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MDS FAMILY HANDBOOK

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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 (MDS) 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.

Mission and Affiliations

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn is a community of families, children and educators using the Montessori philosophy to guide and inspire a joy of learning both in and outside of the classroom. We are an inclusive community of choice that values diversity, excellence in early childhood education, and continuous learning.

Our Core Values are:

- We are a welcoming community
- We value diversity
- We are committed to excellence in early childhood education
- We value continuous learning
- We value partnership between school and families

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 maintain and are seeking to enhance our tuition assistance program to help families gain access to an MDS education.

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.

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 and sustained a reputation for excellence in developmentally appropriate preschool education.

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.

The Montessori Philosophy

Our school is built on the observations, principles, and methods initiated by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1955) 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 neurological and developmental research has reinforced Dr. Montessori's observations 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 the 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.
- **A continuum of learning:** Children from youngest to oldest are absorbing language and literacy, math and measurements, science and close observation, art and drama at their own pace.

Classroom Curricula

MDS teachers provide a stimulating range of classic Montessori works and other materials and activities so children of varied interests can build on their experiences each year. Children in multi-age classrooms (threes, fours and fives) have opportunities to become the big brothers and sisters as they

age up. Each month, the teachers of every classroom distribute a calendar to all parents of their classroom identifying the themes, special projects and events.

Our curriculum is child-centered, developmentally appropriate and enriching. Children's own interests shape the topics or themes they explore. Teachers carefully observe children's progress across developmental domains: self-care, social-emotional skills, gross and fine motor skills, expressive and receptive language, emerging literacy (writing and reading) and numeracy (mathematics and quantitative concepts)... They then tailor their specialized materials and focused lessons to each child's readiness and receptivity.

School Governance

The Montessori Day School of Brooklyn is a section 501(c) (3) nonprofit pre-school/day care facility. The school is governed by a Board of Directors made up of current and alumni parents, the current PTA president, the Executive Director and a teacher representative. The Board exercises fiduciary, strategic planning and policy oversight for the benefit of the entire 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, alumni parents and teachers. The full Board meets one evening a month. 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. The teacher representative, 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 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.

Special Needs Policy

Making every reasonable effort to accommodate diverse learning styles and abilities is consistent with our school's mission and with the guiding vision of Dr. Maria Montessori. Therefore, we assist parents in identifying children's needs and advise them how to pursue supplemental services, even though MDS is not in a position to provide those services given our non-profit structure. Specialized interventions, whether funded as a qualified special education plan by city/state agencies, or privately funded by parents, may enable a child's full participation in school. We welcome collaboration with early childhood special educators and related service providers, when available, as part of a team process with parents.

MDS cannot guarantee that our program is suitable for every child in every circumstance. Therefore, we may need to deny admission or continuation in program to a child we are not equipped to serve. A child's significant behavioral challenges, developmental differences or physical needs may require supports that cannot be provided in our facility by classroom teams of teachers and assistant teachers.

Steps for teachers and parents considering a child's possible special need:

1) Parents/teachers ask for a team meeting, which can include the Executive Director. Share impressions of challenges child faces in school and/or home settings. Make a plan to work on particular skills at home

and/or school. Discuss accommodations to the learning environment that may alleviate some/all of the problems. Reconvene to assess outcomes.

2) Parents consult with the Executive Director about possible next steps, which may include an Early Intervention, Preschool Special Education (age 3+) or School-Age Special Education (age 5+) evaluation process, or a private psycho-social, PT/OT or speech/language evaluation.

3) Parents and Executive Director discuss how the eligibility determination and available support services (city/state or parent funded) will affect the child's participation in program. Specifically, when will special ed. teachers and/or therapists come to school, will the length of school day need to be modified, will any activities need to be curtailed?

4) If necessary services are not forthcoming, the Executive Director may ask the parents to withdraw their child until all needed arrangements are completed.

II. GUIDELINES ABOUT OUR PROGRAM

Faculty and Administration

Each of our classrooms is staffed by a lead teacher and two assistant teachers (or two co-teachers and an assistant) 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 Director, a Business Manager and an Office Manager who are available to parents in person and by phone or email.

School Hours / Extended Day

The school is normally open Monday through Friday from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.

Contracted program hours	Pick-up times
8:00-3:00	2:45-3:00
8:00-4:00	3:45-4:00
8:00-5:00	4:45-5:00
8:00-6:00	5:45-6:00

Children may be enrolled for a full-day session from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m., or an extended day until 4:00, 5:00 or 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.

In the event that you need extended day hours that are not part of your child's enrollment contract, please contact the office as far in advance as possible. If space is available, you will be asked to fill out an additional hours form and pay an hourly fee. **Space may not be available for extended hours on a per diem basis, but extended day is guaranteed to families who make it part of their enrollment agreements (TADS contracts). Please contact the school office/executive director regarding unplanned/unforeseen needs for late pick up.**

Contact Information

A member of the administrative team 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: execdirector@montessoridayschool.org
- ▶ Assistant Director: assistantdirector@montessoridayschool.org
- ▶ Business Manager: businessmanager@montessoridayschool.org
- ▶ Office Manager: officemanager@montessoridayschool.org

Please note that all staff members have email addresses of firstname@montessoridayschool.org. Classroom teams also have shared email accounts, i.e. penguins@montessoridayschool.org. Staff, parents and board members use the group community1516@montessoridayschool.org, and parents can reach classroom teams and each other via classroom groups, such as penguin-families@montessoridayschool.org.

Notices from the school administration, board, and parent committees are placed in student mail pouches and shared via the school's web site and email account. Newly enrolled families are put on class and school-wide email lists and are then able to reach and hear from groups of fellow parents. Emergency messages (e.g. school closings, evacuations) may be sent by text blast to all parents' numbers.

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.

As a convenience to enrolled MDS families, the school offers a day camp for students during the February Break, Spring Break, and during July and August, for additional fees.

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 parents and teachers and organizes social and other special events. The PTA also coordinates fundraising efforts. Every September, the PTA organizes and presents "Next Schools Night" workshops in which alumni parents share advice and experiences about various independent and public school options after the MDS years. Other popular meeting topics have been "Typical and Not-So-Typical Development in Young Children," parenting skills, and strategies for raising siblings who get along. Suggestions and requests are welcome.

Much of the work of the PTA is also done through committees—such as the Events, Enrichment and Fundraising Committees. Announcements of PTA committee meetings and events are put in student mailbags, posted on the MDS website calendar and sent in email messages to the community. The PTA budget is sustained by annual dues paid by each family, other donations, and fundraising activities. 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

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: 9:00 - 10:00 am

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

Second Day: 9:00 - 11:00 am

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: 9:00 am - 12:30 pm (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: 9:00 - 2:30 pm

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: 8:00 - 3:00 pm (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, we know that it can be stressful for parents and guardians to say goodbye to their children. We encourage you to share and discuss your feelings and experiences with your child's teachers, a school administrator, or fellow parents.

What To Bring To School

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. Items needing refrigeration need to be in a non-insulated container (such as a clear zip lock bag). You should send a lunch, water bottle and two snacks (or three 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, vegetables, whole-grain 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); some children and adults are highly allergic. Please do not send popcorn, which can pose a choking hazard to your child or to a younger child in the classroom.

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.

Consistent with the Montessori principle of fostering independence, teachers encourage children to put away their own food in the refrigerator and other designated areas.

Clothing:

Your child should have three (3) complete changes of *seasonally appropriate* clothing.

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 toilet trained should have *at least* four (4) sets of underwear in case accidents occur. 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 (and 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.

As a welcoming community that values diversity in all forms, we also value maintaining a peaceful environment in our school. We discourage clothing or personal items with any slogans/language/graphics that may be offensive and reserve the right to request that a child not bring back to MDS an article that has triggered offense within our community.

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 for his/her cot. Pillows and any type of quilted blankets are not permitted, due to the possibility of breathing obstruction during sleep. 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.

Medications and Ointments:

If your child has a need for medication at school, please see the Executive Director.

Upon completion of appropriate training based on a doctor's prescription and care directions, staff may administer certain medications in the parent's absence (in loco parentis). For instance, staff can train to use an epi pen or inhaler in case the need arises.

Transitional Objects:

To minimize interference with learning and social interaction, the school discourages families from bringing outside toys to school. If your child feels strongly about having a particular item—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.

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., extra snacks and drinks)
2. Re-usable plates and utensils
3. Cloth napkin, water bottle, food containers and/or zip lock bag with lunchbox

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

Your child’s teachers may provide a list of other items that your child will need for the year.

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 a bit depending on the age of the child and the time of the year. In general, you should bring your child to his/her classroom door where a teacher will welcome you both. Unless the teacher invites you into the room, you should say your good-byes at the door. The school encourages families to drop off their child no later than 9:00 a.m. because later drop offs may disrupt the classroom schedule.

Consistent with Montessori teaching principles, each classroom day begins with a “work cycle,” when children make their own choices about what materials they will use and what activities they will try individually or with a friend. The arrival of children after 9:00 interrupts the flow and peacefulness of work that children have begun to get involved in.

Children are not allowed into the class after 9:30 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.

Pick-Up

You must pick up your child promptly at your contracted hour.

When a parent or guardian is late without notice picking up a full-day child, this lateness causes a disruption for other children and the classroom team. If children on an extended day schedule are picked up late, the results can be unplanned crowding of program areas or afterschool staff having to work past their scheduled workday. Because of the difficulties and inconveniences caused by late pickups, families will be charged a late fee 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. Please note that the school and yard are not available for free play after dismissal. No children or parents are permitted on the premises after the last staff member leaves.

Communicating With Teachers

It is very important for parents/caregivers and teachers to share observations, questions and expectations with each other about each 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 other children. There are a number of formal and informal communication methods used by teachers and parents at our school:

- ▶ **Email newsletter and blog posts:** teachers write frequent newsletters to families, and post blog entries linked to our web site, where parents can see images of their children at work!
- ▶ **Phone calls and emails:** parents and teachers often catch up with each other in ways that best suit the urgency/importance of the situation and each other's schedule.
- ▶ **Mailbox:** Each child has a mailbox in which teachers will send home hard copies of notices.
- ▶ **Bulletin Board:** Each classroom has a 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:** Classes may use 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 November (Election Day) and once in the spring (March or June). 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 Lead Teacher know and then speak with the Executive Director.

If your child is sick, will be late or absent from school for any reason, please contact the school office, and a school administrator will make sure that the message gets to your child's teachers. If your child is absent due to contagious illness or for three (3) days or longer, please obtain a note from your child's physician verifying that your child may safely return.

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, and arrange to discuss them soon after your visit.

Discipline of Children Policy

As a Montessori community, our School is committed to the principle of guiding our children in ways that respect their own inner guidance and self-directed purpose for harmony, order, cooperation and love of 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, for example: modeling, clear directions, reasoning, distraction, reflective language, and questioning.

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. Verbal and non-verbal abuse (shouting, intimidating gestures, etc.) also will not be tolerated.

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 Executive Director.

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

IV. SCHOOL ACTIVITIES AND COMMUNICATIONS

Daily Classroom Schedule

Every class has a regular schedule that includes work cycle, circle time, recreation, and enrichment programs. Circle time or meeting usually takes place mid-morning. This activity helps your child focus and brings all children together to plan for the rest of the day's activities and share a song or story. It is disruptive to the other children and the teachers when you bring your child late.

Work cycles, circle times, lunch and naps are scheduled, but will vary depending on the ages of the children, their concentration spans and the particular flow of the day. After naptime, each class will have a range of activities that may include use of our play yard -- 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 classroom, the movement studio or our play yard 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. Mentioning activities can prompt more of a verbal response than simply asking your child what she did.

Special Programs

Montessori Day School offers special "enrichment" programs for children, including Movement, Music, and Yoga classes for all full-time students, with Piano and Spanish lessons available after school by subscription. 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:

During the School Day:

- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Music**: A music teacher comes weekly to each class and engages children in songs, rhythms, finger play, movements 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 different languages and cultures. Please let us know if you play an instrument and would like to be included in a music activity.
- ▶ **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.
- ▶ **Gardening**: A gardening specialist conducts a variety of activities generating children's interest in and awareness of the natural environment and our local ecosystem, and consults with teachers about plant life works in the classroom.

After School/Weekend:

- ▶ **Spanish**: **Brooklyn Beanstalk** offers weekly **Spanish** lessons (using art, music and movement to engage interest) late afternoons and on Saturday mornings, for an extra fee.
- ▶ **Piano**: The school has an arrangement with the **Piano School of New York** to provide weekly piano lessons in the late afternoon to children three and above whose parents elect this program. Parents pay an extra fee for these lessons, but the cost is reduced for MDS compared to the school's usual rates.

Field Trips

(For more on safety & lost child procedures see Appendix, pp. 22-24)

As an extension of the classroom activities, teachers plan field trips to playgrounds and 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 give their permission 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 (e.g. apple picking in Westchester County).

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 teachers so that they can have the classroom and the children ready.

In general, we suggest that you provide food with low sugar content (no nuts, strawberries or shellfish!) for snack just after naptime. Fruit can be a great alternative to cupcakes. We also suggest that you keep the celebration very simple and avoid gift bags, toys, etc. Also, if you do bring a treat for the children such as cake or ice-cream, please ask the teachers if any child has special dietary needs.

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, End-of-Year Celebrations and Family Fun Day 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.

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 Email Group:** All of the classrooms have their own groups so parents of enrolled students can connect with each other as well as the teachers.
- ▶ **School Email Groups:** The school has email groups for the whole school community, including alumni families. Not only does the school notify parents about upcoming activities and events, but MDS families can also share questions and notices about issues and events that they feel may be important or useful to other MDS families.
- ▶ **Executive Director's Newsletters and Blogs:** E-newsletters and blog posts convey news and notes about the school, Board and PTA special events and activities, or refer to articles about early childhood education in general, various aspects of the Montessori Method and philosophy, and other topics of interest to the MDS community.

V. HEALTH AND SAFETY

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 health conditions that their children 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.**

Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pick-Ups

Upon enrollment, you must complete an **Emergency Contact/Authorized Pick-Up Form** and return it to the office (or complete it on TADS) 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 provide the school with the name of the person and the date of the pick-up. This person will also be required to show photo identification at the school.

Attendance

In accordance with New York City Health Code, Article 47, parents or authorized caregivers must sign their child in and out of school each day. Classroom teachers provide sign-in/out sheets by their classroom door for parents to record the names of child and adult and date and time of arrival and dismissal.

Daily attendance will also be taken by teachers in classrooms by 10:00am. Parents will receive a phone call from a school administrator soon after 10:00am on the same day if teachers note an absence which has not been previously confirmed by parents. Please contact the school office if your child is sick, will be late or absent from school for any reason.

Administrators will notify classroom teachers of any late arrivals or early departures, and will advise parents as to any changes to the usual classroom drop-off and pick-up procedures needed to accommodate for a late arrival or early departure. If a child arrives after their class has left school premises for an off-site activity or trip, administrators will arrange appropriate supervision and care for the child until they can be reunited with their assigned class group.

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, difficult breathing, wheezing, pink/runny 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 exhibits 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 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, 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 condition and stating that the child is no longer contagious before we can allow your child back into the classroom.

Lice

If your child has lice, you must keep him/her home until any live lice and any nits (eggs attached to hair follicles) have been completely removed. **To return to program, you must present the school with a note from a lice professional verifying that your child is lice-free. Consistent with DOH regulations, the school maintains a "no nits" policy, which differs from the "no live lice" policy at many elementary schools.** The school will call in a lice professional to do thorough head checks following a credible report of lice in a classroom (or in a child's household). Parents who shared information early have helped us prevent infestations.

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 whoever is you listed on your emergency form and reachable by phone. If necessary, MDS staff will call an ambulance to access immediate emergency care. When appropriate, MDS staff may escort a seriously injured or ill child to the nearest emergency room, New York Methodist Hospital, 506 Sixth Street (at 7th Avenue) in Park Slope. The telephone number at the hospital is 718.780.3000.

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. 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 administer the dosage. If your child has a chronic illness that requires on-going medication, please discuss your situation with the Executive Director.

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, staff will walk children to one of the following locations:

M.S. 340 North Star Academy
227 Sterling Place, Brooklyn, NY
Phone number: 718-857-5516

P.S. 9 Teunis G. Bergen School
80 Underhill Avenue, Brooklyn, NY
Phone number: 718-638-3260

Extreme Weather, Blackouts and Other Emergencies

The school typically 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 stay tuned for news announcements.

If the school is forced to delay opening or 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 by our emergency text blast system and/or a phone call 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 Precinct** is:

78th Precinct, Sector C
65 Sixth Avenue, at Bergen Street
Phone number: 718-636-6411

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 program staff are mandated reporters 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.

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.

CONTRACTS AND FEES

Enrollment Options

Children are enrolled at the Montessori Day School in Thurs/Fri (2-day), Mon/Tues/Wed (3-day), or Mon-Fri (5-day) programs from 8:00 a.m. – 3:00 p.m. (full day) or 8:00 a.m. – 6:00 p.m. (extended day).

Children may not be dropped off before 8:00. Regular attendance on your scheduled days is important for your child's development and success in the school. Attendance on non-contracted days is not allowed without special permission from the Executive Director.

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 summer program, winter and spring camp weeks and extended day through the TADS system.

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 in TADS, 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. Consent Form (for walking
trips, photos and emergency medical treatment)**

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.

Deposits, Payments, and Fees

Deposits and Tuition Payments

All families are required to pay a non-refundable deposit 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.

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

Extended Day / Late Pick-Up Fees

The school offers extended day hours to full-day schedule students at an hourly rate. This must be arranged through the office in advance – if there is any available space. Please contact the office in order to arrange for payment and to fill out the necessary form for late pick up. **Extended day can only be guaranteed to those who make it part of their annual enrollment contracts.**

In the event that you do not follow the above procedure, you will be charged a fee 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.

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.

Tuition and Fee Delinquencies

A late charge and/or returned check charge will be added to a delinquent account each month that an account is overdue.

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 all attorneys' fees and other costs and expenses incurred by the School in enforcing the Contract.
- (iv) In a referral form, notify a school to which the Student may apply for admission of the delinquency.

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.

Financial Assistance

Consistent with the School's mission of making quality pre-school available to a wider community of families, MDS maintains a tuition assistance program funded by school revenue and donations from current and alumni families. Applicants for tuition assistance use the TADS system linked to the MDS website. A Board committee reviews results of those eligibility determinations, with no names visible, and allocates available funds.

FAMILY HANDBOOK SIGNATURE PAGE

A Note on the Family Handbook and School Policies

The school may change the policies described in the handbook 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.

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

APPENDIX -- MDS FIELD TRIP & LOST CHILD PROCEDURES

MDS teachers are accountable for the safety and health of all children on trips at all times. The class lead teacher or one of the co-lead teachers will serve as **trip coordinator**, and is responsible for overseeing all facets of the event/trip activity, including familiarizing themselves, the other teachers and volunteer chaperones with the destination and travel plans for the trip.

I. General Requirements

1. Before leaving the classroom, review with the children all safety procedures appropriate to the activity.
2. Assign each adult (teacher, parent, any other volunteer) a specific child or group of children to supervise depending on the age and the total number of children/adults who will go on the trip. Instruct the assignees to remain with their groups throughout the trip.
3. Adult/Child Ratios: For classes with 2 year old children, one adult may supervise two children at one time. For classes with children aged 3 – 5, one adult may supervise up to four children at a time.
4. Carefully note the number of children, number of adults, destination, times of departure and return, and cell phone contact numbers for trip coordinator, other teachers and chaperones. Leave this information with the Office before leaving the premises.
5. Be extremely careful at all crossings and cross the street only at the corners. When crossing the street, **HAVE CHILDREN WALK MORE QUICKLY THAN THEIR USUAL PACE**. The walk signals are short for a preschooler's regular walking pace!
6. When walking or while waiting for a traffic light to change, stand away from the curb.
7. Assign all children a buddy that he/she will hold hands with when walking and traveling.
8. Teacher #1 leaves group and takes a position facing potential oncoming vehicles having the "right of way". Teacher #1 waits until the last child is safely across the street and follows behind the group. Teacher #2 walks at the head of the group, crossing the street. Children and other teachers follow Teacher #2.
9. Be certain each child has displayed on his/her person (such as on a sticker or school field trip t-shirt) the School's name, address, and phone number.

10. Complete the Outdoors Attendance Form at least six times when outside the school premises and periodically throughout the day while at the trip site.

II. Traveling by Subway

Each parent needs to sign a consent form that his/her child is allowed to take the subway. When you take subway with a group of children, the following recommendations can facilitate your trip:

1. Stand away from the track and wait for everyone in the group to get on or off the train.
2. If left on the platform, inform the clerk at the token booth and wait at the booth until you unite with the group.
3. If someone else is left behind, disembark at the first possible stop, inform the clerk at the token booth and wait at the booth until you reunite with the lost individual.
4. Give appropriate instructions to the children and chaperones depending on the situation.

III. Emergency Medical Procedures on a Trip

In the event that there is a medical emergency while you are on a class trip, the procedures below must be followed:

1. Notify Director via telephone.
2. Notify proper authorities/services as situation indicates, e.g., call 911.
3. Provide appropriate first aid and medical care.
4. Provide adequate supervision in a secure area for all children.
5. Arrange for alternate means of transportation and inform the office of your return plan.

IV. Lost Child Procedures

In the event that a child goes missing, the procedures below must be followed.

Reporting:

1. Notify Director in person or via telephone.

2. Notify proper authorities/services as situation indicates, e.g., call 911 and/or 311.
3. Notify parents via telephone.

Search Procedures:

4. On a trip, the designated trip coordinator will work with emergency responders and officials, such as police, fire fighters, EMS or MTA bus/subway personnel to search the immediate area where the child was last seen, while staying in contact with teachers supervising the group and Director by cell phone.
5. On school premises, administrative team members and coverage staff will conduct the search while classroom team members maintain required staff-to-child ratios.
6. During a trip, upon instruction from the trip coordinator and/or administrative team members, the group of children led by assistant teachers and chaperones may return to school, while the trip coordinator or their designee remains to assist at the site of an ongoing search.

Upon Retrieval of a Lost Child:

1. The trip coordinator will thoroughly examine the child, ask appropriate questions to assess their emotional and physical well-being and provide appropriate first aid, medical care and emotional support.
2. If child does not require further medical treatment, trip coordinator will reunite them with the group and notify school administrators and parents.
3. In the case that a lost child is not retrieved by the end of the school day, all appropriate emergency service agencies will be notified by phone (911, 311, the N.Y. Statewide Central Register) and their instructions will be followed regarding continued search process.

Documentation of Incident:

The trip coordinator, lead teacher or their designee will complete a school incident report as soon as possible, no later than the end of the day. Incident forms are available in the school main office.