



MONTESSORI ACADEMY

GEORGIA COLLEGE & STATE UNIVERSITY

Montessori Academy Parent Handbook

100 N. ABC Drive, Milledgeville, GA 31061

Phone: 478-457-2471

Welcome Message

To new and returning families, we extend a warm welcome to the new school year. We are so happy you are a part of our Montessori Academy family. Over the course of this year our children will grow in a Montessori environment to become self-assured, vibrant students who love to learn.

Parents are the most important teachers in the lives of their children and are a very important part of what makes our school community so special. We are honored to be partners with you in the development of your child. We rely on your communication, energy, and support to ensure a successful experience for your child.

The Montessori Academy can benefit your child best when you understand the roles played by parents, teachers, and children. As we begin our year, we are delighted to share the many wonderful things about The Montessori Academy and to orient you to our policies, procedures, resources, and events.

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

Communication Methods

We do our best to remain in close communication with our families in a number of different ways:

- **Email:** Monthly newsletter with important information (please ensure we have your updated contact information)
- **Remind App:** Quick reminders and updates - https://www.remind.com/join/6838ee?utm_medium=ios
- **Website:** www.montessoriele.com for school information, events, news, and calendar
- **Procare:** Primary communication tool for classroom teachers
- **Teachers:** Your first line of communication for classroom happenings

Director Responsibilities

The Director handles:

- Questions or concerns about school policy
- Staff performance and professionalism
- Recommendations for improvement
- Conference facilitation at parent request
- Financial matters, immunizations, registration, medication, and record changes

Contact: Michelle Grove, Director
Email: michelle.grove@gcsu.edu
Phone: 478-457-2471

Program Description

The Montessori Academy at the Early Learning Center seeks to meet the needs of children and parents who live and work in Milledgeville and surrounding areas by providing excellent Infant, Toddler and Pre-School Age programs. The Montessori Academy was developed with Georgia College and Baldwin County Public School faculty and staff in mind.

The Montessori Philosophy

Dr. Montessori developed her educational philosophy as a result of observations and discoveries she made of the ways in which children learn. She found that they learn in distinctly different ways at different stages of development. She formulated an educational program to meet the particular needs of the child at whatever stage of development, to help him/her reach his/her fullest potential.

Dr. Montessori preferred not to call this a "method," but an "approach" to life. She said, "What I have done is merely to study the child, to take and express what he has given me." She believed that no one is educated by another - he must do it himself, and thus, the goal of early childhood education should be to cultivate the child's own natural desire and ability to learn and to protect the essential nature of the child.

Key Concepts

The Absorbent Mind: Young children have a unique aptitude for learning not found again at any other period of life. The young child literally absorbs information from his or her surroundings.

Sensitive Periods: During certain periods in development, children are more easily able to absorb specific types of learning.

The Prepared Environment: A classroom where children can handle materials that demonstrate basic educational information, scaled to the child's size with attractive, didactic materials presented in an orderly manner.

Task of the Montessori Teaching Staff

- To awaken children's spirit and imagination
- To encourage their normal desire for independence and high sense of self-esteem
- To help them develop kindness, courtesy and self-discipline that will allow them to become full members of society
- To help children learn how to observe, question, and explore ideas independently
- Having created a spirit of joyful learning, to help children master the skills and knowledge of their society

Montessori Goals Summarized

1. To promote the growth of a positive self-image in each child and satisfaction about him/herself
 2. To promote feelings of enthusiasm and responsibility about one's world
 3. To create an awareness of one's own feelings and sensitivity to the feelings of others
 4. To encourage the natural desire, ability, self-discipline, and independence inherent in learning
 5. To ensure mastery of the basic skills required to pursue knowledge
 6. To teach physical coordination and control
 7. To develop the ability to concentrate and to attend to details
 8. To develop a sense of order
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Program Offerings

The Infant Program

- **Ages:** 6 weeks and up
- **Focus:** Loving care and gentle stimulation for growth and development
- **Schedule:** Flexible scheduling allowing each child to eat, sleep, or play according to their natural timetable
- **Napping:** In cribs in the infant classroom under direct staff supervision

The Toddler Program

- **Focus:** Hands-on materials, social skills foundations, manners, independence, and self-confidence
- **Napping:** On cots in their respective classrooms

The Pre-School Program

- **Ages:** 3-5 years
 - **Approach:** Teachers act as guides in a child-centered learning environment
 - **Balance:** Order and completion with freedom of choice creating a calm, active atmosphere
 - **Napping:** On cots in their respective classrooms
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Montessori Materials & Activities

Five Main Areas

1. **Practical Life Exercises**
 - Activities: Pouring, grating, polishing, sorting, washing, buttoning
 - Benefits: Attention to details, concentration, muscular control and coordination
2. **Sensorial Activities**
 - Purpose: Isolate and sharpen each of the five senses
 - Features: Built-in error control, sequential progression, foundation for mathematics and language
3. **Language Materials**
 - Approach: Individual presentation using kinesthetic methods
 - Tools: Sandpaper letters and similar materials
 - Progression: Word building activities leading naturally to reading
4. **Mathematical Concepts**
 - Method: Extensive use of concrete materials
 - Foundation: Builds on sensorial training for quantity identification
5. **Cultural Subjects**

- Areas: Geography, history, botany, biology, music, and grammar
- Method: Concrete materials introduction
- 6. **Enrichment Activities**
 - Source: Parent and community volunteers providing special interest units

Daily Schedule Includes

- Breakfast, lunch, and snack periods
 - Listening period
 - Outside period
 - Rest period
 - Individual and group activity periods
 - Art and craft projects
 - Special interest units
 - Cooking, music, games
 - Outdoor activities
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Montessori Classroom Guidelines

Rights of the Child

- To program his/her own day during work period and choose friends to work with
- To work alone if desired
- To repeat an activity as many times as needed or desired
- To observe others in an activity (with permission) without participating
- To ask for and receive help from an adult
- Not to join a group activity if s/he prefers

Responsibilities of the Child

- To respect the rights of others
- To respect the environment
- To complete the work cycle of chosen activities

Role of the Adult

- To respect the child
- To prepare the environment
- To act as an appropriate model
- To observe the child at work
- To reinforce the guidelines
- To intervene if the child is disturbing, dangerous or destructive

Classroom Rules

- Children move their bodies slowly and quietly, using "quiet voices"
- Walk around someone's work (denoted by mat or rug)
- Walk when moving anywhere through the building
- Ask to join someone's work and move away when another child prefers to work alone
- Return materials to the shelf before choosing another activity

Simple Rule: ONE MAY NOT DISTURB

Enrollment Information

Staff Composition

- Highly Qualified Teachers
- Montessori Certified staff
- Classroom Assistants
- Georgia College and State University Interns

Admission Policy

Our school admits children of any race, creed, national or ethnic origin. Children age three through 5 years are eligible for acceptance into the Pre-School program.

Required Documentation

All parents must provide annually:

DocuSign Student Registration Form Including:

- Authorization Photo Release form
- Emergency Medical Permission Form
- Authorization to Pick-Up Child Form
- GCSU Minors on Campus forms
- Signed Handbook receipt

Trial Period

All students new to the program are accepted on a **30-day trial basis** to ensure an appropriate program fit. The Director has discretion to withdraw children if developmental readiness poses safety concerns.

Daily Operations

Arrival and Departure

Morning Arrival:

- Montessori day begins at 7:30 a.m.
- Early drop-off at 7:10 a.m. available for local school system teachers (contact teacher for approval)
- Children should arrive no later than 8:30 a.m. for optimal daily rhythm

Departure:

- Regular Day Pick-up: 3:00-3:30 p.m.
- Extended Day: 3:30-5:30 p.m. (enter side door of Early Learning Center)
- **Late Fee:** \$50.00 for pickup after 5:30 p.m.

Drop-off Procedures

Infants/Toddlers:

- Tears are common - manage quick, cheerful drop-off
- Avoid lingering as it increases the likelihood of tears
- Allow two weeks for adjustment; schedule Director appointment if crying persists

Pick-up Procedures

- Only authorized persons on pickup list may collect children
- Contact Director at michelle.grove@gcsu.edu to modify pickup list
- Staff may request ID from any parent/authorized person as safety protocol

Parking Guidelines

- Limited parking in front of Early Learning Center
 - Designated parking: Board Office lot, front of ELC, side lot near playground
 - **Prohibited:** Bus lane parking, blocking fire lanes
 - Police on-site during drop-off will address violations
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Parent Engagement

Observations

- First four weeks: Allow child acclimation time before observing
- Observation rooms are locked for safety - contact Director for access
- **Prohibited:** Video or pictures from observation room
- Maintain discretion and confidentiality about other children

Parent-Teacher Conferences

- Formal/informal conferences once per semester for toddlers-preschool
- Additional conferences available upon request from teacher or parents

Assessment Tool: Ages and Stages Questionnaires (ASQ-3)

Purpose: Trusted development screening tool for children 1 month to 5½ years

Five Development Areas:

1. **Communication:** Language skills - understanding and expression
2. **Gross Motor:** Large muscle use for sitting, crawling, walking, running
3. **Fine Motor:** Hand and finger movement and coordination
4. **Problem Solving:** Play and problem-solving abilities
5. **Personal-Social:** Self-help skills and social interactions

Learn more: <https://agesandstages.com/about-asq/for-parents/>

Daily Life Policies

Photography

- Parents/family members cannot take pictures/videos of children for social media
- Media release form required for all students

Events and Communication

- Check website calendar for important dates and activities:
<https://www.gcsu.edu/sites/default/files/documents/2025-01/Montessori%20Academy%20Calendar%202025-2026%20Complete.pdf>
- Monthly newsletter with upcoming dates
- Weekly teacher communications

Food Services

Provided by Baldwin County Nutrition:

- Breakfast and lunch for children ages 1-5

Parent Responsibility:

- Sack lunches on days when Baldwin County Nutrition is closed (Upon Request)
- No warming or storage facilities available - pack accordingly

Allergies:

- Doctor's note required for any allergies
- Nutrition staff will accommodate documented needs

Birthday Celebrations

- Allowed with teacher coordination
- Discuss classroom preferences with your child's teacher

Clothing Guidelines

Recommended:

- Play clothes suitable for floor activities
- Pants, shorts, shirts, closed-toed shoes
- Clothing children can fasten independently
- Weather-appropriate outdoor clothing

Required:

- Minimum one complete labeled outfit (shirt, pants, underwear, socks)
- Replace seasonally and as needed
- Winter jackets required

Additional Supplies for Toddler/Infant Programs:

- Diapers or pull-ups
- Wet wipes
- Diaper rash ointment
- 3 changes of clothes
- Small labeled blanket (Toddler/Preschool)

Financial Information

Tuition Structure

Payment Schedule:

- Weekly tuition due Monday of each week
- Payment required regardless of attendance
- ACH transfer setup is required
- **Not Accepted:** Cash, checks, money orders

Rates (Effective 7/28/25)

Regular Rates:

- Regular day (7:30-3:30): \$155/student
- Extended day (7:30-5:30): \$185/student

GC/BOE Faculty and Staff:

- Regular day (7:30-3:30): \$150/student
- Extended day (7:30-5:30): \$180/student

Additional Fees:

- Sibling Discount: 15% for second child
- Activity Fee: \$50 per child annually
- Incoming Infants: Full tuition required beginning first week of school to reserve space

Late Payment Policies

Late Pickup:

- \$50 fee for each day late pickup occurs

Drop-in Extended Day:

- We are not able to offer any drop ins with our extended day program. If you need extended day care, you must be enrolled at the beginning of the school year.

Late Account Fees:

- \$20.00 fee if not paid by Wednesday 5:00 p.m.
- Additional \$20.00 for each week charges remain unpaid

Past Due Account Process

1. **Week 2:** Email reminder sent
2. **30 days past due:** Phone call/email from Director to discuss payment
3. **1 week after contact:** Written letter if no payment plan established
4. **1 week after letter:** Certified letter about collections; child withdrawal

No Fee Deductions For:

- Emergency closings
 - Weather-related closings
 - Legal holidays
 - Surgeries, sickness, or vacations
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Discipline and Behavior Management

Positive Discipline Approach

Foundation: Significant relationship between adult and child promoting self-esteem and security

Positive Methods Include:

- Encouraging, teaching, and modeling appropriate behavior
- Setting consistent clear rules
- Talking about feelings
- Offering alternative solutions
- Involving children in problem-solving
- Ensuring relationship between behavior and discipline method
- Tailoring methods to individual children
- Removing child from conflict source

Disruptive Behavior Policy

Core Rule: ONE MAY NOT DISTURB

Progressive Discipline Process:

1. **Verbal Redirection**
 - Teacher demonstrates proper behavior
 - Assumes child didn't know/remember proper way
2. **Warning & Incident Report**
 - Conversation about expected behavior
 - Incident report sent home to parent/guardian

3. Phone Call & Conference

- Parent/guardian contacted
- Conference scheduled with student, parent/guardian, and Director
- Classroom Behavior Checklist provided

4. Dismissal from Program

- When all efforts have failed
- When safety/integrity of Academy is compromised
- Parents asked to find alternative environment

Behavior Categories

Minor:

- Teasing, biting, pushing/shoving
- Improper manners, not following directions
- Disrespect, bullying

Moderate:

- Teasing/taunting, fighting
- Misuse of playground/materials
- Insubordination, inappropriate language
- Defiance, throwing objects

Severe:

- Inappropriate contact, hitting/kicking/biting
- Verbal abuse, bullying, harassment
- Threats, stealing
- Possession of dangerous objects/weapons

Biting Policy

When Biting Occurs:

For Child Bitten:

1. Comfort and first aid provided
2. Parents immediately notified
3. Incident report completed within Procure
4. Conference available if problem persists

For Child Who Bit:

1. Firm "NO! DO NOT BITE!" with explanation of harm
2. Time away (age-appropriate) or removal from situation

3. Parents notified
4. Incident report completed

Continued Biting (not resolved within two weeks):

1. Staff observation to determine cause
2. Positive attention for good behavior
3. Appropriate teething toys provided
4. Director evaluation and resource provision
5. Literature provided to parents
6. Parent conference to develop joint plan

Corporal Punishment Policy

Statement: No corporal punishment is permitted anywhere in the Montessori environment, in accordance with the Children's Bill of Rights of the American Montessori Society.

Health and Safety

Medication Policy

- Schools cannot administer medication without proper documentation

Contagious Disease Protocol

- School notifies all parents when reportable contagious disease reported
- Parents must inform the Director of any diagnosed contagious illness in their child

Injury Protocol

- Incident reports completed for all injuries
 - Reports describe situation, injury, first aid, and supervising adult
 - Parents receive copy via Procure
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Emergency Procedures

Severe Weather Policy

- Closure decisions made by Director in consultation with Baldwin County Superintendent
- Follows Baldwin County School District and GCSU closure decisions
- Check Facebook page for updates

- Early dismissal notifications via Procure and REMIND
- No credit given for weather closures unless extenuating circumstances

Electric Outage/Water Crisis Policy

- Director and Superintendent determine continued operation
- Check Facebook page for updates
- Parents must pick up child within 2 hours of notification
- School remains closed until next school day after resolution

Emergency Drills

- Fire drills practiced at least once per month
- All children and staff must clear building immediately

Illness Policy.

Exclusion Criteria

General Exclusion:

- Child too ill to participate in program activities
- Illness requiring care beyond staff capacity
- Acute behavior changes (lethargy, irritability, persistent crying, breathing difficulty, rapidly spreading rash)

Fever Exclusion:

- Temperature above 101°F orally or 100.3°F axillary WITH behavior change or symptoms
- Under 6 months: Unexplained temperature above 100.3°F axillary
- Under 2 months: Any fever requires urgent medical attention

Specific Conditions Requiring Exclusion:

Gastrointestinal:

- Diarrhea not contained in diaper (diapered children)
- Diarrhea causing soiled clothing (toilet-trained children)
- Blood/mucous in stools not explained by diet/medication
- Confirmed salmonella, E.coli, or Shigella infection
- Vomiting twice in 24 hours
- Abdominal pain continuing more than 2 hours

Infectious Diseases:

- Mouth sores with drooling (unless provider confirms non-infectious)
- Strep throat until 24 hours after treatment started
- Head lice and ringworm until after first treatment
- Scabies until treatment completed with doctor's note
- Chickenpox until all lesions dried/crusted (usually 6 days)
- Rubella until 6 days after rash appears
- Pertussis until 5 days of antibiotic treatment
- Mumps until 5 days after parotid gland swelling
- Measles until 4 days after rash onset
- Hepatitis A until healthcare provider approval
- Impetigo until treatment started
- Any child contributing to illness transmission during outbreak

Return to School Guidelines

Common Conditions:

- **Cold:** Fever-free 24 hours without reducers, symptoms quieted
- **Flu:** No fever 24 hours without reducers, symptoms subsided (usually 5-7 days)
- **Strep Throat:** On antibiotics and fever-free 24 hours, no sore throat
- **Pink Eye:** On antibiotics 24 hours, reduced redness, no discharge
- **Chicken Pox:** All lesions crusted over (generally 6 days after rash)
- **Ear Infection:** No pain and fever-free
- **Parasitic Infections:** As directed by physician
- **Vomiting/Diarrhea:** Minimum 24 hours after last episode, normal stools

Contact Director for unlisted illnesses

Special Programs

Summer Program

- **Eligibility:** Currently enrolled students and Alumni Pre-K Students (space permitting)
- **Enrollment:** Information distributed in February; parents must indicate summer plans
- **Payment:** Charged for each indicated week of attendance
- **Staffing:** Based on early spring enrollment commitments
- **Format:** Summer camp-style with extra activities and fun focus
- **Pricing:** Same as regular tuition rates

Aftercare Program

- **Separate Program:** Distinct from daily routines
 - **Staffing:** Georgia College students
 - **Hours:** Until 5:30 p.m.
 - **Closure:** Prompt 5:30 p.m. closure
 - **Late Fee:** \$50 per day for pickup after 3:30 Regular Day or 5:30 Extended Day
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Handbook Acknowledgment

This handbook contains important information about Montessori philosophy, goals, policies, and procedures. The parent handbook is issued prior to the beginning of the academic year.

Required: Parent(s) or guardian(s) must sign the acknowledgment within the digital DocuSign document page indicating they have received the handbook and understand and agree to abide by the contents. The signed form is kept with the student's file.

Important: Please save this handbook for reference throughout the year. Some information within this handbook is subject to change.

We look forward to another wonderful and productive year.

Sincerely,
Michelle Grove
Director of the Montessori Academy
478-457-2471
michelle.grove@gcsu.edu