



Montessori School  
of Westminster

# MSW PARENT HANDBOOK



We envision a school that cultivates  
independent, self-advocating, intellectually  
curious learners engaged in a global community.



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## Introduction

This handbook is designed as a reference to the Montessori School of Westminster, Inc.'s policies and procedures. Complete copies of the Montessori School of Westminster, Inc.'s bylaws are available upon request to the Head of School.

The Montessori School of Westminster, Inc., a non-profit organization formed in 1973, opened the Montessori School of Westminster in September 1974. **The school is governed by a Board of Trustees who are not compensated for board services.**

The Montessori School of Westminster, Inc. is an accredited member of the American Montessori Society (AMS) and is accredited by the Association of Independent Maryland Schools (AIMS). The school has fulfilled the requirements for approval established by the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and the MSDE Office of Child Care.

### **Mission Statement**

We deliver an individualized, self-paced, structured education in a nurturing environment that allows students the opportunity to explore topics deeply and reach their fullest potential.

### **Diversity Statement**

The Montessori School of Westminster is committed to individual and organizational efforts to build respect, dignity, fairness, caring, equality and self-esteem in our students, staff and community resulting in an environment that is inclusive of all. We recognize that diversity includes, but is not limited to culture, gender, sexual orientation, age, traditions, beliefs, physical attributes and access to resources. We strive to create curriculum, programs and activities that encourage diversity and a high regard for all.

### **Vision Statement**

We envision a school that cultivates independent, self-advocating, intellectually curious learners engaged in a global community.

### **Non-Discrimination Policy**

The Montessori School of Westminster admits students and conducts its employment practices without regard to race, color, religion, gender, national and ethnic origin, sexual orientation or disability.

### **Accreditation & Licensing**

The Montessori School of Westminster is accredited by the Association of Independent Maryland & DC Schools (AIMS) and the American Montessori Society (AMS). Membership in these oversight organizations ensures compliance with the highest proposed standards.

Additionally, MSW is approved by the Maryland State Department of Education. Programs providing services to children below the kindergarten level are subject to the licensing requirements assigned by MSDE and administered by the state agency known as the Office of Child Care.

### **Maryland Green School**

The Maryland Association for Environmental and Outdoor Education recognizes the Montessori School of Westminster as a Maryland Green School where students understand their connection to the environment and create a healthier space to learn with support from guides, school staff, and community partners.



## Admissions Policies

### Governance

The ultimate authority and responsibility for governing and operating the Montessori School of Westminster Inc. shall be with the Board of Trustees as set forth in its bylaws. The daily operations of the school are under the direction of the Head of School who reports directly to the Board of Trustees.

### Eligibility

It is the policy of the Montessori School of Westminster that no child shall be denied admission to the school because of race, religion, color, sex or national origin. All applicants shall be no less than two years of age or no more than 15 years of age by September 1 of the year they will be attending. All students who will be five years or older upon admission will undergo an assessment at the parent's expense. The process of admissions is described in subsequent sections of this Handbook. All students must be toilet-trained prior to entering the school, except for those seeking admission to the Montessori Beginnings program. Please review the "Toilet Training Policy" found below.

Children enrolled in the Beginnings program are eligible for the three-day-week option currently offered. The three-day-week option takes place on Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday during the school year.

Children are expected to be in their classrooms and ready to begin their school day at 8:30 AM. Children of ages two through four (as of September 1<sup>st</sup>), including those who are enrolled in the three-day-week option, may attend for a half day until midday dismissal (11:50 AM through 12:00 PM) or for a full day which ends at afternoon dismissal (3:00 through 3:10 PM).

Children of age five are considered to have achieved kindergarten status. As such, kindergarten-age students in the MSW Primary program will attend five days a week from 8:30 AM until 3 PM.

### Toilet Training Policy

*For families of children eligible for Primary enrollment:*

We understand that you may be enrolling your child at MSW prior to the completion of the child's toilet training, which is a requirement in the Primary classroom.

Should your child not be potty trained by the first day of school, you will need to keep your child home. We will hold your child's spot in the Primary classroom for one month. If after one month, your child is still not toilet trained, we will release you from your contract with MSW. Any funds paid, minus the non-refundable, deposit will be refunded to you. Should you want to hold your child's spot, tuition will be collected as scheduled.

Note: We understand that school may be new to your child and potty accidents may occur. If your child begins in our Primary program and is continuing to have regular potty accidents after three weeks of attendance, you will need to keep your child home until he or she is fully toilet trained. If, after one month, you determine your child is not ready to be fully toilet trained, MSW will return all funds paid minus the ten percent (10%) nonrefundable deposit and a pro-rated amount equal to the days your child has attended. Should you want to hold your child's spot, tuition will be collected as scheduled.



## **Application Procedure**

Applications for enrollment may be obtained from the Office of Admissions or via the school website at [www.theMSW.org](http://www.theMSW.org). Before submitting an application for enrollment, the parents or guardians of the prospective student should read and understand (1) the MSW Parent Handbook, and (2) the Parent Volunteer Commitment (PVC) guidelines, both of which are available upon request from the Office of Admissions or viewable online.

The parents or guardians of the prospective student will be required to attend one classroom session for the purpose of observing the Montessori method and environment and be interviewed by the Head of School, faculty member, and/or an alternative administrator before an application for enrollment will be processed. Parents and candidates for admissions whose application for enrollment is received after the observation period has ended will be required to visit the school and fulfill other pre-admission requirements as deemed necessary. Notification is provided upon receipt of a child's application for enrollment by the MSW Office of Admissions.

## **MSW Prospective Parent Guidelines**

The parents of prospective students must seriously consider the below-listed guidelines for families in the school community. In addition to the payment of tuition and other financial obligations, families who enroll a child should:

- Arrive promptly in the morning for start of day and after school for pick-up of the child. Your child benefits from starting the morning at a relaxed pace before the day's work begins. He or she is most comfortable entering the classroom between 8:20 and 8:30 AM with classmates. It is more difficult for a child to orient him or herself to the class's daily workflow and to comfortably choose work when everyone has already begun their day. Many materials are designed for more than one child to use in partnership; your child wants to find a partner for these types of work as the day begins.
- Attend and participate in Parent Education Nights to increase understanding of the child's classroom experience and the Montessori method of education. Check the MSW calendar for dates.
- Attend scheduled conferences. Attend class-specific and other school events to support your child's development as a student and to be an involved, informed parent.
- Provide the school with any information that affects the school's ability to educate and support the child's development.
- Understand the differences between a Montessori education and traditional education styles. In addition to information distributed by MSW, such as the periodical *Tomorrow's Child* magazine, the following books are helpful:
  - *The Montessori Way* by Tim Seldin & Paul Epstein Ph.D., published by the Montessori Foundation, 2006;
  - *The Absorbent Mind* by Dr. Maria Montessori, published by Holt Paperbacks, 1995, (first published 1949);
  - *A Parents' Guide to the Montessori Classroom* by Aline Wolf, published by Parent Child Press, 2009 (originally published 1995);
  - *The Science Behind the Genius* by Angeline Stoll Lillard, published by Oxford University Press, 2005, (first published 2005).

An abundance of information about Montessori pedagogy and its implementation is available on the internet.

- Read thoroughly all notices from the school including the weekly "MSW Updates" emails, notices sent home in student Blue Bags, messages on the school's internal system—Montessori Compass, and timely respond to all notices requiring RSVPs or other actions to ensure the smooth functioning of each class and the school in its entirety.





- Respect school security policies to ensure the safety of all students. As such, we require all parents, guardians, and visiting guests to sign in at the school office before proceeding through the building on school days.
- Patiently allow the child to participate in the household to support the Montessori education experience.
- Fulfill the Parent Volunteer Commitment (PVC) to the school.
- Communicate with faculty and administration as soon as a concern arises so that it may be addressed promptly.

Upon acceptance of the Montessori method and the acknowledgment of the above-listed parent guidelines, the prospective family will submit to MSW the child's application for enrollment together with the current application fee. A copy of the child's birth certificate is also required. Upon receipt of the application for enrollment, the child is then considered for admission to the Montessori School of Westminster.

### **Admissions Process**

Acceptance for enrollment at the Montessori School of Westminster is predicated upon our evaluation of the child. For children below age five, no formal assessment is needed; however, we do require a visit with the child and interview with the parent conducted in one of our classrooms. Applicants of age five or above applying for enrollment are subject to an assessment.

For children of age five and above seeking admission, a classroom visit during the school year, also known as a "shadow day," is scheduled. School records from any previous school or program are ordered and evaluated. Any other pertinent records are included for review during the admissions procedure. The Montessori School of Westminster reserves the right to request additional information or require further steps in the admissions process as candidates for admission to the school are evaluated.

Upon the receipt of applications for enrollment from families with children with disabilities and/or special health care needs, the family is required to supply information from the pediatrician or other health care practitioners working to support the child. Reports from any professionals from whom the child is receiving services will be requested to determine if the best interests of the child can be served through enrollment in the school. Faculty and administration will collaborate to identify reasonable strategies to use in the classroom to benefit the child's education. MSW reserves the right to determine the extent of modifications to its programs or environments that are practical and safe for all students.

### **Acceptance**

Candidates selected for enrollment are notified in writing following the completion of the admissions process. A letter of welcome will include the formal contract (Tuition Payment Agreement, or "TPA") to be signed and returned to the school with a required nonrefundable deposit and tuition payment plan. For additional information, please refer to the section of this Parent Handbook entitled "Finances" or contact the MSW Office of Finance at 410.848.6283 EXT103.

Families of students accepted for enrollment will be required under Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) regulations to submit student health and immunization records before the child's first day of attendance in the school. Please refer to the section of the MSW Parent Handbook entitled "Health & Safety" for additional information or contact the school office.

### **Student Selection**

Subject to favorable screening, the Head of School will determine a student's eligibility using the admission preference stated below:

- Current students from the previous academic year
- Siblings of currently enrolled children



- Transfer students from other Montessori programs
- New applicants

While the admissions process may be finalized beforehand, open enrollment for new applicants begins on March 1<sup>st</sup> of each year. Applications for enrollment may be submitted at any time.

Student selection is discretionary and final admissions decisions are made by the Head of School.

### **Waiting List**

Applications for enrollment for prospective students are accepted year-round up to twelve months before the target school year. Those applications received after classroom rosters are established for any upcoming school year are placed into a pool of candidates known as a waiting list. Families who have submitted applications for enrollment for children on the waiting list must complete admissions requirements in order for children to receive placement if and when classroom positions become available. Available positions are offered to applicants best suited for admissions to MSW.

### **Student Placement**

While parental input is taken into consideration, the process of placing students is undertaken by the Head of School in collaboration with the classroom guides. Should there be a conflict of opinion between the Head of School and a guide, the Head of School will make the decision. Ideally, the classrooms are composed of one-third of the students of each age in the multi-age program (Example - Primary: 1/3--3-year-olds; 1/3--4-year-olds; and, 1/3--5-year-olds) as well as having a balance between boys and girls.)

While initial placement of students into programs within the school is age-based, subsequent placement of students into appropriate levels relies upon other factors, including developmental readiness, and is determined by the Head of School in collaboration with classroom guides.

### **Re-enrollment**

In early December, the families of current students are advised of reenrollment by notice sent from MSW to the family including revised tuition rates for the next academic year, payment option information, etc. Returning students of age five or above applying for entry to Lower Elementary are subject to an assessment conducted on campus at the parents' expense. Applications for enrollment of siblings of current students are offered at this time. In January, contracts for annual tuition are provided to the families of current students and siblings. Signed contracts, "Tuition Payment Agreements," (TPAs) are due to MSW by February 1<sup>st</sup> with a nonrefundable ten percent (10%) tuition deposit. Remaining spaces within the school are offered to new students beginning on March 1<sup>st</sup>. Please request the [MSW Financial Guide](#) for additional information.

### **Transition**

In late July, an orientation is held on campus for families new to MSW. The orientation includes an informal question-and-answer session and distribution of helpful materials.

To facilitate the new student's transition into the Montessori School of Westminster, new students are provided an opportunity to visit the classroom before the start of the academic year. Notice will be sent to the student and family by faculty.

Apart from students in the Middle School level, classroom guides and aides will call upon the new student and family in the child's home for a brief visit during August. Home visits are scheduled by guides prior to the onset of the new school year. These visits are intended to be brief and focused on the child.





The annual All School Night gathering for parents is held to prepare the school community for the onset of the new school year. This meeting is held in late August and includes an all-school session in the UTZ Field House followed by classroom-specific meetings in the academic building. During this event, parents will receive information regarding what they can do to ensure their child's success during the school year. The attendance of all parents is expected; this event is strictly for adults.

Please contact the Office of Admissions at 410.848.6283 X104 or via email to [sradcliffe@theMSW.org](mailto:sradcliffe@theMSW.org) with questions regarding the admissions process.



## **School Operations**

The school has a nine-month school year. Our most current school year calendar is maintained online via Montessori Compass. A calendar outlining an overview of the school year is available upon request to prospective families.

Montessori Beginnings for two- and three-year-old children and Primary for three-, four-, and five-year-old children are half-day sessions. Class times are 8:30 AM to 11:50 AM. Afternoon extensions of these programs are available: The Nappers program is for children ages two, three, or four; and, the Extended Day program is for children ages four and five. Class times for these afternoon programs are 11:50 AM to 3:00 PM.

For children who are age two on September 1<sup>st</sup> of the school year and enrolled in the MSW Beginnings program, a three-day-week option is available. The three-day option includes Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and Thursdays, a schedule designed to preserve consistency, a key component of Montessori education, for the student.

The kindergarten year in the Primary program, Elementary and Middle School classes have full-day sessions, five days a week. Class times are 8:30 AM to 3:00 PM. Lower Elementary consists of 1st, 2nd and 3rd grades. Upper Elementary consists of 4th, 5th and 6th grades, and Middle School consists of 7th, 8th and 9th grades.

Before School Care (BSC) is available to all children at an additional fee. Hours are 7:00 AM to 8:30 AM. This program can be added at any time as long as space is available. After School Care (ASC) is available for an additional fee to all children who are enrolled in an MSW program until 3:00 PM. Hours are 3:00 PM to 6:00 PM. This program can be added at any time if space is available.

All children are expected to attend school on a full-time basis for the length of the contract (with days excused for illness and vacation).

### **Visiting School**

If you need to conduct any business with the school, please call ahead so we can prepare for your visit.

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up of Students**

Students may be dropped off no earlier than 8:15 AM unless they are enrolled in Before School Care. From 8:15 until 8:30 AM as measured by the atomic clock in the lobby window, staff will welcome your child to school each day by opening the door of your vehicle, assisting children who need help from vehicles, making eye contact, greeting the child politely, and escorting children to the door and/or classroom as needed. Middle School students exit vehicles and enter school independently. All other students should remain seated in vehicles until a staff member approaches and opens the vehicle door.

One of the hallmarks of our Montessori day is the morning greeting offered car-side as students arrive to begin their day. Please ask your child to disengage from any in-car activities as you approach Montessori Drive in the morning.

Safety is crucial to drop-off and pick-up procedures. We ask all drivers to wait patiently while MSW staff works to bring children to or from cars. It is important for drivers to stay in a single-file line during arrival or dismissal. Pavement areas marked with white stripes are reserved for pedestrians and should not be used for stopping or parking.



**All students must be in their classrooms no later than 8:30 AM or as soon as staff complete the morning drop-off process. Students arriving after the completion of the morning drop-off process are considered tardy.** Because responsibility is an integral part of the Montessori experience, it is necessary for students to be in the classroom on time. Arriving on time allows your child to start the school day successfully with his or her guide and classmates.

For your child's safety and security, if you find yourself running late, it is your responsibility to bring your child to the door of the building and ring the signal bell. You will be greeted by a staff member at the door, and your child will be admitted to the school. Staff members will monitor your child's access to the classroom. This allows staff to ascertain the location of all children in case of an emergency in the school. At no time should parents or other visitors be in MSW hallways or classrooms without first reporting to the office and signing in.

At the end of the school day, a staff member will escort your child to your car. Students must be picked up promptly at the end of their school day. If you are late, you must come into the building to pick up your child.

The families of students who are not picked up by 3:10 PM are charged \$20 as a late fee. After 3:30 PM, the late pick-up fee is converted to the provisional fee for emergency care for non-care program-enrolled student.

Please notify the staff via a written note, if possible, when your child needs to be picked up early or is to leave school at dismissal time with someone other than his or her parent or regular carpool driver. Plan on arriving before the necessary early departure time to park and enter the building while staff assists by escorting your child from his or her classroom. Your child will need ample time to collect his or her belongings, come in from the playground, put away work, etc.

Please list all those who may be picking up your child from school on the "Emergency Contact Card," a form which is updated by parents on an annual basis. In the event someone who is unfamiliar to MSW staff arrives to pick up a child, staff may request identification before releasing the child.

In order for MSW to prohibit a legal guardian from picking up a student, court documents giving us this authority must be provided to the school office.

## **The School Day**

Before School Care 7:00 – 8:30 AM	
Beginnings and Primary Classes 8:30 – 11:50 AM	Nappers Programs and Extended Day Programs 11:50 AM – 3:00 PM
Elementary and Middle School Classes 8:30 AM – 3:00 PM	
After School Care 3:00 – 6:00 PM	

## **Student—Staff/Guide Ratios**

	Classroom Faculty & Staff
Montessori Beginnings	1:6
Primary	1:13
Lower Elementary	1:10
Upper Elementary	1:10
Middle School	1:10

**Important information for parents of children in child care facilities can be found at [www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/division/childcare/childcare.htm](http://www.marylandpublicschools.org/MSDE/division/childcare/childcare.htm)**



## **The School**

1 Montessori Beginnings class  
3 Primary classes  
2 Lower Elementary classes  
2 Upper Elementary classes  
1 Middle School class  
Before School Care program  
Nappers program  
Extended Day program  
After School Care program

## Curriculum

Subject areas covered in **Montessori Beginnings and Primary** include:

Practical Life	Sensorial
Language Arts	Art/Art History
Math	Geometry
Social Studies	Science (Botany/Zoology/Experimental)
Spanish	Environmental Education
Music/Music History	

Subject areas covered in **Elementary** include:

Language Arts	Physical Activities:
Spelling	<i>Motor Coordination</i>
Math	<i>Sportsmanship</i>
Geometry	<i>Group Participation</i>
Zoology	History:
Physical Science	<i>Representing time</i>
Botany	<i>Fundamental human needs</i>
Biology	<i>Origin</i>
Geography	<i>Evolution</i>
Environmental Education	
Earth Science	Art:
Spanish	<i>History</i>
Handwriting	<i>Technique</i>
Reading	Music:
Composition	<i>History</i>
Research Skills	<i>Theory</i>

Subject areas covered in **Middle School** include:

Physical Science	History
Earth Science	World Cultures
Life Science	Career Education
Environmental Education	Physical Education
Speech	Personal Reflection
Literature	Fine and Practical Art Electives
Language	
Spanish	
Writing	
Math:	
<i>General Math</i>	
<i>Pre-Algebra</i>	
<i>Algebra</i>	
<i>Geometry</i>	

Two of the Middle School work cycles are followed by an Immersion Week away from school. The last cycle of the year is followed by an Adventure Trip. The final week of each cycle is the assessment week, utilizing a variety of assessment methods. The cycle format is designed to help students learn time management, organization, and decision-making skills.

## Foreign Language Study

Primary, Elementary, and Middle School classrooms have foreign language instruction twice per week. Students in the Beginnings program participate in Spanish instruction once per week.



## **The Student**

- The heart of any education system is the student.
- In Montessori schools, the student's natural drive to learn is respected and fostered.
- The student can exercise a sense of freedom and spontaneity. The student feels joy and enthusiasm in learning because he/she may select among multi-sensory materials in the prepared environment.
- Gradually, the child builds a strong sense of independence and self-confidence as his/her skills increase.
- The Montessori philosophy is built on a student's love of learning and instills a lifelong motivation for continuous learning. Often, high academic achievement is a product of this method.

## **The Guide**

The guide, through use of the prepared environment, helps the student discover basic principles about his/her world which provides a firm foundation and keen desire for future learning.

All guides are Montessori-certified for a particular program level. The Montessori certification process is the equivalent of at least 30 hours of graduate study. Beginnings and Primary guides must possess, at least, an associate's degree to receive their Montessori credential. Guides in the Elementary and Middle School programs have achieved, at a minimum, a bachelor's degree to be eligible for Montessori certification.

Guides are responsible for setting up the prepared environment. The guide strives to know each student's needs and directs each child to his or her level of learning. The guide instructs the student in the proper use of the Montessori materials and then returns to observing the student, intervening only when necessary.

Guides welcome calls from parents regarding any aspect of a child's classroom experience. You may leave a message for your child's guide at school, and he or she will return your call within 24 hours.

## **The Aide**

The aide provides support to the guide in the administration of the classroom and is integral to the success of its function.

Aides working in Beginnings and Primary undergo six hours of continuing education annually, at a minimum, and senior staff members undertake at least 12 hours of continuing education per year.

## **The Classroom**

The prevailing atmosphere in a Montessori classroom should be one of freedom within the limitation of respect for others. Rooms are equipped with Montessori materials and supplementary materials that enhance the classroom experience. The student chooses the materials with which he or she wishes to work but must use them in a prescribed manner so as not to infringe upon the rights of classmates.

The atmosphere should be free from adult domination and be non-competitive; the room should be attractive, comfortable, orderly, simple, and stimulating. The furniture is student-sized, and the Montessori materials are self-correcting to provide a maximum problem-solving effort by each student. Many different levels of abilities and interests are anticipated among the class, and each activity is designed to stimulate a student's natural curiosity. There is a designated place for each piece of equipment to be stored, and objects in the room are "real" whenever possible.





## **The Parent**

Educating parents about Montessori method is vital for a successful program. Once parents have invested the time and resources to learn basic Montessori principles, they should attempt to implement them in the home.

The Montessori School of Westminster relies on parent involvement. This involvement not only keeps the school operating daily, but also helps to ensure that new ideas and diverse talents are introduced to the system.

Please refer to the Parent Education Nights schedule on the MSW calendar. We ask that you make every effort to attend these sessions to better your understanding of MSW and the Montessori method.

## **Discipline Policy**

The Montessori philosophy is such that each person within the environment has certain rights and privileges. Ground rules are set up by and for the class and are expected to be followed for the social cohesion of the group. When the rights of an individual within the environment are infringed upon, positive steps for correction are taken.

### ***The following shall be measures taken in disciplinary actions:***

1. A positive example is modeled by the guide and/or classroom aide.
2. The guide or aide will counsel the child.
3. The lesson on proper conduct will be repeated with the child.
4. The child may sit in a quiet area of the classroom.
5. The child may briefly be separated from the group with supervision.
6. The guide or aide and/or child will communicate with the parents about the problem. Collaboration and cooperation with school staff to remedy conduct is expected.
7. The child may be required to remain home if he/she is a continuous disruption to the other students or if there are acts of aggression. A psychological evaluation and counseling may be required in order to help the child return to school. Any such reports will be made available to the school. The school may speak to the child's healthcare providers as necessary.
8. The child will be permitted to return to school when he/she is able to follow the rules of the program.

Any student is subject to dismissal from the school at any time by written notice from the Head of School. The Head of School, after conferences with faculty and parents, will notify the Board of Trustees of the dismissal.



## **Privacy Rights and Access to Records**

### **Privacy Rights**

In order to ensure a student's privacy, the classroom staff and Head of the School have access to the records of individual students. The Administrative Assistant and Business Officer, at the direction of the Head of School, may file or send out documents.

### **Performance Transcripts**

When a student leaves the school, a transcript of the student's evaluation will be made available provided all financial obligations have been met in accordance with the tuition contract. Should parents wish transcripts of student records to be forwarded to a receiving school on behalf of the exiting student, MSW must receive a written request providing all necessary contact information to facilitate the transfer of the transcript. The subsequent transcript will be forwarded directly to the receiving school.

Students who attend Middle School will also receive a transcript of credits earned while in attendance at this level. One course credit is equal to 120 hours of class time and the completion of 75 percent of course objectives. A half credit is equal to 60 hours of class time and the completion of 75 percent of course objectives. Courses that earn credits will be shared with student and parents during conferences.

### **Parent Review**

A parent or guardian may look at his/her student's records at school in the company of the Head of School.

### **Parent Communication**

MSW values and relies on communication from and with the parents of our students.

If you have a question or a concern about your child's education, we encourage you to talk with your child's guide. A phone call or a note will be responded to within 24 hours. If the problem or concern has not been resolved to your satisfaction or the concern continues, please bring it to the attention of the Head of School.

Please refer to the section in this Parent Handbook entitled "Communication" for a detailed explanation of types of communication in the school.



## Observations, Evaluations, Conferences

### Classroom Observations

Parents, grandparents, relatives and other interested persons are encouraged to visit the classroom once the students have adjusted to the environment and rules. All observations will be scheduled by the parents of the student to be observed. Scheduled classroom observations may be arranged effective mid-October through April. No family observations are available in May.

Appointments to observe may be made by calling the school office. Appointments are made in an effort to allow the number of visitors per observation to be a maximum of two adults representing one family. **Observations are for adults only.**

Observations are scheduled for approximately 45 minutes. At the end of the observation, the guide and the parent will leave the classroom to discuss the student's progress and activity levels and answer any questions about the classroom. Parents may choose to observe their student in the classroom in place of a conference.

Observations may be scheduled at:

Montessori Beginnings	9:15—10:15 AM
Primary	9:00— 10:00 AM
Extended Day	1:00— 2:00 PM
Elementary	9:30—10:30 AM
Middle School	By appointment

Progress reports are sent home three times a year; one in the fall (usually in November); one in the spring (usually in March); and, one after the end of the school year in June.

### Conferences

Conferences are scheduled twice during the school year to coincide with the fall and spring progress reports. In addition, a conference for the parents of Beginnings students will be scheduled a few weeks after the start of the school year. The parent or guides may call for a conference at any time if either feels it would benefit the child. Conferences, at all times, are confidential conversations between the staff and the parent. With the exception of Middle School, conferences are not structured to include student participation. However, there are certain circumstances which are best resolved via a collaborative effort between staff, parents, and student. Conferences of this sort are scheduled at mutually agreeable times for staff and family members.



## Schedule Policies

### All Day Care

As noted on the school calendar, All-Day Care will be offered on certain days when the normal school day is not in session or is shortened. It is first offered, for a fee, to those students already enrolled in either Nappers, Extended Day, or After School Care programs.

After the All-Day Care offer period expires for those students enrolled in programs as described above, the offer of fee-based All-Day Care is extended to non-care program enrolled students if spaces remain in the All-Day Care program. This type of care is referred to as *provisional care* and is for non-care program enrolled students on All Day Care days.

Before-School Care and After-School Care will also be available on the same schedule beginning at the regular opening time of 7:00 AM for those enrolled in BSC, and ending at the regular closing time of 6:00 PM for those enrolled in ASC.

### Weather Policy

In the event that school must be canceled or delayed due to inclement weather, the decision to close or delay will be made between 6:00 and 6:30 AM. The Montessori School of Westminster does **not** follow Carroll County Public Schools in matters of weather-related closures or delays. Parents receive notification via the Textedly system for mobile phones or via MSW Updates email.

Please do not rely solely on the MSW Updates email system as occasionally the internet does not work properly. If school must be closed before dismissal time due to inclement weather, you will be contacted via the "Textedly" cell phone notification system. Please contact the MSW office with all new contact information to ascertain your receipt of important messages.

**CAUTION: The downhill "S turn" prior to Montessori Drive is often slippery when other parts of Hughes Shop Road are fine. Please use caution prior to approaching this section of the road.**

### Snow Make-Up Days

The MSW school year calendar includes several days labeled "half-day snow make-up days." These are shown as schedule options on certain days throughout the school year and are dependent upon weather-related closures. Please make note of these schedule options on your family calendar. We incorporate these days into the school calendar as we plan to fulfill the requirement for the number of days school must be in session. That number is regulated by the state of Maryland for both private and public schools.

Your review of the school calendar will show that half-day snow make-up days are often scheduled as options on days that would be, alternatively, in-service days--days when school is closed to students.

We meet three goals by creating half-day snow make-up days on our school calendar:

- (1) We ensure our students attend school for the correct amount of time annually.
- (2) We preserve some of the important time set aside for faculty and staff to meet, plan, prepare, review, etc.
- (3) We avoid extending the school year by adding year-end days, thus retaining summer opportunities and scheduling priorities for MSW and its families.



Please note that half-day snow make-up days are only one way of resolving unforeseen school closures caused by weather or other circumstances. Some snow make-up days may be full days, and extreme circumstances may require further measures, such as a shorter “spring break,” or other calendar changes as deemed necessary.

### **Transportation**

MSW offers daily bus service between the school and stops in Westminster, Finksburg, and Reisterstown for students of age five and above. Families are billed monthly for bus transportation. Fees and regulations are available upon request. Bus service is available on a first-come, first-serve basis.

For students not using the bus, transportation is the responsibility of the parents. We encourage carpooling. Those desiring to carpool may utilize the Family Directory located on the school website to find those families with whom they would like to carpool. New families are added to the website Family Directory each year. It is mandatory that you notify the staff in writing of the children in your carpool. A written note must be sent to MSW if someone other than the regular driver is to transport the student. The student will not be released to unauthorized persons. List permitted carpools and authorized persons on your Emergency Contact Card and update annually. MSW retains the right to verify the identity of any persons transporting students. As carpools are formed, those parents involved should establish rules of conduct for the carpools. Help the staff by making as few last-minute changes as possible.

### **Schedule Changes**

The Head of School and faculty have the right to make changes to the calendar and schedule as deemed appropriate for the welfare of the students. Notice of such changes will be sent via MSW Updates, the Blue Bag, Montessori Compass, or other communication method. Should you be scheduled to attend or participate in a school event, please check Montessori Compass messages and calendar for the most recent announcements, schedule changes, etc.

***See also “Weather Guidelines for Recess, Physical Education, and Environmental Education” in the Health & Safety section of this handbook.***



## Health & Safety

### **Student Health Records**

MSW is required by the state of Maryland to maintain records detailing the immunization history and health records of each student in the school. Health forms are required to be completed and must be submitted prior to the first day of school for each new student and must be updated periodically. The MSW school nurse reviews student health records and advises any family whose child may lack required immunizations.

Families of students who participate in the MSW Summer Camp program prior to their first year of enrollment as a school-year student do not need to re-submit the health forms packet before the start of the school year unless the child has visited his or her pediatrician and received new immunizations. In such a case, updates to the student's MSW immunization record are required. Any medical or other event which changes the child's health profile should also be entered into the student's MSW records. It is the responsibility of the family to provide to MSW required health records from the student's health care practitioner.

Students whose families have not submitted the necessary health records are notified and advised of a reasonable timeframe in which to provide missing information and forms, including immunizations, as mandated by the state of Maryland. If a student's record is not properly updated as advised by MSW, the child will not be allowed to return to school until such record is complete.

Each student in the school is required to receive his or her second "MMR" vaccine for measles, mumps, and rubella by the child's fifth birthday.

More information about immunization schedules and state vaccination requirements may be found by using the following link:

<http://phpa.dhmh.maryland.gov/OIDEOR/IMMUN/Pages/back-to-school-immunization-requirements.aspx>

If a family has any questions regarding MSW's student health records, immunization policies, or other health practices, please contact the school offices for more information.

### **Sunscreen**

MSW recommends each family apply sunscreen to their child before the start of the school day. For children who benefit from additional applications of sunscreen on certain days, please send to school the preferred sunscreen clearly labelled with the child's name and any necessary directions regarding its application. For children in the Beginnings and Primary programs, a Sun Safety directive selecting the family's choice for the application of sunscreen is provided.

### **Service Dogs**

Service dogs are defined as those providing a specific service to an individual with a disability. Special training is required for service dogs to perform identified tasks. Comfort/emotional animals do not qualify. In evaluating the use of service dogs at MSW, we may ask:

- (1) *Is the dog a service animal required because of a disability?*
- (2) *What work or task has the dog been trained to perform?*



## **In the Event of an Emergency**

The school staff will continue to personally care for your student in the event of an emergency. We will maintain an environment that is as normal as possible to continue with the school experience for our students. All safety precautions will remain in place. If there is a national crisis and you are unable to pick up your child at dismissal, our staff will continue to care for your student until arrangements can be made. Please review the section of the Parent Handbook entitled "Communications" for additional information.

**In case of an emergency, call the school at 410-848-6283. Phone messages are monitored prior to each midday and afternoon dismissal.**

## **Absenteeism**

If your child will be absent from school, please notify MSW by phoning the school before class.

We ask families whose children are absent due to illness to maintain contact with the school throughout the illness. Your communication provides important information to your child's class and the school regarding potential viral outbreaks.

If your child has an ongoing illness, please communicate with MSW throughout your child's illness and recovery. Please note that regular attendance will maximize your child's learning experience.

## **Illness**

Students with severe colds, a fever of 100 degrees or higher, vomiting or communicable illness are not allowed in school. **Students who have fever and/or are vomiting may not return to school until they have been symptom-free for 24 hours.**

If the student becomes ill at school, he/she will be isolated, and you will be contacted to pick up your child as soon as possible. **To protect all students, the school reserves the right to determine when a student is to be sent home because of illness.** When providing the names of those persons who are permitted to pick up your child from MSW on the school emergency form, please include provisions for those times when your child may become ill at school and include who may pick up your ill child within 30 minutes after receiving notification from the school.

The guides must be informed at once of a communicable disease other than colds. This includes, for example, Covid, chicken pox, pink eye, head lice and strep throat. Please contact MSW to help us advise other families of precautions that may help limit the spread of communicable illnesses.

We employ a school nurse on a flex-time basis; therefore, a nurse is not regularly on the premises. Our nurse, however, is on call for information and advice.

## **Symptoms Indicating Your Child Needs Care at Home**

- Fever
- Sore throat
- Nasal congestion
- Runny nose
- New or worsening cough
- Shortness of breath
- Fatigue/malaise
- Headaches
- Body aches
- Nausea
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Loss of taste or smell



## **Medication Policy**

If possible, alternate plans should be made to avoid the administration of medication at school. Parents are encouraged to consult with their physician to discuss administering medication before and/or after school. In most cases, these arrangements can and should be made. Parents may come to school to administer medication. Medication may only be administered in the school office, not in the classrooms.

**All medication must be in the original container or prescription bottle and clearly labeled with the child's name. Under no circumstances will unlabeled medication be given.**

**Students are not permitted to carry any medications to school or keep any type of medication in their lunch boxes or other personal carriers. All medication must be given to an adult (staff member) by an adult (parent or caregiver).**

### **For All Students – All Medications – Use of Medication Authorization Form**

No medication, whether prescription, non-prescription or any over-the-counter, or homeopathic remedies, will be administered without a **Medication Authorization Form** signed by a parent and a physician. The form must list precautions or possible side effects. It is recommended that families review and understand the **Medication Authorization Form**. In order to meet compliance standards, MSW utilizes the Maryland State Department of Education **Medication Authorization Form** also used by Carroll County Public Schools.

Please contact MSW at 410.848.6283 or via Montessori Compass message to the Administrative Assistant should you have any questions about the MSW Medication Policy or to receive the **Medication Authorization Form**.

## **Medications and Overnight Travel**

Students in Upper Elementary and Middle School are given valuable opportunities to travel during the school year. For those students who require the administration of medicine on a strict schedule, the needed medications that must accompany them on the school trip must be submitted to MSW two weeks prior to the scheduled departure date for required review and verification by the MSW school nurse.

## **Participation at School and in Physical Education**

If your student is well enough to be at school, he/she must be able to participate in all programs, including physical education. If a student suffers from a persistent physical problem, the student will need to remain with the class during physical education. If a student has an ongoing physical problem, please send a note from the student's physician explaining why he/she cannot participate.

## **Head Lice Policy**

Please check your student periodically for head lice.

- Any student who is found to have lice or nits (even one) when at school will be immediately sent home.
- If this is an initial occurrence, your child may return to school only when all lice and nits are gone. If a student returns to school and is found to have lice and/or nits (even if it is just one), the student will immediately be sent home again. It is the parent's responsibility to make sure that all nits and lice are gone.
- If this is a repeat occurrence, your child will not be readmitted to school for three full days following the detection.



- Before readmission to school, all nits and/or lice must be removed. A parent must accompany the student into the school office to be checked before admission to the classroom.
- The parent must stay until the student is cleared to enter the class.
- During a lice outbreak, students with long hair must have their hair tied back.
- Please remember that it is each parent's responsibility to check their child daily.

### **Accident**

In case of a serious accident at school, the student's parent is called immediately after first aid is given. If you cannot be reached, the emergency number you indicated on the Emergency Contact Card will be called. If that person is not available, your student's doctor will be called.

If transportation to a hospital or medical facility is required, transportation will be provided by the parent or ambulance.

### **Car Safety Seats—Lower Elementary**

Parents are required to provide safety seats for all field trips or other school-related travel as mandated by state law. Students who do not have car safety seats and are required by the state of Maryland to ride in a car seat will not be allowed to participate in the field trip.

### **Vehicle Safety – Carpool, Parking Lot, Driveway**

Please note that the posted speed limit on all paved areas at MSW is 15 miles per hour. During carpool arrival and dismissal times, or at any time when cars are parked at the front entrance to the academic building of the school, on the parking lot, or in any area normally used by vehicles, it is important for children to stay in cars and to be supervised by parents or caregivers. No passing is permitted by vehicles while in carpool lines. Drivers should refrain from parking in the pedestrian crosswalk at any time.

### **Weather Guidelines for Recess, Physical Education & Environmental Education**

Time spent outdoors is an important part of the school day whether it is guided during Physical Education (PE), Environmental Education (EE), or free play during recess. It is difficult to set guidelines that fit every circumstance and condition with regard to outside activities, especially during periods of rainy or cold weather. Students at MSW will go out every day if the weather is within the parameters listed below.

Our expectation is that parents will provide their child with clothing appropriate for all types of weather so he/she can participate in all outdoor opportunities.

When determining whether a classroom will go outside, we will make these considerations:

- |               |                           |                                  |
|---------------|---------------------------|----------------------------------|
| • Temperature | • Wind chill              | • Adequacy of students' clothing |
| • Humidity    | • Age of students         | • Condition of the playground    |
| • Heat index  | • Length of time outdoors |                                  |

### ***Cold Weather Guidelines***

1. When properly clothed, children can participate in safe, vigorous play in an outdoor environment in most weather conditions. Increased caution should be practiced when temperatures reach below 40 degrees including wind chill factor.
2. When temperatures and wind chill factors fall below:



- 32 degrees including the wind chill, students in-- Beginnings and Primary are limited to 20-minute intervals outside.
  - 30 degrees including the wind chill, students in-- Beginnings and Primary are kept indoors. Elementary and Middle School are limited to 20-minute intervals outside
  - 28 degrees including the wind chill, students in-- Beginnings and Primary are kept indoors. Elementary and Middle School are kept indoors.
3. Temperatures considerations and proper clothing:
- Below 60 degrees >jacket or long sleeves recommended
  - Below 50 degrees >coat and long pants recommended
  - Below 40 degrees >gloves and hats with previously recommended gear necessary
4. Clothing requirement when snow is present:
- Snow pants and snow boots. A change of clothes is an acceptable alternative. (Boots kept at school for EE may be used during snow unless otherwise noted by parent.)

*Note: Due to the difficulty of preparing the entire class for outside play in proper attire, students in Beginnings and Primary will only be going outside in the snow during their scheduled EE small group time. For additional information, please consult your child's guide.*

### **Heat Advisory Guidelines**

1. When the temperature reaches 95 degrees as indicated by the National Weather Heat Index chart, faculty should provide for inside activities or lessons.
2. For temperatures below 95 degrees, faculty should provide students with a water break before and after recess. Additionally, any student who shows signs of heat exhaustion or overheating should be allowed a water break during the recess period.
3. Faculty should be aware of medical conditions such as asthma, diabetes, epilepsy (seizure), allergy medications etc. which put students at a high risk of heat-related illness. These conditions could be intensified if exercising in hot weather; however, there is no reason to limit students' participation, unless a known risk is obvious or the parent has advised the school that their child should not participate.

### **Rain Guidelines**

If the temperature is 45 degrees and above including the wind chill, students will be permitted to be outside during a light to moderate rain event. Note: PE will not be held outside during any rain events.

1. Clothing requirements for rain:
  - Rain jacket
  - Rain boots



***Please be advised it is best to encourage your child to be prepared to be outside each day. You are welcome to send extra clothing for your child to school. Should your child come to school unprepared, he/she will not be able to participate in outdoor activities.***

References: Weather Guidelines – National Weather Service | Montessori Services | Barlett City Schools



## Security

In order to provide a safe environment for all students, the Montessori School of Westminster has certain practices and procedures in place. Security needs of the school are evaluated on an on-going basis. School staff has participated in training to help ensure the needs of students are addressed in the event of a crisis, and an emergency plan is in place for crisis management. This plan is available for review in the school office.

### Door Access

The doors to all buildings remain locked whenever students are present in the school. All visitors to the school are admitted only after ringing a signal buzzer located adjacent to the main entrance and being visually identified by office staff. Visitors must then report to the school office and sign a roster naming their destination within the school. Visitors are supervised by school staff and are asked to sign out when their visit is complete.

To maintain the most secure environment possible for children, parents and students are directed to refrain from permitting visitor access to the building by opening doors from inside the building. This helps MSW staff identify and supervise all visitors within the academic building. This applies to all persons entering through the main doors of the building; everyone entering the building should be acknowledged by a staff member.

### Drills

Drills are conducted throughout the school year to help in preparedness for a variety of emergencies including those related to weather, intruders, fire, etc. Students of all ages participate in drills.

#### Emergency Medical & Medication Training

Certain staff members have participated in qualifying training to assist with health-related situations that may arise within the school. State regulations mandate that at least one staff member in each program level maintain approved certification for:

- Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR)
- Automated External Defibrillator (AED),
- First Aid

At MSW, approximately 20 staff members are certified for CPR, AED, and First Aid, exceeding the state-required mandate.

Additionally, eight staff members have received training for the administration of medications.

### Emergency Cards

MSW maintains student file cards detailing emergency contact information, the names of those permitted to pick up children from school, etc. Each family must update this information annually at the beginning of the school year. It is important to consider who is entrusted to pick up your child when he or she is ill, **preferably within 30 minutes of receiving notice** from MSW regarding symptoms.





## **Volunteers**

Parents who wish to volunteer within the school are asked to undergo a criminal history background check via fingerprinting. This applies in all cases in which a volunteer could potentially be alone with one or more students. Fingerprinting and background checks are conducted at the volunteer's expense, the cost of which is then applicable to the family's Parent Volunteer Commitment (PVC) to the school.

Fingerprinting can be obtained locally in the Westminster area. Contact information on businesses supplying this service is available through the school office. The cost for fingerprinting and criminal background history checks is approximately \$45 to \$65 and will apply towards your required PVC commitment.

Parents who volunteer at MSW must also participate in and complete online training regarding the abuse and neglect of children. More information is available through the school's office.

MSW reserves the right to update and amend its requirements for volunteers at any time.

## **Other Security Measures**

MSW has measures in place which are not publicly described in order to preserve additional security for its students, staff, and visitors.



## General Classroom Policies

### Lost and Found

Please check with your child's guide for lost items. There is also a lost-and-found located in the school office area. Labeling **all** your child's clothing, including outerwear (each mitten, boot, hat, scarf, etc.), will reduce the number of misplaced items. After efforts to reunite items with owners, remaining items are donated.

Many families support MSW events by preparing food items to share. Please make certain that each serving piece, each container, lid, base, etc. is labeled in order to facilitate return.

While staff will do its best to return all items to owners, MSW is not responsible for any lost or misplaced items and will not reimburse for personal items at any time.

### School Clothing

For the current school year, each child is asked to bring a face covering mask to school each day. Families are required to have at least two additional face masks for the child that will remain at school. More may be required as circumstances dictate. Please label your child's masks. Face masks should be washed at the end of each day.

For safety reasons, students may not wear flip-flops, opened-toed, or slip-on shoes on outdoor equipment. Shoes or sandals appropriate for play on the playground climbers must include closed toes and a strap securing the back of the child's foot. No hats, bandanas or visors will be worn indoors.

Because several students may own identical items, students must have their names on all outerwear (coats, sweaters, mittens, boots, hats, etc.). **Please label every piece of clothing your child will wear to MSW.**

Clothing selected for school should be appropriate for indoor and outdoor curriculum which includes floor work, exploration, movement, active play, etc. Clothing selections should be suitable for wear in an interactive mixed-age student population. MSW staff has the right to determine the appropriateness of clothing worn to school.

MSW has an on-going Environmental Education program that includes outdoor study in all weather; please provide outer wear appropriate for each season throughout the year. Please include slip-on rubber boots (no laces or buttons) for your Beginnings and Primary student.

Additional classroom clothing policies may apply within separate programs; parents will be given this information at All School Night or during the school year.

### Beginnings and Primary Students

Every student must have a complete extra change of clothing (labeled with his/her name) in school. Please send extra clothes to the classroom in a bag marked with the student's name.

Students' school clothing should be practical and washable. Play clothes for both boys and girls are necessary. Students get dirty sometimes, so please have your child dress accordingly. It is more important that he/she participates in an activity than remains clean.

We expect Primary students to be able to handle their own clothing. When selecting new pants for your child, check to see that he/she can fasten and unfasten them alone, or buy pants with elastic waistbands.



Children should always try the zipper and buttons on a coat before a purchase is made. Some zippers and buttons are frustrating to children. Children should also try on new shoes and snow boots before purchasing them. They should be simple for the children to put on and take off by themselves.

## **Possessions**

**Sharing:** Students are encouraged to bring anything that they have made to share with their class. Please label every item with your child's name.

**Books:** Students are encouraged to bring books to share with the class. Books must have the owner's name in them. All books must be in good condition. For Beginnings and Primary students, it may take days or, perhaps, longer to read each book. Keep this in mind when sending library books – the staff cannot be responsible for their timely return.

**Nature items:** Students are encouraged to bring items from nature. They may leave them at school for the class to enjoy or take the items home after sharing with their class.

**Toys:** Please point out to your student that his/her toys are for home use and, at school, he/she has "special" work to do. If a student does bring a toy from home, it will be stored in the student's "cubby" (storage space) or held by the staff until dismissal time. Trading cards of any type are not permitted at school.

**Animals:** Without prior written permission, no live animals or insects will be permitted.

## **Photos**

The Montessori School of Westminster periodically takes photographs of the students and reserves the right to publish photos online, in brochures, newspapers, periodicals, displays, and in any other manner deemed appropriate by the administration during or after the student's enrollment at MSW. All photographs are the property of the school. Parents may have copies printed at their own expense.

Any photos taken in the classroom will be at the convenience of faculty or other staff and will be in accordance with the policies stated in the administrative manual of the school. *Any photographs taken in school, on the campus, or during a Montessori School of Westminster-sponsored field trip may be used by the school for publicity.*

## **Gift Policies**

Students may not exchange invitations or gifts within the school. A printed class roster is provided to each family at All School Night. Names and addresses of our families are available on the secure portion of our school website at [www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org](http://www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org) (or short form: [www.theMSW.org](http://www.theMSW.org)). Students may give gifts to the classroom, such as a book or an exercise; please check with the guides beforehand.

Traditionally, MSW staff has received a generous gift from the parents in the form of monetary contributions used to fund a year-end luncheon. No other personal gifts to any staff from parents or students are expected or encouraged. This practice may place undue burdens on families, especially those with multiple children within the school.

## **Special Information from Home**

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform your child's guide as soon as possible. Common causes of distress are either one or both parents being away from home, a new person living at home, illness of a family member, hospitalization, accident or death in the family, divorce or separation, moving, or death of a pet.



## **Allergies**

There are documented food allergies among our students. Due to the risk of anaphylaxis, which could cause a narrowing of the airways as well as being potentially fatal, there is a **STRICT NO PEANUT BUTTER or PEANUT POLICY**. Any questions regarding this policy should be directed to the Head of School and the school nurse.

If you choose an alternative food that resembles peanut butter (e.g. almond butter) for your child's lunch, kindly label such items to notify staff of safe content.

## **Snack**

The school, supplemented by the parents, will provide nutritious snacks throughout the year for Beginnings and Primary students. If you or your child would like to prepare something which you would like to share with the class, check with the guides before bringing it to school. Snack selections will be made to provide maximum sanitary precautions, such as those available in individually wrapped portions. Snack requests for Elementary and Middle School will be defined by each classroom.

Examples of popular snacks include raw vegetables and fruits. In order to promote healthy eating habits, please avoid foods that are high in processed sugar. Also, please refer to specific classroom requirements that will be provided by your child's guides.

**Always label any snack that is sent into the school with your name as well as the name of the classroom/program or event for which it is intended. To ensure the return of your dishes, containers, or other personal items, please make sure each piece is marked with your name.**

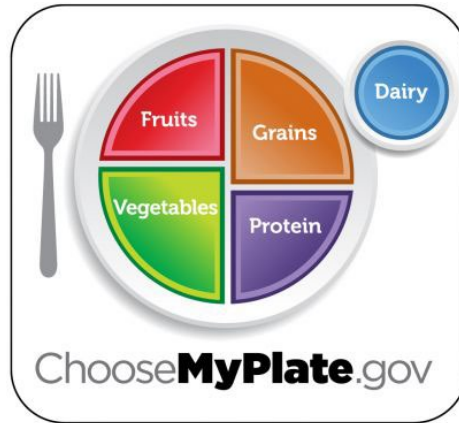
Per guidelines from the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care:

*MSW ensures that it serves whole grains four times per week in addition to serving fruits or vegetables four times per week. MSW limits snacks high in fat, sugar, and salt. MSW will supplement lunches in order to provide each student with a balanced meal.*

## **Lunch**

Students in the Beginnings and Primary programs will have their lunches refrigerated as required by the MSDE Office of Child Care for all pre-school children. Please be mindful of our limited refrigerator space when purchasing lunch boxes. Keep all hot food separate and labeled with your child's name. Kindly label each item in your child's lunch to assist in repacking unused portions, containers, etc.

Ideally, students will be active participants in preparing their lunch at home, as well as in taking responsibility for bringing their lunch to school with them each day. If your child forgets his or her lunch, a standard lunch will be provided by the school, and you will be charged a fee for the lunch provided. This lunch is made by school staff and will contain representative items from each of the recommended food groups. Appropriate foods include fruits, grains, vegetables, protein, and dairy. For more information, go to [www.choosemyplate.gov](http://www.choosemyplate.gov).



Students in the Elementary and Middle School programs must bring their own lunches, and those lunches will not be refrigerated. Students in the Middle School program will define their own requirements for lunch.

Do not send soda or gum with lunches. Also, avoid foods and beverages containing processed sugars. Beginnings and Primary students will be served milk or water at lunch.

We do not permit the trading or sharing of any food during lunch due to varying nutritional philosophies as well as food allergies that exist in the school. In order for parents to be aware of how much food their child has consumed, all uneaten food that can be repackaged will be sent home. This can assist you and your child in packing lunch.

Per guidelines from the Maryland State Department of Education Office of Child Care:  
*MSW will supplement lunches in order to provide each student with a balanced meal.*

### **Breakfast During Before School Care**

While the school is unable to provide breakfast during Before School Care, children who attend this program are welcome to bring and eat a breakfast in the morning.

### **Napping**

Students enrolled in the Beginnings program who stay during afternoon hours will nap after lunch. Students of age three to 4.5 who stay at MSW during the afternoon will begin the school year in the “napping classroom” that provides options for sleeping and/or quiet activities. Faculty and staff will evaluate the needs of students on an on-going basis, and each student’s program enrollment will be adjusted to accommodate his or her appropriate developmental phase. Students of age 4.5 to five will participate in the MSW Extended Day program which is conducted in Primary classroom spaces during afternoon hours.

Due to limited storage space, please have your child bring a pillow no larger than 12” x 12”, a crib sheet, and a small blanket to use while he/she sleeps. These items will be sent home weekly for laundering in a tote bag provided by MSW. (Please note: The tote bag used for nap laundry is separate from the Blue Bag used for school-parent communications.)

### **Screen-free Curriculum – Beginnings through Lower Elementary**

Students in Beginnings, Primary, and Lower Elementary (age 2 through third grade) do not use devices with screens in the classroom or as part of the curriculum of any MSW program in which they participate.



Students in Upper Elementary (grades four, five, and six) and Middle School (grades seven, eight, and nine) are provided with technology options including access to devices utilizing screens for the preparation of reports based on research and for other activities. Student access to the internet at MSW is filtered and monitored for appropriate content and use.

This policy applies to students enrolled in Before School Care, After School Care, or any summer camp programs at the school.





## Communications

The key to creating the most effective partnership between MSW and families of students is communication. Communication is a two-way process.

Your child's guide is responsible to notify you when he or she believes that there is a genuine concern regarding your child's progress or behavior. Should parents have a concern about their child, or any circumstance involving the classroom or guide, the parent must first contact the student's guide directly to discuss any concerns. If the parent/guardian feels that the concern has not been addressed, it is then appropriate to reach out to school leadership.

If you would like to speak to a guide, please send a note to school with your child(ren) or contact the school, and we will relay the request to the guide to call you.

### Montessori Compass

Montessori Compass is an internal system, accessible via the internet, used to facilitate communication between MSW and parents. It includes classroom-specific information, school-wide communications, photographs, calendars, and more. It is a helpful tool in becoming an active member of the MSW community.

An internet connection is required for access to Montessori Compass. To receive login credentials for Montessori Compass, please contact the office at 410.848.6283. A Montessori Compass phone application is also available for smart cell phone users.

Montessori Compass provides a method for MSW to reach its families with up-to-the-minute information. **The calendar provided within the Montessori Compass system is the primary calendar for the MSW community. Please rely on the Montessori Compass calendar for most accurate event details. Please check Montessori Compass messages and calendar before setting out for any school-related events or activities (e.g., field trips, observations, etc.) as it will be used to announce cancellations or other changes that may affect your participation.**

### Guidelines for Online Communication: Email or Montessori Compass

Staff and parents should keep in mind that while online communication via email or Montessori Compass messages is a quick way to send a message, it is not necessarily the best way to get a quick reply or resolve an issue. Parents are asked to adhere to the following guidelines:

1. Email or Montessori Compass messages should not be used to discuss contentious, emotional, or highly confidential issues.
2. Using email or Montessori Compass messages as a communication tool is voluntary. Parents and staff must agree to use email or Montessori Compass as a form of communication.
3. Email or Montessori Compass messages should not be used for time-sensitive communication.
4. *Parents who are unwilling to abide by these guidelines will be asked to withdrawal from the school.*

### MSW Updates

MSW Updates are sent via email, and it is each parent's responsibility to read and understand the information contained therein. MSW Updates will be used to relay new information as well as reminders. Please provide the school with a current email address in order to view all messages sent. **Please contact the school office if you are not receiving weekly email updates.**



## **The Blue Bag**

The Blue Bag traditionally carried by MSW students through the Lower Elementary level is intended to relay Montessori school messages to parents from the Board of Trustees, the school staff, the MSW Parent Organization, and from MSW committees. Messages must pertain to school business or school-related activities. No personal items, invitations, or notes may be sent out via the Blue Bags. The Blue Bag may contain folders sent home from the various programs within the school. For example, a student who attends the Primary program in the morning and the Extended Day Primary program in the afternoon may have two separate folders in his or her Blue Bag. **Please review the contents of your child's Blue Bag and folders and return them to the classroom the next school day.**

Students in Upper Elementary and Middle School may use backpacks. It is the responsibility of students and their parents to ensure the prompt delivery of messages to and from the school when transported in a student's backpack.

If submitting a payment via your child's Blue Bag or backpack, kindly place your payment in a separate, labeled envelope and alert office staff to the payment's delivery by (1) calling the office at 410.848.6283, or (2) emailing [office@theMSW.org](mailto:office@theMSW.org). Please consider using online payment options through the school website at [www.theMSW.org](http://www.theMSW.org).

Payments may be sent via US Postal Service and addressed to MSW, 1055 Montessori Drive, Westminster, Maryland 21158.

You may personally deliver your payment to our administrative offices.

## **RSVPs - Responding to Notices from MSW**

Many notices from MSW to parents require timely responses. The use of the notation "RSVP" means we are planning an event that requires a headcount to be successful, and we need to know if you'll be there. On certain occasions, responses determine whether or not events will take place. Sometimes, it is necessary to know the number of children who will attend an event in order to provide sufficient child care. MSW devotes resources to purchasing supplies for events, have staff on hand, etc.; thus, your responses assist us in accurate budgeting and planning.

## **MSW Website and Parent Access**

The website for our school is online at: [www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org](http://www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org) **or** [www.theMSW.org](http://www.theMSW.org).

The school website contains helpful information for MSW families, including access to our Family Directory, the contact list for all families within our school population. The Family Directory includes names, mailing addresses, phone numbers, and email addresses and is updated annually during summer months to reflect changes in the school population. It can be a helpful tool for those who wish to carpool.

This MSW Parent Handbook is regularly shared with the families of prospective students. To protect the confidentiality of current students and their families, parent login information is given to each family *in written form* separate from this Handbook prior to the onset of each school year. Login information can also be acquired by contacting the school office.

**Important:** Please help MSW maintain an accurate Parent Directory by advising the office of any and all changes in your listed contact information.

The school website also includes:

- MSW Staff Directory



- PVC Hours Form – online reporting of completed PVC hours/jobs
- Handbook – Parent Handbook online
- Parent Organization – details on “Parent Org”-sponsored events within MSW
- Family Directory – contact information for all MSW families
- Direct link to Montessori Compass via the MSW website’s home page
- “Pay” - payment option for tuition and fees via the button located on the MSW website’s home page
- “Give” - donation option via the button located on the website's home page

While MSW makes every effort to keep all information on its website current, please confirm listed information as to dates for accuracy. Website information changes from school year to school year and must be updated constantly.

The public portions of our school website provide useful references as you discuss MSW with families interested in the school for their children.

### **“Textedly” Cell Phone Notifications**

MSW uses a school-wide cell phone notification system for important notices, especially those regarding weather-related closures and/or delays. Families who list cell phone numbers on applications for enrollment are automatically included.

### **MSW and Facebook**

Various groups within the school, including parent groups within classrooms, have found it helpful to create Facebook pages for internal communication; however, it is important to remember that the school has one official Facebook page labeled “Montessori School of Westminster.”

Please note that everyone has different priorities and access abilities regarding Facebook. Information received should be verified; kindly direct your questions to our faculty or staff. We want to communicate with you whenever possible to provide clear answers to questions and solutions to any concerns that may arise.



## Development & Family Involvement

Thanks to contributions from our families, alumni, MSW staff, and the community, your children are able to experience all that Montessori has to offer.

Did you know?

- Your tuition dollars cover 95% of your child's education and school expenses.
- MSW provides financial assistance to families not able to fully afford school tuition.
- Because of contributions made to the school, our students are able to learn through art, music, Spanish, environmental and physical education, and have access to individual support through a Language Resource Specialist.
- Philanthropy is a part of a Montessori education. Students of all ages are learning about their role in the world and how they can make a difference – through financial support and through giving of their time and talents, and raising money for their favorite causes.

At the Montessori School of Westminster, we foster an environment in which our students are learning about giving back to the community – both to the school, to our local community, and to our world. **We encourage you to include your children in conversations about how your family will contribute to our school this year.** Talk to your children about the reasons your family makes financial contributions to the school and why it is important. They can even be a part of “earning” the money that your family contributes.

There are many opportunities to give back to our school. How will your family participate this year?

- Contribute to MSW's annual giving campaign. (You can make a donation at any time. There will also be a variety of times throughout the year when you'll be reminded of the opportunity to give.)
- Serve on one of our committees; involve grandparents, aunts, uncles in volunteer opportunities and in our classrooms. There are lots of chances to bring your knowledge and skills to our students. Volunteer hours donated by extended family count toward your annual PVC requirement.
- Keep an eye on MSW Updates and Montessori Compass for more opportunities to participate.

If you have questions or would like to talk about making a contribution, please contact Trish St. Michel, Director of Development ([tstmichel@theMSW.org](mailto:tstmichel@theMSW.org) or 410.848.6283).



## Cell Phones

At MSW, cell phone use by staff is limited in our classrooms or wherever children are present with certain exceptions such as field trips, event photos, and adventures to areas of the campus where phones can be used if needed in emergency situations.

We gladly accept calls through the school office at 410.848.6283 to deal with the needs and emergencies of both staff and our students' families.

Our goal is to set the example of behavior we expect from our students, and we ask you to join with us to meet this challenge--limiting our cell phone usage to times and places that are separate from our young Montessorians as much as possible, whether in carpool line, on the playground, in the UTZ Field House, on trips, or in our classrooms. ***Thank you for using your cell phones in areas away from our students and their important activities.***



## Special Days and Events

### **Parent Visits**

Parents are vitally important to the school. The students love to meet their classmates' parents in the classroom setting. We would like to have all parents come to the class and share their professions or hobbies. You may spend as little as five minutes or up to an hour sharing with the children. Everyone's job or hobby provides a great opportunity for the students to learn about the "real world." Sharing photos and artifacts from travels or family cultures and traditions is a great way to be involved in your child's classroom.

### **Parent Education Nights**

Look for Parent Education Nights on the school calendar. Throughout the year, several Parent Education Nights are conducted. Parents are required to attend all sessions to better understand the Montessori philosophy and include its application in the home. Parent Education Nights provide parents with an understanding of Montessori materials, methods, policies, and procedures. We invite grandparents and anyone who cares for the child on a regular basis to join these seminars.

### **Grandparent Days**

On designated days, grandparents are invited to visit the school, meet staff members and other students' family members, and to spend time with their grandchildren. Due to space limitations, we cannot accommodate parents as visitors on Grandparent Days. Please see the MSW calendar for dates and monitor weekly MSW Updates for event-specific information.

### **Parties**

At the Elementary and Middle School levels, all classroom parties in recognition of holidays, special events, or cultural customs will be planned by the students with the assistance of the guides and are for Montessori students only. Birthdays at all levels will be recognized in a manner determined by each guide. This information will be shared with parents at All School Night. Please contact your child's guides if you have any questions.

### **Field Trips**

Field trips are scheduled periodically throughout the year. Parents are asked to chaperone and/or transport the students during the field trip. If you sign up to chaperone and/or drive, please wait until you are contacted before you definitely change your schedule to be available for the field trip. There have been times when we have had an overabundance of drivers, and other times when we have not had enough. We will try to rotate drivers so everyone is given a chance to drive during the year. No (non-enrolled) siblings are allowed on field trips.

All volunteers, staff, and students must wear facial masks while riding in vehicles during field trips.

Students must ride in the cars chosen by the classroom staff. We understand there are times when a child is anxious about going on a field trip. Please alert us early if you have any concerns. Our expectations are that all children are able to travel separately from parents when necessary. We strive to be sensitive to the needs of each child. All gift shops and snack bars are off limits for students and parent chaperones. No one may give any student food during a field trip other than the food the student brings for his or her lunch.

With the exception of Middle School students, students are not permitted to ride in the front seat of an automobile unless the student's parent is driving. Middle School students may ride in the front seat if they have a parent's permission.



Chaperones must be fingerprinted for an FBI background check in order to drive or conduct small groups for field trips; therefore, fingerprinted chaperones will be given first priority. To learn about the fingerprint process, contact the Administrative Assistant in the MSW office. The focus of the chaperones is to provide guidance to the students in their group, engaging with the students and the field trip presentations. Chaperones are asked to refrain from cell phone use on the field trip. If a situation arises when a chaperone must use his/her cell phone, please inform the staff so you can make your call away from the group and rejoin the students when you are available. Any student is subject to dismissal from a field trip by the staff at any time; parents will be called immediately to pick up their child.

### **Closing Ceremony**

At the end of each school year, MSW marks the passage of time with its closing ceremony. This special event is held at venues throughout the community with sites selected to accommodate all those who wish to attend. All students participate in a closing ceremony performance and receive recognition as they complete their school year. Many staff members in attendance have roles in the presentation of the ceremony.

The closing ceremony especially honors those students finishing their years at MSW by graduating from its Middle School program. Students achieving this milestone address the audience with prepared remarks about their years at MSW.

It is important that guests in attendance monitor children who have completed their participation in closing ceremony activities or are otherwise in attendance. Providing our undivided attention to students speaking and performing in the ceremony is required, and we ask parents to ensure that children in the audience listen respectfully to those on stage. Being supportive of students' time, effort, and performances encourages their self-confidence and future public endeavors. A time for socialization is scheduled immediately after the closing ceremony ends.



## MSW Summer Camp

Held annually, the Montessori School of Westminster offers weekly camp programs during summer months. Program times are designed to duplicate those in place during the school year and include full- and half-day options as well as a napping option, Before Camp Care beginning at 7 AM, and After Camp Care ending at 6 PM. The MSW Summer camp program is open to all age-eligible children in the community as well as those in the school population.

MSW Summer Camp features outdoor fun, crafts, and weekly themes for Elementary-age campers. Subjects may include science, art, technology, nature, math, music, campus exploration, creativity, and more. Themes change from year to year. Younger children in the Primary camp enjoy the Montessori classroom environments with a focus on fun and the great outdoors. The MSW Summer Camp program is designed and administered by the Montessori School of Westminster. Montessori materials used during the school year may be used during camp when appropriate and relevant to the theme of the camp week.

The MSW campus offers 27 acres of space for exploration, field and stream play, nature lessons, outdoor games, sports, and more. Children attending MSW Summer Camp should be prepared to spend time outside on a regular basis.

### **Availability**

MSW Summer Camp is divided into two age groups. **Primary** camp is for children ages two through five. A limited number of spaces are offered for two-year-olds. MSW Summer Camp is offered on a first-come, first-served basis to MSW families and the general public.

### **Registration**

MSW Summer Camp registration forms are made available to the MSW school population and to the wider community early in the calendar year through various methods including the school website at ([www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org](http://www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org)). A reduced rate discount period is offered annually. Children registered before the cut-off date listed on the registration form receive MSW Summer Camp t-shirts. Registration is on a first come, first serve basis. A separate registration form is needed for each child enrolled.

### **Payment**

Those who register for MSW Summer Camp must pay a deposit for each week selected for the child. The balance due is invoiced prior to the week(s) selected and must be paid in full before the first day of child's camp attendance. Payment details are included on the camp registration form.

Payment for summer camp is made by check to the Montessori School of Westminster (MSW) or by credit card. Registration forms and payments for each child may be mailed to the school at 1055 Montessori Drive, Westminster, Maryland 21158 or hand-delivered during business hours. (It is recommended that visitors call 410.848.6283 before traveling to school offices.) Credit card payments are accepted via the school website at [www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org](http://www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org). A convenience fee collected by the credit card processing agency is charged.

### **Drop-Off and Pick-Up**

A carpool procedure designed to match that utilized during the school year is in place for MSW Summer Camp. Families bring their children to the school by joining the vehicle loop that approaches the front of the academic building. Campers are greeted at each car in succession by MSW Summer Camp staff members. Morning camp drop-off is from 8:20 to 8:30 AM. Midday dismissal is from 11:50 AM to 12:00 PM. Afternoon dismissal is from 3:00 to 3:10 PM.



Children arriving for Before Camp Care must be escorted into the building by the parent. Please park your car in the school parking lot and escort your child into the academic building. For families whose children stay in the After Camp Care program, please park your vehicle and then request entrance to our locked building via the buzzer system at the front door to the academic building. Should After Camp Care be using other spaces on our campus (e.g, the playground or the UTZ Field House), a sign to that effect posted near our entryway will direct you.

In the event your child arrives late to camp, please park your car and bring your child into the school office after being admitted to the building.

### **Medical and Emergency Forms**

A series of medical forms, including an immunization record, must be completed by your child's pediatrician and submitted to the MSW school office prior to the first day of camp attendance. Your completed Emergency Contact Card will be kept on record in the school office containing the names of those who will be called in the event of an emergency.

Families of students who participate in the MSW Summer Camp program prior to the onset of their first year of enrollment as a school-year student do not need to re-submit the health forms packet before the start of the school year unless the child has visited his or her pediatrician and received new immunizations.

### **Camp Lunch and Snacks**

Children attending MSW Summer Camp pack and bring their lunches to camp. Refrigeration is provided for the lunches of children through age five in Primary camp. Water or two-percent milk is provided as a beverage to Primary camp children as well as wholesome snacks.

In our Elementary camp program, children's lunches are not refrigerated; please pack accordingly. A snack is provided; however, if your child has special dietary needs, please send a snack that meets your child's needs. A "water bottle" or other refillable container should be labelled with the child's name and brought to camp every day.

Please refer to the section of this MSW Parent Handbook detailing school lunches and recommendations for more information.

### **Clothing and Sunscreen**

Children attending MSW Summer Camp should wear clothing that is comfortable and sturdy. Outdoor play, crafts, and other activities should determine the choices you help your child make in terms of appropriate camp attire. Closed-toe shoes are required for access to climbing equipment for both Primary and Elementary campers. Weather-appropriate clothing suitable for outdoor activities is necessary. Sunscreen should be applied prior to the child's day at camp. Please send additional sunscreen to camp in a container labelled with your child's name, as needed. Children in the Primary camp program will be provided with a form for parent signatures and consent for the application of sunscreen.

Children of ages two to five must bring a complete change of clothing. If the camper is not toilet-trained, please send one week's supply of diapers and cleansing wipes labelled with the child's name. An email will be sent to you if additional items are needed.

### **Nappers**

Napping children need to bring a crib sheet, small pillow, and blanket to camp. These items will remain at MSW throughout the week and are sent home for laundering weekly.



## Finances

### **Payment Options**

Payments may be made to the Montessori School of Westminster in three ways: (1) check, (2) ACH, or (3) credit/debit card. We do not accept cash payments.

#### **(1) Check**

Please make your payments to the Montessori School of Westminster *via check* made payable to "MSW." Kindly use US Postal Service addressed to MSW, 1055 Montessori Drive, Westminster, Maryland, 21158.

If submitting a payment via your child's Blue Bag or backpack, kindly place your payment in a separate, labeled envelope and alert office staff to the payment's delivery by (1) calling the office at 410.848.6283, or (2) emailing [office@theMSW.org](mailto:office@theMSW.org). Please consider using online payment options through the school website at [www.theMSW.org](http://www.theMSW.org).

Payments may be sent via US Postal Service and addressed to MSW, 1055 Montessori Drive, Westminster, Maryland 21158.

#### **You may personally deliver your payment to our administrative offices.**

#### **(2) ACH (Automatic Debit)**

A second payment option exists via Automated Clearing House, or "ACH." By completing the ACH Authorization Agreement supplied by MSW, you authorize a direct debit of your bank account in the agreed upon amount on the first day of each month while payments are due. This authorization will remain in effect until the Montessori School of Westminster has received written notification of termination.

#### **(3) Credit/Debit**

A third payment option is via credit/debit card. Simply go to our website [www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org](http://www.MontessoriSchoolofWestminster.org) and click the "payment" button on the home page. When choosing this option you will be responsible for paying a convenience fee associated with the processing of your credit/debit card. This convenience fee goes directly to the payment page host, **not** MSW, for the processing of your payment.

For security and audit reasons, **cash is not accepted for ANY payments.** This includes fund-raising, trip fees, etc.

Questions concerning charges or payments should be addressed to the Business Officer.

**Any extenuating circumstances that might interfere with the timely payment of tuition should be communicated in writing to the Business Officer before a missed payment occurs.**

### **Returned Check Fee**

A fee of \$35 will be added to the family's MSW account balance for any check returned to the Montessori School of Westminster by the bank. If an ACH debit is returned for non-sufficient funds, a fee of \$6.00 will be added to the family's MSW account balance.

The school reserves the right to require a family whose check has been returned to submit future payments in the form of a money order or cashier's check.

## **Application of Payments**

Payments are recorded when received and are applied to account balances in this order:

1. Returned check fees
2. Late fees
3. Other fees: i.e. PVC, materials, etc.
4. Tuition balances

## **Payment Schedules**

The Montessori School of Westminster offers various payment plans for tuition. All payment plans begin in February of the preceding academic year and end no later than January 1<sup>st</sup>. First year payment plans may be created to facilitate new student enrollments. To learn more about payment plan options, please contact the Business Officer in the Office of Finance at 410.848.6283 EXT 103 and request an MSW Financial Packet, a helpful resource for new and returning families.

## **Withdrawal and Refund Policy**

- Admission is for the full academic term in accordance with the dates set forth in the school calendar for the applicable school year.
- Upon written notice of withdrawal of the student from the program and upon written request for refund, if received before July 1, the school will refund any tuition paid, minus the 10% non-refundable tuition deposit payment.
- No portion of tuition paid or due will be refunded or cancelled after July 1, the subsequent absence, removal for cause, or withdrawal of the student from the school, notwithstanding.
- School application fee, billing fee and ten percent (10%) of the total tuition amount are **not** refundable under any circumstance.

## **Nonpayment of Tuition and Fees**

- If any payment is in arrears by more than 45 days, the student may be removed from the school and his or her academic records withheld pending payment.
- During the school year, if a student is not attending the academic program and/or if any payment is in arrears by more than 15 days, the student's space will be forfeited.
- Re-enrollment for the subsequent school year is contingent upon payment of all outstanding tuition and fees.

## **Late Pick-Up Fees**

When students are picked up late after school or after the closing time for the After School Care program, late pick-up fees are invoiced.

The families of students who are not picked up by 3:10 PM are charged \$20 as a late fee. After 3:30 PM, the late pick-up fee is converted to the provisional fee for emergency care for non-care program-enrolled student.

For those in After School Care, a fee of \$15 is invoiced if the student is not picked up by 6 PM. After fifteen minutes, the family will be charged an additional \$1.00 per minute.



## **Payment Due Date/Late Fees**

There is a late fee of ten percent (10%) of the amount due, rounded to the next whole dollar, but not to exceed \$25.00, for each late payment. A payment is considered late when received in the school's administrative offices after the first of the month it is due, unless the first occurs on a weekend or legal holiday, in which case payment is due by the next business day. A "legal holiday" includes those days on which the US Postal Service is closed for business. If a payment remains unpaid after 30 days, an additional late fee will be assessed on the first day of the following month.

The late fee is assessed separately against each past due invoice.

**Any extenuating circumstances that might result in a late payment should be communicated in writing to the Business Officer before a missed payment occurs.**

## **Maryland State Sales Tax**

Parents and staff occasionally make purchases for the school. The school is exempt from paying Maryland state sales tax when a copy of the exemption certificate is presented at the time any retail purchase is made. It may be prudent to present the exemption certificate to a store's management or customer service department before attempting to purchase goods as some stores have certain requirements for doing so. Please obtain an exemption certificate from MSW before making a purchase. **The school will not reimburse sales tax in either cash or Parent Volunteer Commitment time.**

## **Maryland Nonpublic Textbook Program**

MSW participates in the state of Maryland's Nonpublic Textbook Program. This is a grant that allows MSW to purchase books, classroom materials, and technology equipment. By participating in the program, we are able to reduce the school's budgeted expenses by approximately \$60 to \$65 per **qualifying student**. This savings is considered when tuition rates are set by the MSW Board of Trustees.

In order to receive the benefits of the Nonpublic Textbook Program, certain language is required in the school's Handbook, as follows:

*It is the policy of the State of Maryland that all public and publicly funded schools and school programs operate in compliance with:*

*(1) Title VI of the federal Civil Rights Act of 1964; and*

*(2) Title 26, Subtitle 7 of the Education Article of the Maryland Code, which states that public and publicly funded schools and programs may not:*

*i. Discriminate against a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student on the basis of race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability;*

*ii. Refuse enrollment of a prospective student, expel a current student, or withhold privileges from a current student, a prospective student, or the parent or guardian of a current or prospective student because of an individual's race, ethnicity, color, religion, sex, age, national origin, marital status, sexual orientation, gender identity, or disability; or*

*iii. Discipline, invoke a penalty against, or take any other retaliatory action against a student or parent or guardian of a student who files a complaint alleging that the program or school discriminated against the student, regardless of the outcome of the complaint.*



### **Maryland Nonpublic Building Grant Program**

MSW participates in the state of Maryland's Nonpublic Building Grant program. This is a grant that allows MSW to provide new doors, repave the parking lot, purchase a new HVAC system, etc. By participating in the program, we are able to reduce the school's budgeted expenses by approximately \$60 to \$65 per **qualifying student**. This savings is considered when tuition rates are set by the MSW Board of Trustees.

### **Maryland Nonpublic Safety Grant Program**

MSW participates in the state of Maryland's Nonpublic Safety Grant program. This is a grant that allows MSW to evaluate our safety needs (cameras, safety locks, alarm systems, etc.). By participating in the program, we are able to reduce the school's budgeted expenses by approximately \$60 to \$65 per **qualifying student**. This savings is considered when tuition rates are set by the MSW Board of Trustees.



## Parent Volunteer Commitment (PVC)

The Montessori School of Westminster is a non-profit school. All families are required to sign a PVC agreement pledging 30 hours of Parent Volunteer Commitment time per school year or pay \$600. The PVC year begins on June 15 and ends the following year on June 14. PVC hours expire at the end of the current PVC year.

All parents are required to share in the maintenance and improvement of the school. PVC work has played a major role in lowering our expenses. The children take pride in knowing their parents are interested in helping with their classrooms, and parents get to know one another as they share their ideas and talents.

If you see a need or an opportunity at MSW that would benefit from PVC effort, please share your idea with a staff member.

**Please request the PVC Manual to assist you in selecting qualifying jobs and tracking completed commitment hours.**

### Parent Referral Incentive Program

Parents of currently enrolled students who refer successful candidates to the school for enrollment receive an incentive of 25 non-expiring PVC hours plus a maximum \$500 tuition credit. The credit is awarded with the final tuition payment or as a refund near the end of the calendar year when tuition has been paid in full. Referred applicants must *not* be currently registered in our offices as members of “prospective families” and must enroll for the succeeding school year. Tuition credits are awarded per family and *not* per enrolling child. The maximum tuition credit for each referred family is \$500. If more than one referral name is listed by an enrolling family, the credit will be distributed accordingly. It is the responsibility of the referring family to make certain their referral lists them.

Parents who refer an interested family for an observation or tour or to an MSW Open House receive two PVC hours if the referred party enters the name of the referring family on the event sign-in log. Parents who attend an MSW Open House with an interested family and record the attendance of both parties via the event sign-in log receive four PVC hours. Should a referred family successfully enroll their child(ren), the hours grow to 25 hours for each family referral in addition to the \$500 tuition credit. These hours may be carried over from school year to school year, unlike other PVC hours. If more than one referring family is listed by the successful applicant, hours will be distributed accordingly.

This policy is in effect until changed or ended by action of the MSW Board of Trustees. Please contact the Registrar in the Office of Admissions at 410.848.6283 EXT 104 or via email to [sradcliffe@theMSW.org](mailto:sradcliffe@theMSW.org) for additional information.



## Grievance Policy

Step 1—Talk directly to the person responsible for the difficulty.

Step 2—Contact the classroom guides and discuss the difficulty.

Step 3—If, after observing steps 1 and 2, you are not satisfied with the outcome, contact the Head of School.

Whenever satisfactory results are not obtained, calls or letters should be directed to a designated Board member. Grievances may be presented in written or verbal form to the designated Board member. The designated Board member must be contacted in advance of the Board meeting to ensure the grievance is placed on the agenda by the Board President. The issue may be discussed during the Board meeting or may be deferred for later action at the discretion of the Board. Any actions taken will be documented in the minutes of the meeting at which time the actions were approved. The designated Board member will contact the person who submitted the grievance with the Board's decision.

## Student Dismissal

Any student is subject to dismissal from the school at any time by written notice from the Head of School. The Head of School, after conferences with faculty and parents, will notify the Board of Trustees of the dismissal.



## **MSW Board of Trustees & Committees**

Those currently serving as members of the **Montessori School of Westminster's Board of Trustees** are:

David Schriver	President
Doug Piper	Vice-President
Josh Lippy	Secretary
Jason Collins	Treasurer
Karen Barbour	Trustee
Greg Chatfield	Trustee
Hassan Mirzaev	Trustee
Ed Molare	Trustee
Andrew Woodard	Trustee

**Audit Committee—Ed Molare, Chair**

**Buildings & Grounds Committee—Doug Piper, Chair**

**Committee on Trustees— Doug Piper, Chair**

**Development Committee— Trish St. Michel**

**Finance Committee—Jason Collins, Chair**

**Tech Committee—Josh Lippy, Chair**

**Marketing Committee—David Schriver, Chair**

MSW parents are welcome to attend Board meetings. Dates are provided via MSW Updates. Those wishing to attend should contact Board member Josh Lippy via email to [JLippy@theMSW.org](mailto:JLippy@theMSW.org).





## Montessori School of Westminster Staff Profiles

### **SHANNON ALBRIGHT**

#### **Upper Elementary Aide**

Shannon Albright began working at MSW in January 2021 after spending seven years working for the Littlestown Area School District. She has also spent many years as a volunteer at the elementary school level and in youth sports organizations.

Mrs. Albright enjoys spending time with her husband, two teenage children, and pets. She also enjoys hiking, kayaking, reading, and gardening.

### **MELISSA BAIN**

#### **Middle School Aide**

Melissa Bain is originally from Pensacola, Florida and has lived in many places including overseas locations in Japan and Panama. She spent many years as a firefighter and paramedic and her work now includes being a strength coach. Mrs. Bain has been a MSW Girl Scout troop leader since 2015.

Mrs. Bain has three children and a grandson; daughter Christina is attending MSW for her seventh year; Brad and Reagan are both serving active duty in the US Marines and Army. Her grandson, Jayden, is very busy being an active toddler and attending MSW's Beginnings program.

She enjoys strength training, backpacking, camping, section-hiking the Appalachian Trail, competing in strongman competitions, being outdoors, working on restoring her farm, and spending time with her family.

### **JENNIFER CARROLL**

#### **Primary Guide**

Jennifer Carroll is a native of Westminster. She received her Bachelor of Science degree in Elementary and Special Education at St. Joseph's University in Philadelphia in 2012. While attending St. Joe's, she played on their lacrosse team.

Before starting her Montessori training at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland, she worked at a local preschool for two years. Mrs. Carroll is active in local sports and is currently coaching basketball at Manchester Valley High School.

Outside of MSW, Mrs. Carroll enjoys spending time with her son, Kaleb, her daughter, Maya, and husband Marcus. Mrs. Carroll enjoys being outside, hiking, and fishing.

### **ADEL DAVIS**

#### **After School Care Aide**

### **CANDICE DAVIS**

#### **Primary Aide**

After high school, Candice Davis went to Howard County Community College for Early Childhood Education while starting her family. Mrs. Davis was a stay-at-home mom for over 20 years. She worked for the Littlestown Area School District for four years and currently works in an after-school program at Collaborating for Youth.

Mrs. Davis lives in Littlestown, Pennsylvania with her husband, Dean, and has four children and two grandchildren.

### **KARALINE DIEHL**

#### **After School Care Senior Staff**

Karaline Diehl was born in Latvia and came to America in 2010. She enjoys working with small children at MSW. Ms. Diehl is a Raven's fan, likes spending time with her family, and loves the outdoors. She also loves spending time with her new chickens.

### **LINDA FELKER**

#### **Lower Elementary Guide/Aide**

Linda Felker first came to Montessori as a parent and Primary aide at the Montessori School of Westminster. She earned a Bachelor of Arts degree at Thomas Edison State College and went on to complete her Montessori training in Lower and Upper Elementary at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies. She has worked in a Montessori setting for 24 years.

Mrs. Felker enjoys gardening, needle crafts, cooking, and volunteer activities. She lives in Littlestown, Pennsylvania.



#### JACOB FINE

##### Music Instruction

Jacob Fine is a recent graduate of McDaniel College with a Bachelor of Arts in Music. He is continuing his education at McDaniel and will graduate with a Master of Science in Teaching Instrumental Music in 2022. Mr. Fine is busy pursuing many aspects of music, as a private instructor in drums, gigging drummer with The Leister Quartet, Sunday Night Big Band, and Treblebeck, student intern at Runnymede Elementary School, and a salesperson at Coffey Music in Westminster.

In his free time, he enjoys journalism, hiking, running, learning new instruments, and spending time with friends and family.

#### CARLY GABRIEL

##### Primary Aide

##### After School Care Senior Staff

Carly Gabriel recently moved to Thurmont, Maryland where she resides with her partner and their cat Gary. Ms. Gabriel earned her child care certifications from Howard County Community College.

In her free time, Ms. Gabriel enjoys traveling, Broadway musicals, and tending to her citrus plants.

#### JENICA GETTO

##### Business Officer

Jenica Getto earned her associate degree in Early Childhood Education from Holyoke Community College and, upon graduating, taught kindergarten for almost two years. She then went back to college and graduated from Western New England University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Business Administration majoring in Accounting and has been working in the accounting field for over 20 years.

Ms. Getto is originally from Western Massachusetts where she was a Montessori student through sixth grade. After graduating from college, she moved to New York where she lived for five years before moving to the DC/Maryland area in 2006. She currently lives in Thurmont, and her daughter Alexandra is an Upper Elementary student at MSW.

Some of Ms. Getto's favorite activities are spending time with her family and friends, going to the beach, yoga, skiing and going to concerts. She loves to travel, and Portugal is one of her favorite places to visit.

#### BETH GUERIN

##### Fine Art Instruction

Beth Guerin attended the Schuler School of Fine Arts and has 14 years of experience teaching art to children.

Ms. Guerin's love of art extends back to her early childhood. She has always had a love for animals, and she has developed an art career focused on pet portraits.

In her free time, Ms. Guerin enjoys meditation, yoga, being outside, and spending time with her family. Her sons, Hans and Ollie, attend MSW.

#### RACHEL HARTENSTEIN

##### Primary Aide

Rachel Hartenstein attended Swarthmore College and attained a bachelor's degree in Comparative Religion with a concentration in Peace Studies.

Ms. Hartenstein is a candle maker. She enjoys camping, good food, live music, and visiting historical sites and national parks.

Ms. Hartenstein has a business as a meditation coach and energy healer. Her twin sons, Isaac and Levi, along with their sister, Annabel, attend MSW!

#### AMY HEIKKINEN-BROOKS

##### Music Instruction

Amy Heikkinen-Brooks teaches choral music at MSW. She is a licensed clinical social worker, with a specialty in children's mental health and integrating the expressive arts with therapy. She has bachelor and masters' degrees in Social Work from the University of Maryland system, as well as undergraduate training in creative education from The New School in New York City.

She is a lifelong musician, singer, and self-identified *music nerd*, bringing all types of music into the MSW classroom and exploring different musical concepts and skills in the most fun, meaningful ways she can conjure.

Mrs. Heikkinen-Brooks and her wife live in Westminster with their young sons, and favorite family activities include roasting marshmallows over their front-yard fire pit, rocking out to their favorite songs in the car, and eating pineapple pizza.



### **MADISON HUBER**

#### **Primary Guide**

Madison Huber graduated from Mt. St. Mary's University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology. She is acquiring her certification in Montessori education from the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies located on the Barrie School campus in Silver Spring, Maryland.

In her free time, Ms. Huber enjoys walking her dog and being with her family.

### **AIDA KINDRED**

#### **Spanish Language Instruction**

Aida Kindred is a native speaker of the Spanish language who came to the US 17 years ago from Barranquilla, Columbia. Ms. Kindred has worked for Carroll County Public Schools as an interpreter for Hispanic families. For 11 years, she worked for the Head Start and Early Head Start programs and as a home visitor/teacher.

Ms. Kindred has attained numerous certifications in the field of child care including those for Early Childhood and Infant & Toddler Development. She is trained in the administration of first aid, CPR, and medication.

In her free time, Ms. Kindred enjoys dance, the gym, and cooking. She lives with her two sons, Andrew and Lucas.

### **KIM LETTIE**

#### **Administrative Assistant**

Kim Lettie graduated from South Carroll High School and attended Carroll Community College. Prior to joining MSW, Ms. Lettie worked at Carroll County General Hospital for 13 years. Besides her current position in the school office, Ms. Lettie has worked in Lower Elementary, Middle School, Beginnings, and After School Care. This year marks her 23rd year at MSW. Ms. Lettie enjoys spending time with her dog, Chewie, her daughters and grandson, Dylan. She also enjoys sewing and cooking.

Ms. Lettie has obtained certification for Cardiopulmonary Resuscitation (CPR), Automated External Defibrillator (AED), First Aid application, Blood-borne Pathogens, MSDE Office of Child Care Senior Staff, and Water Plant Operator.

### **JOY LIN**

#### **Primary Aide**

### **ALLIE LINDSEY**

#### **Middle School Guide**

Allie Lindsey is a graduate of St. Mary's College of Maryland with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English. She has also cultivated her interest in the sciences and has taken biology and chemistry courses at UMBC.

Ms. Lindsey completed the Montessori Secondary training program with The Center for Guided Montessori Studies. She resides in Westminster with her partner Jacob (a MSW alumnus) and their daughter Violet, who is enjoying her first year at MSW in the Beginnings program. In her free time, Ms. Lindsey enjoys reading, hiking, and spending time with her family.

### **MELISSA LIPPY**

#### **Upper Elementary Aide**

Melissa Lippy graduated from Juniata College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Psychology and a minor in French. She received her master's degree from the University of Baltimore in Industrial and Organizational Psychology.

Ms. Lippy volunteered extensively at MSW for eight years as a member of the school's Parent Organization, as a library helper, in the classroom, and with MSW Girl Scout Troop #1698.

In her free time, Ms. Lippy likes to hike, backpack, travel, read, learn, study nature, and camp with her husband and two children--Nola and Galen--who attend MSW!

### **JODI LUPCO**

#### **Head of School**

Jodi Lupco is a graduate of Penn State University with a Bachelor of Science degree in Early Childhood Education. She first came to MSW as a parent and volunteer. She joined the staff in the fall of 1996 as Admissions Officer. In the summer of 2002, she took the Montessori Lower Elementary (ages 6 to 9) training from the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland. She was a guide in Lower Elementary from September 2002 through June of 2007. Mrs. Lupco is CPR/First Aid-certified. She currently serves on the Board of Trustees of Carroll County Youth Service Bureau.

Mrs. Lupco resides in Westminster with her husband, Mike, and enjoys spending time with her family. Her daughters, Taylor and Tori, both attended MSW.



### **GRETCHEN MALCOLM**

#### **Elementary Guide**

Gretchen Malcolm begins her 21st year teaching Upper Elementary at MSW. She graduated in 1980 from Washington Adventist University with a bachelor's degree in Elementary Education, then married her college sweetheart, Stephen, in 1981.

She was introduced to the Montessori philosophy in 1985 and never looked back! She took the elementary (ages 6 to 12) training through the Association Montessori Internationale, then earned a master's degree in Curriculum Development from Cleveland State University.

She has two grown children: Levi, who lives in Colorado Springs, Colorado, and a daughter, Mercedes, who lives in Boston, Massachusetts. Mrs. Malcolm loves working with the children and families of MSW!

### **BETSY MERENA**

#### **Beginnings Guide**

Betsy Merena is excited to be back for another year at MSW. This is her third year at the top of Mount Montessori, but her ninth year teaching in the Early Childhood Education field. She is glad to have made the switch from mainstream to Montessori.

Mrs. Merena received her teaching credential from the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies and has a Bachelor of Arts degree in English from Roanoke College in Virginia. She lives in Westminster, just five minutes away from MSW, with her husband Paul and their daughter Collette, a second-year student in MSW's Lower Elementary program.

As a family, the Merenas love to travel, especially to Disney, and to cook and bake together.

### **TERRI MILLER**

#### **Language Resource Specialist**

Terri Miller joined the MSW staff in 2014 as our Learning Resource Specialist. She received her Bachelor of Arts in Social Work from Shippensburg University, her master's in Special Education/ Management, and later her Maryland Teacher Certification from Western Maryland College (now McDaniel College). She has 30-plus years in the fields of Special Education, Mental Health and Human Services Management. She is trained in Orton Gillingham, the Wilson Reading Program, and many other educational programs. Mrs. Miller worked as the Disability/Mental Health

Coordinator for Head Start, managed the YMCA Child Care programs, has provided private and small group tutoring, and taught at Francis Scott Key High School.

Mrs. Miller lives in Westminster with her husband and two of their four children. She enjoys spending time with her family, outdoor activities, the beach, yard sales, movie nights, church activities, and six grandchildren.

### **STEFANIE MISNER**

#### **Environmental Educator**

#### **Events & Logistics Coordinator**

Stefanie Misner received her undergraduate degree in Marine Biology from the University of North Carolina Wilmington, a master's in Environmental Education also from UNCW, and is a certified North Carolina Environmental Educator. With over 15 years of experience in aquariums and a local nature pre-school, she has worked with children of all ages, prefers to teach outside, and is passionate about molding the next generation of environmental stewards.

Both her daughters, Penelope and Cordelia, are MSW students. In her rare free time, Mrs. Misner loves to scuba dive and travel.

### **ISABELLA MOORE**

#### **After School Care Aide**

Isabella Moore is a high school student at Winter's Mill High School in Westminster, Maryland who loves to read and color. At Winter's Mill, she participates in the Educators Rising club. Ms. Moore plans on pursuing a teaching career after graduating from high school.

### **MARYNA NEIKO**

#### **Upper Elementary Guide**

Maryna Neiko (Tkachuk) was raised in Western Ukraine. She pursued her dream to become a teacher at Podillya Technological University where she earned her bachelor and masters' degrees in teaching computer science and home economics.

Mrs. Neiko moved to the US in 2008. She earned her Associate of Applied Science degree from Northern Virginia Community College in 2010. Mrs. Neiko learned about Montessori education while looking into schools for her son. She immediately fell in love with the philosophy and became a passionate supporter of Maria Montessori's teachings.



Mrs. Neiko graduated from the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in 2019 with Lower & Upper Elementary guide credentials. She has also received recognition as Senior Staff from MSDE's Office of Child Care.

In addition to seeking opportunities to grow and learn professionally, Mrs. Neiko enjoys spending time with her family. She enjoys visiting new places, reading, knitting, and long walks in nature. Mrs. Neiko's greatest joy is her sons and her husband. She dreams to visit Ukraine with her boys and to share her heritage with them.

### **IZABELLA PEREZ**

#### **After School Care Aide**

Izabella Perez attends Littlestown High School and is on course to graduate in June 2023. She has participated in training specific to the needs of child care employment. Ms. Perez volunteered for two years at CFYCD's after-school program.

In her spare time, Ms. Perez enjoys reading and camping. It is important to her to be patient and determined--qualities which will serve well when working with children at MSW.

### **JOYEL PEREZ**

#### **Beginnings Aide**

Joyel Perez graduated from Southwestern High School in 1993. She went on to start a family while working in factories until the birth of her second child. She then became a stay-at-home mom.

Upon her return to the work force, Mrs. Perez took a position in the kitchen at the Littlestown Area School District to stay close to her daughter.

Mrs. Perez is also a program coordinator for an afterschool program. She is married with two daughters. Her hobbies are reading and camping.

### **TRES QUINN**

#### **Lower Elementary Guide**

Tres Quinn graduated from Indiana University of Pennsylvania with degree in Secondary Math Education. She completed Lower Elementary training at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies. Ms. Quinn has worked at MSW for 19 years.

Ms. Quinn's children, Elizabeth and Nathan, are both proud MSW alum.

Ms. Quinn likes listening to books she downloads from the public library and going to Pittsburgh to visit her family.

### **SUZANNE RADCLIFFE**

#### **Registrar; Office of Admissions**

Suzanne Radcliffe is an "alum mom" whose first year as an MSW parent was 1993. A Carroll County native, she served on the MSW Board of Trustees as secretary and member-at-large during the construction of the campus.

Mrs. Radcliffe paints in oils and watercolor. She loves writing about Montessori method and studying the teachings of her personal superhero—Maria Montessori. She lives to add flowers and new hosta varieties to her many gardens. She recently added arrowhead hunting to her hobbies. She prefers life on her farm with her goats and horse to gym membership.

Mrs. Radcliffe obtained a summa cum laude BA degree in American Studies from UMBC in 1995 and a juris doctor degree from the University of Maryland School of Law in 1997.

Her son attended MSW for ten years, completing Middle School in 2003. Robert now works at T Rowe Price and lives in Carroll County with his lovely wife while Mrs. Radcliffe patiently waits for grandchildren.

### **CLARK RICHEY**

#### **Director of Technology**

Clark Richey began working as the school's Director of Technology in 2017. He graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in Computer Science from UMBC and a Master of Science in Computer Science from American University.

Mr. Richey has been an MSW parent for more than 12 years. His oldest daughter, Savannah, started MSW in Primary and departed after two years in Middle School and now attends Winters Mill High School. His younger daughter, Shannon, started MSW in Beginnings and is now in Middle School.

When not working Mr. Richey loves tabletop games, reading, and annoying his daughters.





#### **TRISH ST. MICHEL**

##### **Director of Development**

A native of North Carolina, Mrs. St. Michel earned a Bachelor of Arts from the School of Journalism and Mass Communication at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and returned to UNC a few years later to earn a master's in City and Regional Planning. She worked in public relations and marketing communications for corporations and associations, primarily in Washington, D.C., and Silicon Valley, and for the past several years has supported a few small business clients on marketing projects.

Mrs. St. Michel lives outside of Mount Airy with her husband Jay, daughters Hannah and Charlotte, an MSW alumna, and two dogs. When not working, Mrs. St. Michel enjoys hiking, baking, and exploring rails-to-trails with the family on their bikes.

#### **DAWN STRINE**

##### **Primary Guide**

Dawn Strine attended Carroll Community College where she earned her Associate of Arts degree in Elementary Education. She taught preschool for three years before joining the Montessori staff in 1994. After 21 years at MSW, Mrs. Strine joined the MSW faculty by undertaking her certification training at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland. She has now taught in the Primary program for seven years.

Mrs. Strine enjoys reading, finding a bargain, sharing time with her granddaughter McKenna, a student in the school's Beginnings program, and going to the beach.

#### **KRISTIN THOMAS**

##### **Lower Elementary Aide**

Upon graduating from Westminster High School, Kristin Thomas started working at MSW as an After School Care aide. Two years later, Ms. Thomas joined the Lower Elementary program as a classroom aide. She looks forward to working at MSW for many years to come.

#### **KAREN UHLIG**

##### **Physical Education**

#### **LAUREN WELSH-BAER**

##### **Lower Elementary Guide**

Lauren Welsh-Baer graduated from St. Catherine University with a master's degree in Education and from Juniata College with a Bachelor of Science degree in Communication Education. She earned her Montessori certification from the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies in Silver Spring, Maryland.

Mrs. Welsh-Baer was a student at MSW from Primary to third grade. She enjoys spending time with her husband, two children, and pets.

#### **MARGARET WINTERS**

##### **Lower Elementary Intern**

Margaret Winters is an MSW alumna. Ms. Winters became a Montessori student as a toddler. She attended MSW from fifth grade through ninth, and then went on to Friends Meeting School to complete her secondary education. Ms. Winters attended Hood College in Frederick, Maryland where she earned her B.A. in Communication Arts with a concentration in Public Relations.

After conferring with MSW's Head of School, Ms. Winters began the process of Montessori teacher training at the Institute for Advanced Montessori Studies (IAMS) on the campus of the well-known Barrie School in Silver Spring, Maryland. Her focus is on Elementary-level education.

Ms. Winters quickly realized Montessori education is her calling. She looks forward to sharing her new-found passion for the method with children in our community as she acquires her Montessori teaching credentials.

The MSW Parent Handbook is an official publication of the Montessori School of Westminster.

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