronic illness that requires on-going medication, please discuss your situation with the Executive Director.

G. Fire Drills and Evacuations

MDS conducts fire drills once a month. Teachers talk with children about what to expect and conduct one or more practices before the first drill. Fire drill evacuation routes and procedures are posted.

In the event of evacuation, the children will walk to the following location:

The Outdoor Plaza in front of the Brooklyn Museum of Art
Brooklyn Museum of Art
200 Eastern Parkway

H. Extreme Weather, Blackouts and Other Emergencies

The school will be closed for bad weather whenever the New York City Public Schools are closed or, in isolated events, at the discretion of the Executive Director. Please listen to WOR 710 AM or WIN 1010 for information about school closings.

If the school is forced to close early for an emergency, lack of heat or hot water, or extreme weather—or if the school re-opens earlier than public schools—you will be notified via e-mail or telephone by a school administrator.

If a citywide or neighborhood wide emergency—e.g., power failure, terrorist attack, extreme weather—occurs while your child is in our care, please come to the school as soon as possible to pick up your child.

If we are unable to safely remain in the school, we will notify the police of our location as well as of the names of the children in our care. Our neighborhood **Police Precincts** are as follows:

77th Precinct, 127 Utica Avenue, between Bergen and St. Marks Ave.
Tel: 718.735.0658.

I. Child Abuse or Neglect: Prevention and Reporting

As required by the Department of Health, all school employees are fingerprinted and undergo a thorough criminal background check prior to their employment at the school.

All school employees are trained to detect evidence that a child is experiencing any type of abuse, neglect or any type of inappropriate touching. All teachers know that they are required by law to report any such suspicions to the designated state authorities, including– but not limited to– the New York State Central Registry. More generally, all teachers receive training in the area of appropriate and inappropriate touching of– and by– other children, and in how to discuss such issues with children and parents.

If you have any concerns about this issue, you are encouraged to discuss your concerns with one of your child’s teachers or the Director at any time.

VI. CONTRACTS AND FEES

A. Enrollment Options

Children are enrolled at the Montessori Day School in two (2), three (3), or five (5) day programs from 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (full day) or 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (extended day). Children may not be dropped off before 8:00am. Regardless of their schedule, regular attendance on your scheduled days is important for your child’s development and success in the school. Please do not request to change your child’s days repeatedly, as this irregularity is disruptive to both your child and the class.

B. Contracts and Forms

The regular school year begins in September. The school offers a **10-month enrollment** contract from September through the following June. We also enroll students for the summer term.

Enrollment Contracts may be amended during the school year to add days or hours if there is space in your child’s class, but in order to maintain the school’s financial stability, enrollment contracts may not be changed to reduce the number of days or hours.

Upon enrollment, families must complete and submit the following eight (8) documents or forms:

- 1. Enrollment Contract**
- 2. Emergency Contact and Authorized Pick-Up Form**
- 3. New Admissions Medical and Immunization Record Form
(or Follow Up Record for returning students)**
- 4. Written Medical Consent Form**
- 5. Family Handbook Acknowledgement form**
- 6. Day Care Cumulative Health Record**
- 7. Consent Form (for walking
trips, photos and emergency medical treatment)**
- 8. Copy of child’s birth certificate**

All of a child’s records, contracts and forms are kept in a child’s individual folder and are maintained in absolute confidence. The school does not voluntarily release such records to anyone except upon a parent’s written request or in the case of licensing authorities seeking to verify that such records are kept in accordance with the law... All parent signatories of a child’s enrollment contract have the right to review the documents in such folder, obtain copies of them or request release of such records to a third party.

C. Deposits, Payments, and Fees

1. Deposits and Tuition Payments.

All families are required to pay a non-refundable deposit of \$1,750 to secure the child's place prior to the beginning of the school year. Returning families usually make this payment in February to secure their placement for the following September. New families make this payment in March—or at the time of their acceptance—to secure their placement for the following school year. Your child's placement is not guaranteed until the full deposit has been received. The non-refundable deposit is applied toward your total tuition obligation.

The school has a waiting list of families and we rely on a full enrollment each year. The full amount of tuition and fees is unconditional and non-refundable, even if a child does not finish the school year. This obligation is set forth in the Enrollment Contract.

Parents may select a payment plan of either (i) two payments or (ii) quarterly payments. A non-refundable \$120 administration fee is assessed to cover the costs associated with quarterly installment payments. Although parents are billed by written invoice, it remains the parents' obligation to know their payment schedule and to make timely tuition payments *regardless of whether they receive an invoice*. Upon request, families with dependent care accounts will be issued receipts at the time of payment.

Tuition payments may be made by personal check, money order or cashier checks. Neither cash nor credit cards are accepted by the office.

2. Extended Day / Late Pick-Up Fees

The school offers extended day care to full day schedule students at the rate of \$10/hour. This must be arranged through the office in advance of the pick-up. Please contact the office in order to arrange for payment and to fill out the necessary form for late pick up. The form will also be available on the school website for download.

In the event that you do not follow the above procedure, you will be charged \$1 per minute for late-pickups. As late pick-ups seriously burden teachers and children, families who consistently fail to abide by the school schedule may be asked to leave the school. Families are encouraged to partner with other parents or to have a back-up system in place to avoid late pick-ups.

3. Field Trip Fees

On occasion, it may be necessary to charge a small fee for a particular classroom field trip. Parents will be notified of any such fee by the teachers in advance of a trip, and any such fees will be collected by the teachers. Uncollected fees for participating children will be invoiced.

4. Tuition and Fee Delinquencies

A \$50 late charge will be added to a delinquent account each month that an account is overdue. The fee for any returned check is \$75.00.

A default of sixty (60) days or more in the payment of tuition or any fees shall make the entire remaining balance of tuition and fees immediately due and payable upon notice by the school, notwithstanding the payment option selected. All accounts must be current before a child will be permitted to start a new term.

The School may take any one or more of the following steps if an account is over sixty (60) days in arrears:

- (i) Cancel the Contract, causing suspension or expulsion of the Student;
- (ii) Refuse to offer a Contract for the following year;
- (iii) Require the undersigned to pay all costs incurred by School in collecting the outstanding Tuition, including, including all attorneys' fees and other costs and expenses incurred by the School in enforcing the Contract.
- (iv) Notify any other school to which the Student may apply for admission of the delinquency.

5. Financial Obligations of Parents and Cancellation of Contract

The School has the discretion to suspend or terminate an Enrollment Contract and the enrollment of the Student at any time, or to nullify this Contract prior to the beginning of the academic year. The School may cause such suspension or termination if it determines, in its sole discretion, after consultation with the undersigned, that it is in the best interests of the Student and the School to suspend or terminate the Student's enrollment. An offer of enrollment in any Contract Period does not ensure an offer for any subsequent period. The School reserves all rights to refuse to offer any Student re-enrollment in its sole discretion.

As set forth in the Enrollment Contract, parents and guardians must recognize that the School's expenses do not diminish with the departure, absence or non-enrollment of a child, and that, accordingly, parents and guardians who sign an enrollment contract agree to pay the entire tuition for the full term of the enrollment contract whether or not the child remains in the School for the entire term. No deductions or refunds of tuition may be made in the event of any absence, withdrawal, suspension, or other termination of enrollment regardless of reason or cause. Similarly, the School may not characterize the payment of tuition as a charitable contribution to the School.

6. PTA Dues

Every family is required to pay PTA dues in the amount of \$65/family (regardless of number of children). These dues should be paid by the end of the first week of School by check or money order made out to "MDS PTA." Please leave your check or money order with the office.

D. Financial Assistance / Scholarships

Consistent with the school's mission of making quality pre-school available to the widest community of families as possible, the school has established a scholarship program funded primarily through donations from current and alumnae families. We are in the process of building this fund through grants and other development efforts that should be available to qualified families in the near future.

VII. A Final Note on the Family Handbook and School Policies

The school may change the policies described here from time to time. If there are any differences between information contained in the **Family Handbook** and more specific statements such as contracts, letters of agreement, memoranda and other notices and announcements, the latter statements control. A student's and family's presence in the Montessori Day School of Brooklyn signifies acceptance and willingness to abide by the policies set forth in the **Family Handbook**, as may be revised from time to time. Parents signify acceptance of a change in policy by remaining members of the school community after notice of a change is given. Parents must understand that a family's failure to follow the procedures set forth herein or other policies of the School may result in the cancellation of a family's enrollment contract.



Montessori Day School of Brooklyn

FAMILY HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE

We acknowledge that we have received and read a copy of the *Family Handbook* and we agree to all the policies set forth therein.

Child Name/s

Parent/Guardian Name

Parent/Guardian Name

Signature

Signature

Date

Date

MDS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART

I. BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Sets policy and strategic plan for School and coordinates parent activities, including fundraising.

II. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Reports to Board of Directors
- Responsible for day to day operations, including administration of physical space; compliance with governmental and other educational regulations; supervision of classroom curriculum and activities and communications with parents; supervision of all staff; and general carrying out of Board policy.

III. ASSISTANT EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Reports to the Executive Director
- Responsible for assisting the Executive Director in the day to day operations, including administration of physical space; compliance with governmental and other educational regulations; supervision of classroom curriculum and activities and communications with parents; supervision of all staff; and general carrying out of Board policy.

IV. BUSINESS MANAGER

- Reports to Executive Director
- Responsible for all accounts receivable and payable and parent billing; payroll; and assist with budgeting

V. HEAD TEACHER

- Reports to Executive Director
- Responsible for classroom curriculum and activities; classroom maintenance; communications with parents; and assist Executive Director with the supervision of assistant teachers.

VI. ASSISTANT TEACHER

- Reports to Executive Director
- Responsible for assisting Head Teacher with classroom curriculum and activities; classroom maintenance; and communications with parents.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

1. **Timothy Dierks, Co-President**
 - Seagulls parent; Alumnae
2. **Robert Kolker, Co-President**
 - Doves parent; Alumnae
3. **Jill Grossman, Secretary**
 - Doves parent
4. **Joel Kress, Treasurer**
 - Doves parent
5. **Josh Goldfein**
 - Sparrows parent
6. **Todd Stevens**
 - Bumblebees parent
7. **Belinda Johnson**
 - Doves parent
8. **Julie Bleha**
 - Doves parent
9. **Shari Zisman**
 - Alumnae parent
10. **Jimena Martinez**
 - Alumnae parent
11. **Ellen Wong**
 - Hummingbirds
12. **Dominique Bravo**
 - Alumnae parent
13. **Alex Porter**
 - Bumblebees and Sparrows parent

MDS Board of Directors **Committees**

1) Executive Committee. The Executive Committee is made up of the elected officers of the Board. Consistent with the provisions of the Bylaws relating to the authority of the Board and its officers, this Committee is empowered to make decisions on behalf of the Board for the benefit of the School between meetings of the Board, provided that all such decisions are reported to the Board at its next meeting.

2) Audit Committee The Audit Committee oversees the work of outside auditor and the Treasurer and administrative staff. The Treasurer may not serve on this committee. This Committee also establishes and oversees compliance with the organization's internal controls, which are the policies and procedures that protect the assets of the organization. This Committee shall also establish procedures for the handling of complaints regarding the audit or other financial matters.

3) Communications Committee. This Committee shall work with the Executive Director and the PTA on all school publications directed at parents and the public, including but not limited to any newsletters, brochures or letters on activities and events. This Committee shall also serve as a resource to the PTA and staff on any issue relating to communications.

4) Fund-raising Committee. The Fund-raising Committee shall prepare and carry out short and long-term fund-raising plans and capital campaigns. This Committee shall also work with the PTA on its fundraising events and serve as the liaison between the PTA and the Board on fundraising issues.

5) Personnel Committee. The Personnel Committee shall consist of the Executive Committee and shall assist the Executive Director in his or her supervision of staff. The Personnel Committee shall be responsible for developing and maintaining personnel policies and shall serve as a grievance committee for staff, with such authority as set forth in the employee handbook approved by the Board.

6) Board Development Committee: A Board Development Committee shall be appointed by the Board to recruit and recommend candidates for the Board, including at-large Board members, with the goal of maintaining School leadership that is broadly representative of the School and the greater Brooklyn community, with expertise in a wide variety of areas needed by a non-profit School, including education, the arts, finance, accounting, and the law, among other things. The Board Development Committee shall have at least three board members and any additional members as the Committee deems necessary, with the Executive Director as an ex-officio committee member. The Board Development Committee shall be responsible for developing nominees for board elections, board committees, and planning for board training and leadership development.

7) Real Estate/Building Committee: The Real Estate/Building Committee is convened when real estate of building issues need attention.

Montessori Day School of Brooklyn **Discipline of Children Policy**

The intentional infliction of physical pain, or threat of such pain, on children, such as by pulling hair, grabbing, pulling, hitting, spanking, slapping, pinching, etc., are strictly prohibited and will not be tolerated. Any such conduct on the part of any MDS staff would constitute grounds for immediate dismissal. We view such actions as child abuse and we will report such actions to the appropriate government agencies.

As a Montessori community, our School is committed to the principle of guiding our children in a way that respects their own inner guidance and self-directed purpose for harmony, order, cooperation and love towards their environment. We believe that adults should only interact with children in a way that supports self-discipline, in a manner that seeks to assure their compliance and cooperation with necessary procedures and proper behavior through positive means as example, clear directions, reasoning, distraction, reflective language, and questioning.

This policy applies not only to MDS staff but to all adults while on school premises, including volunteers, and parents and their agents. Any such behavior by anyone in the MDS community on MDS premises or at any MDS event should be reported immediately to the Director.