



**Mara**  
MONTESSORI  
COLLECTIVE

# Family Handbook

LAUREL MARA MONTESSORI

SAGE MARA MONTESSORI

**Document Owner: Program Director – Erin Mallory & Felicia Calabrese**

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# 1. General Information

## Our Campuses

- Laurel Mara Montessori: 3976 S. Livernois Rd.  
Rochester Hills, MI – 48307
- Sage Mara Montessori: 825 Golf Dr.  
Pontiac, MI – 48341

Phone #: 248-453-5757

Website: [www.maramontessoricollective.com](http://www.maramontessoricollective.com)

## Hours of operation

Monday – Friday

7:30am – 5:30pm

**How to contact us:** Phone, Email and Procure messages.

# 2. Purpose

The Family Handbook is your guide to expectations and goals for Mara Montessori Collective. It serves as a secondary contract as stated in Section 9 of your contract.

The contents of the handbook include expectations inside and outside of the classroom for students and parents and answers for our most asked questions.

The Mara Montessori Collective reserves the unilateral right to amend, add, delete, or modify this handbook. All amendments, modifications, additions, or deletions will be effective upon notification to families, unless otherwise stated, and families will be given written notice. Families will have thirty (30) days from written notice to comply with any changes or be subject to the withdrawal policy for failure to comply.

This handbook is the exclusive property of the Mara Montessori Collective. It is intended for the exclusive use of the parents/guardians of enrolled students. It may not be copied or distributed to a third party, nor may it be posted on the internet, without the express written permission from the active Head of School.

For all intents and purposes, this handbook serves as a contract between the parent\* and the Mara Montessori Collective.

\* For the purpose of this handbook, “parent” means the parent(s) and/or guardian(s) of the student in care.

### 3. About the School

**Mara Montessori Collective** was founded in 2012 (originally as *The Montessori School Rochester*) by Joanne and Ron Shango, who recognized a deep need for authentic Montessori education in the Greater Rochester area. The school began at 1812 S. Rochester Rd. and, in 2017, expanded into its current historic location at 3976 S. Livernois Rd.—a beloved building that has served as a school site since 1870, once home to Stiles Elementary.

In 2023, the school acquired its second campus in Bloomfield Hills, a historic property founded in the 1960s as a Baptist college. For decades, the site has been dedicated to higher learning and K–12 education, and today it is in the midst of a multi-stage renovation. Stage Two of the Bloomfield transformation is currently underway, creating expanded, beautiful spaces for children to learn and grow.

In 2025, the school embraced a new name—**Mara Montessori Collective**—to better reflect its vision, growth, and heritage. The word *Mara*, drawn from the Chaldean Sureth language, means “leader, teacher, guide,” honoring the school’s cultural roots and its mission to lead children with wisdom, guide them with compassion, and teach them with authenticity. The word “Collective” celebrates the strong community of educators, families, and children who learn and grow together.

In partnership with **The Spirit of the Child Alliance**, Mara Montessori Collective continues to expand opportunities for children to access world-class Montessori education, blending academic excellence with whole-child development.

**Joanne Shango**, our current Head of School, is a lifelong Montessori educator with more than 30 years of experience. She holds Montessori diplomas in both Early Childhood (1995) and Adolescent Studies (2015) and is a co-founder of the Global Montessori Network. Joanne is passionate about supporting children, families, and educators through her work as a Montessori coach, dignity coach, and international speaker on Montessori education and whole-child development.

Married for over 21 years and the mother of three proud Montessori graduates, Joanne brings both personal and professional dedication to her leadership. When she's not working, she can often be found reading, writing, or painting.

### 3.A) The Mission

*"Mara Montessori Collective nurtures the mind, body, and spirit of every child through authentic Montessori education, guiding them to discover their potential and their purpose."*

The Mara Montessori Collective is dedicated to providing a safe, nurturing, and respectful environment where children can grow, thrive, and develop a lifelong love of learning. They believe in freedom within limits to unlock each child's potential, while focusing on nourishing the child's spirit.

#### How They Uphold Their Mission:

- Employ AMI/AMS Certified Montessori Lead Guides in every classroom.
- Offer ongoing education and scholarships for staff development.
- Design prepared, well-equipped learning environments.
- Use the 3-year learning cycle with mixed-age classrooms.
- Preserve an uninterrupted 3-hour morning work cycle.
- Treat everyone with respect and dignity.
- Present purposeful, beautiful learning materials.
- Engage in ongoing staff evaluation and professional development.

#### Vision:

*"A world where children grow into compassionate leaders, inspired to learn, create, and contribute with curiosity, integrity, and joy."*

It seeks to:

- Inspire curiosity and independent learning by following students' interests.
- Promote Montessori philosophy within and beyond the school.
- Balance traditional practices with modern innovation.
- Support students in becoming independent, globally conscious individuals.
- Foster a culture of compassion, integrity, and excellence.

- Encourage intrinsic motivation and spontaneous learning based on joy and curiosity.

In essence, the school is committed to cultivating a respectful, joyful, and self-directed learning experience that prepares children to contribute meaningfully to the world.

### **3.B) Dr. Maria Montessori**

Dr. Maria Montessori, Italy's first female physician, began her educational work with children deemed "uneducable." Through careful observation, she developed hands-on learning materials and methods that enabled these children to thrive beyond expectations.

In 1907, she opened the first Casa del Bambini (Children's House), where she discovered that children flourish when given freedom within structure. They showed deep concentration, joy in repetition, and natural self-discipline—without needing rewards or punishments.

Montessori's materials were designed to be inclusive and accessible, promoting independence and confidence through sensory learning. She believed education should nurture a child's full potential and lifelong love of learning.

Today, her philosophy lives on in Montessori schools worldwide, providing respectful, developmentally appropriate environments that support children's academic, social, and emotional growth.

### **3.C) Montessori Philosophy**

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870–1952) revolutionized education by emphasizing that children learn best through their own natural curiosity. She believed every child has an "inner guide" that leads them toward meaningful, developmentally appropriate learning experiences. In Montessori education, learning is child-driven, motivated by intrinsic interest rather than rewards or pressure.

#### **Core Principles:**

- Teachers act as guides, preparing calm, orderly environments with hands-on materials tailored to each child's interests and needs.
- The "prepared environment" supports freedom of movement, choice, and learning at one's own pace, which nurtures independence, focus, and confidence.

- Emphasis is placed on respect for the child, critical thinking, observation, and social-emotional development.

#### Program Highlights:

- Young children have unique mental capacities to absorb their environment—distinct from adult learning.
- Children are respected as individuals, and their love for purposeful work is honored.
- A 3-year learning cycle in mixed-age classrooms fosters growth, leadership, and continuity in learning.
- Early childhood focuses on unconscious learning (asking “what” and “where”), while the Elementary years shift to conscious, intellectual exploration (asking “why,” “how,” and “when”).
- The curriculum evolves with the child's development, offering rich, inquiry-based learning experiences that deepen their understanding of the real world.

In essence, Montessori education is a child-centered approach that promotes independence, hands-on discovery, and respect for individual growth and development.

### **3.D) School Organization**

This section provides an overview of how our school is structured to support students, families, and staff. Understanding our organizational framework helps clarify the roles, responsibilities, and communication pathways within the school. The organizational chart that follows outlines the key positions and how they work together to ensure a cohesive, supportive, and well-managed learning environment. Our goal is to promote transparency, collaboration, and efficiency in all aspects of school operations.





Following, we identify the staff member currently serving in that role. This information is provided to help families know whom to contact when specific questions or concerns arise. By directing your inquiries to the appropriate team member, we can ensure timely, accurate, and efficient support for you and your child.

## Head of School

### Joanne Shango

*Educational Leadership & Mission Alignment*

[joanne.shango@maramontessori.com](mailto:joanne.shango@maramontessori.com)

#### Contact for:

- Montessori philosophy & implementation
- Escalated parent concerns
- Complex child or staff situations
- Schoolwide vision, culture, and growth

## COO

### Joanne & Ron Shango

*Operations, Systems, Departmental Coordination*

#### Contact for:

- Workflow, procedures, and operations
- System issues (IT, communication flow, inter-department needs)
- Cross-campus project rollout
- Operational questions affecting multiple departments

## CFO

### **Ron Shango**

*Finance, Payroll, Facilities Oversight*

[ron.shango@maramontessori.com](mailto:ron.shango@maramontessori.com)

#### **Contact for:**

- Payroll & compensation questions
- Tuition escalation or financial questions
- Budgets, spending limits, and financial planning
- Vendor and facilities financial needs

## Program Director

### **Laurel – Erin Mallory | Sage – Felicia Calabrese**

[erin.mallory@maramontessori.com](mailto:erin.mallory@maramontessori.com)

[felicia.calabrese@maramontessori.com](mailto:felicia.calabrese@maramontessori.com)

#### **Contact for:**

- Classroom management & Montessori practice
- Student behavior or development concerns
- Parent communication guidance
- Classroom observations & coaching
- Licensing, ratios, supply order approval

## Human Resources Coordinator

### **Sirena Sesi**

[sirena.sesi@maramontessori.com](mailto:sirena.sesi@maramontessori.com)

#### **Contact for:**

- Hiring, onboarding requirements
- Staff absences & staffing support
- HR documentation, contracts, MiRegistry
- Staff mediation or emotional support

## Marketing Coordinator (Contractor)

### **Ben Haynes**

[ben.haynes@maramontessori.com](mailto:ben.haynes@maramontessori.com)

## Financial Assistant

**Julie Justice**

[julie.justice@maramontessori.com](mailto:julie.justice@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Tuition/billing questions
- Parent account support
- Timesheets & payroll prep
- Billing platforms (Procure, Tuition Express)

## Community Development Coordinator and Enrichment

**Julie Justice**

[julie.justice@maramontessori.com](mailto:julie.justice@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Community partnerships
- Gardens, beekeeping, sustainability programs
- FAN network & work-exchange
- Adolescent service projects

## Facilities Manager

**Frank Havasi**

[frank.havasi@maramontessori.com](mailto:frank.havasi@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- All maintenance or repair needs
- Licensing/safety compliance
- Work orders & safety concerns

## Montessori Mentor Guide

**Regina – Elem/MS | Andria – Primary | Austen – Infant/Toddler**

[regina.dyson@maramontessori.com](mailto:regina.dyson@maramontessori.com)

[andria.conti@maramontessori.com](mailto:andria.conti@maramontessori.com)

[austen.root-walsh@maramontessori.com](mailto:austen.root-walsh@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Model classroom observations
- Lesson flow & environment setup
- ND inclusion strategies
- Assistant mentoring & professional development

### Administrative Assistant

**Noreen Bahri – Laurel | Kayla Smith – Sage**

[nadeen.bahri@maramontessori.com](mailto:nadeen.bahri@maramontessori.com)

[kayla.smith@maramontessori.com](mailto:kayla.smith@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Front office support, communication
- Approved supply orders
- Hot lunch, field trip logistics
- Weekly community communication

### Enrollment Coordinator

**Gianna Kiminaia**

[gianna.kiminaia@maramontessori.com](mailto:gianna.kiminaia@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Classroom tours & enrollment status
- Application/start date questions
- Summer camp enrollment & paperwork
- Inquiry follow-up support

### Fundraising Coordinator (Contractor)

**Tommy Sklut**

[tommy.sklut@maramontessori.com](mailto:tommy.sklut@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Fundraising Events

### Grand Coordinator (Contractor)

**Magdalena Pornuska**

[magdalena.pornuska@maramontessori.com](mailto:magdalena.pornuska@maramontessori.com)

**Contact for:**

- Grants Proposals

## WHO TO CONTACT QUICKLY

- Classroom, children, parents → PD first
- Montessori practice → PD or Mentor Guide
- Operations & systems → COO
- Payroll, tuition → FA then CFO
- Hiring, HR → HR Coordinator
- Enrollment/tours → Enrollment Coordinator
- Facilities/repairs → Facilities Manager
- Escalations/vision → Head of School

## 4. Programs

### 4.A) Infant/ Toddlers Program

(2 months – 3 years old)

*“Little children, from the moment they are weaned, are making their way toward independence...”*

In a warm, secure classroom thoughtfully designed with cozy touches and a nurturing staff, infants spend their day engaged in creative, enriching activities. The curriculum is carefully crafted to support every area of a child's development—social, emotional, physical, and intellectual—in a way that is both age-appropriate and meaningful.

The classroom serves as a purposefully prepared environment tailored to meet the needs of our youngest learners. Here, children develop independence and confidence through movement, exploration, and social interaction. With a natural capacity for deep mental absorption, toddlers are gently guided to explore beautiful, hands-on materials that fulfill their innate curiosity. They are given not only the freedom to explore, but also the tools to do so successfully and independently.

In the Toddler Community, we focus on:

- **Language Development** – building communication skills and vocabulary
- **Socialization** – practicing Grace and Courtesy to foster respectful interaction
- **Movement** – developing fine and gross motor coordination
- **Practical Life Skills** – learning through real-life tasks like food prep and classroom care
- **Functional Independence** – encouraging self-care and bathroom independence

This supportive environment lays the foundation for a love of learning and confident, capable children.

## A.1) Toileting

Our approach to toileting is rooted in Montessori principles and Michigan Child Care Licensing Regulations, with guidance from Sarah Moudry's *Toilet Awareness*. We focus on supporting **body awareness** rather than "training" in the traditional sense. This is a **gentle, consistent exposure** to the toilet as a natural part of the child's daily routine, helping them stay connected to their body's needs.

### SCHOOL APPROACH

- **Training Pants & Plastic Covers:** Children in the toddler community wear training pants with plastic covers.
- **Consistent Opportunities:** Guides provide regular, unrushed opportunities to use the toilet throughout the day.
- **Independence:** Children are encouraged to manage as much of the process as possible, appropriate to their developmental stage.
- **Connection to the Body:** We use positive, clear language to help children notice and respond to their body's signals.

### CLOTHING AND SUPPLIES

Parents must ensure their child arrives each day with:

- **Extra Clothing:**
  - Toddler Community – **Minimum of 5 complete spare outfits** (pants, shirt, underwear/training pants, socks).
  - Primary Community – **Minimum of 2 complete spare outfits.**
- **Reusable Wet Bag:** A labeled cloth diaper/wet bag for soiled clothing and training pants to be sent home daily. This bag must be returned clean each day.
- **Easy-to-Manage Clothing:** Clothing that promotes independence (elastic waistbands, no overalls or belts).

## HOME & SCHOOL PARTNERSHIP

To ensure consistency and progress:

- Continue the same toileting language and routines at home.
- Communicate any changes in habits or routines with your child's guide.
- Support the child's independence by allowing them to participate in dressing and undressing.

### 4.B) Primary Program

(3 – 6 years old)

*"Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment"*

The Montessori Primary classroom (ages 3–6) offers a structured yet flexible environment where children explore at their own pace through hands-on, purposeful activities that feel like play. This approach fosters independence, curiosity, and a strong foundation in math, language, science, geography, art, and music, preparing children for lifelong learning.

#### Key Areas of Focus:

- **Practical Life:** Children engage in real-world tasks like food prep and cleaning, developing concentration, coordination, independence, and a sense of purpose.
- **Sensorial:** Using materials that isolate each sense, children refine sensory perception and cognitive skills, laying groundwork for deeper understanding in math and language.
- **Language:** Rich oral language experiences, sandpaper letters, and the moveable alphabet help children link sounds to symbols, develop writing and reading skills, and express themselves confidently.
- **Math:** Children work with tactile materials like number rods and golden beads to understand math concepts concretely before moving to abstract thinking, encouraging problem-solving and confidence.
- **Science & Cultural Studies:** Lessons in chemistry, geography, biology, botany, and zoology are integrated through sensorial and language work. Children explore global cultures and the natural world, fostering curiosity, connection, and environmental awareness.

- **Building on Prior Knowledge:** Each lesson builds on the last, reinforcing learning and preparing students for more advanced study in elementary and beyond, often exceeding traditional educational standards.

Overall, the Primary program supports the **whole child**, promoting intellectual, social, and emotional growth through meaningful, self-directed learning experiences.

## 4.C) Lower Elementary Program

(6 – 9 years old / 1<sup>st</sup> – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade)

*“The hands are the instruments of man’s intelligence...”*

Montessori Elementary: Where Curiosity Meets Independence.

Montessori Elementary students (1st–8th grade) are naturally curious, highly social, and eager to explore. With a “let’s find out” attitude, they learn to seek answers using classroom materials, books, and even community resources.

The curriculum covers a wide range of subjects—math (arithmetic to algebra), geometry, language and grammar, science (geology, botany, zoology), history, culture, art, music, drama, and foreign language immersion. These subjects are often interconnected and tailored to the students' interests and developmental stages.

What sets Montessori apart is how students learn. Rather than relying solely on the teacher, students are introduced to key concepts and then dive deeper through independent or group projects. They’re taught how to research, reason, and think critically — building the skills they need for lifelong learning.

Teachers, called “guides,” know each student well and track progress through observation and detailed records instead of frequent tests. Test-taking is introduced as a useful skill for future education, not as a measure of their abilities.

Montessori students are explorers at heart. With strong imaginations and reasoning skills, they collaborate with peers to understand big ideas and their place in the world. This approach nurtures not only academic success but also emotional and social growth, helping children become confident, self-directed learners.



## 4.D) Upper Elementary and Adolescent Program

(9 – 12 years old / 4<sup>th</sup> to 8<sup>th</sup> grade)

### *Real-World Learning for the Developing Adolescent*

Our upper elementary and adolescent programs (grades 4–8) offer a rich, integrated curriculum that includes math (arithmetic through algebra), geometry, language and grammar, earth and life sciences (geology, botany, zoology), history, culture, art, music, drama, and immersive foreign language study. Subjects are taught in an interconnected way, allowing students to see how knowledge works together in the real world.

As students grow, so does the depth of their learning. Our adolescent program is designed to meet the unique needs of this age group by combining rigorous academics with hands-on, real-world experiences. Through Project-Based Learning, students apply what they learn in math, science, humanities, and language to meaningful projects. These projects often culminate in a student-run micro-economy, where learners take on roles in engineering, farming, sales, marketing, budgeting, and public speaking—developing practical skills while working as a team.

Classroom learning is also deeply collaborative. Students frequently present in groups, learning to share ideas, defend their thinking, debate respectfully, and solve problems together. The motto is “collaborate; don’t separate”—emphasizing inclusion, accountability, and shared responsibility.

Our Montessori Adolescent Program challenges the one-size-fits-all model of traditional education. Instead, we guide students toward independence, helping them build the academic foundation, life skills, and self-confidence they need to thrive in high school, adulthood, and beyond.

### **ALL PROGRAMS:**

#### **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Parent-teacher conferences are held twice a year—once during the fall semester and again in the spring—to discuss each student’s progress. Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed or at the request of parents or guardians. Our Guides are always happy to discuss your child’s development, address any concerns, and answer questions during scheduled conferences or through ongoing communication via the Procure App.

## PARENT EDUCATION

Raising confident, happy, and well-adjusted children is an ongoing journey—and we value our partnership with parents in this work.

- Parents are **encouraged to stay involved**, visit the school regularly, and actively participate in behavior support plans when needed.
- The Mara Montessori Collective offers resources to support your parenting journey, including:
  - A **parent library** with helpful books.
  - A **recommended reading list** focused on Montessori education and child development.
- Teachers are always open to scheduling a conversation to exchange ideas and strategies.
- The Program Director and the Head of School are also available for further support with educational or behavioral concerns.

Together, we can help children make positive choices and grow into kind, respectful, and self-disciplined individuals.

## PERSONAL ELECTRONIC DEVICES

Students are not permitted to bring personal electronic devices to school, including: tablets; cell phones; smartwatches; etc.

These items are unnecessary during the school day and should remain at home. If a student brings any of these devices to school, they will be confiscated and held in the office. A parent or guardian will be required to pick them up at the end of the day.

**Please note:** The Mara Montessori Collective is not responsible for lost, damaged, or missing electronic devices.

## SCHOOL COMPUTER USE

School-provided computers are available as needed for educational purposes. Students are strictly prohibited from using these devices for:

- Social networking or messaging
- Accessing inappropriate websites
- Engaging in fraudulent or dishonest activity
- Online gaming

- Bullying or harassing others

Inappropriate use of school technology will result in disciplinary action in accordance with our code of conduct.

### ITEMS FROM HOME

To avoid loss or distraction, personal items such as toys, blankets, or stuffed animals should be left at home.

However, educational, cultural, or nature-based items are encouraged for sharing! Examples: nature finds (leaves, stones, shells); vacation or travel souvenirs; handmade crafts; family or pet photos; items from other countries; unique newspaper clippings

If your child wishes to bring something to share:

- Please schedule in advance with the teacher.
- Items may be shared during group time and possibly placed on the Science & Discovery shelf for classmates to explore respectfully.

### MISSING CLASSROOMS MATERIALS

If your child brings home a small item from school—often unintentionally in a pocket or backpack—please return it promptly.

Even seemingly small objects are often part of specific classroom activities, and their absence can disrupt learning.

Examples of commonly misplaced items:

- Small wooden or plastic pieces
- Letters, numbers, beads
- Tiny animal or vehicle figures
- Stones or sensory materials

Your help in returning these materials is greatly appreciated and supports the integrity of our learning environment.

## 5. Program Development

### Community Service

Philanthropy reflects a deep understanding of our shared humanity and the importance of serving others—a principle at the heart of the Montessori philosophy. Regardless of age or personal interests, everyone, including students, has the capacity to give generously and recognize their connection to others, whether in the classroom, workplace, neighborhood, or across the globe. As advocates of Montessori education, we are committed to serving not only our school community but also our local neighborhoods, partner organizations, and the broader global community.

Each classroom nurtures this spirit of service by fostering a culture rooted in Peace, Love, and Hope. Within this environment, generosity becomes a natural expression of community life. It is not taught as a set of rules but lived as a way of being—shaped by daily interactions, meaningful experiences, and active involvement in both academic and social aspects of the classroom.

### Music & Performing Arts

Students participate in weekly music lessons tailored to their developmental level, held either in the classroom or dedicated music spaces depending on the community. These lessons explore a range of musical experiences—from familiar sing-alongs and hands-on instrument exploration to foundational music theory and history. Guest artists, musicians, and storytellers visit throughout the year to introduce students to diverse genres and artistic traditions in music, drama, and the visual arts.

The arts are woven into the fabric of classroom life. Students are encouraged to express themselves creatively through painting, sculpture, metalwork, music, dance, composition, playwriting, and theatre. Artistic exploration is not just an activity—it's a core part of how we nurture imagination, expression, and confidence.

### Private Music Lessons

In partnership with Middle C Education, LLC, we offer individualized music instruction for students seeking to advance their musical skills. Current offerings include:

- **Ages 4 and up:** Piano, Ukulele, Violin
- **Ages 8 and up:** Guitar, Bass Guitar/Double Bass, Cello

- **Orchestra Program:** Available exclusively at Sage Mara campus

### Arts, Physical Education & Cultural Studies

Our enrichment programs encompass the visual, literary, performing, and culinary arts, offering students a broad palette of creative experiences. Weekly Physical Education classes help children build coordination, strength, and teamwork skills, while additional opportunities like dance, drama, woodworking, creative movement, cooking, and cultural tastings allow for deeper exploration of global traditions and self-expression.

Daily enrichment includes art, gym, music and drama, guest speakers, and cultural presentations. After-school enrichment classes are also available based on student interest, with registration offered for an additional fee.

### Spanish Immersion (Program returning soon)

Our Spanish Immersion Program supports natural language development through daily interaction in an immersive environment. Spanish-speaking guides lead Montessori lessons, sing-alongs, storytelling, and free play entirely in Spanish, encouraging children to acquire the language organically.

## 6. Conduct

### 6.A) Guiding Self-Discipline

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we see discipline as a way to teach and guide—not to punish. The word “discipline” actually comes from the Latin word *disciplina*, meaning instruction or learning, and that’s exactly how we approach it.

Our goal is to help children develop self-discipline, kindness, and respect—for themselves, for others, and for their environment. We use a positive, loving approach to support their emotional growth and ensure that every child feels safe, valued, and part of a caring community using Positive Discipline to support Montessori peace curriculum.

### Setting the Foundation

We establish clear, age-appropriate ground rules in each classroom to create a peaceful and respectful environment where children can thrive. These ground rules are designed with the wellbeing of the whole community in mind.

When a child forgets or disregards a ground rule, we gently remind them of it and guide them to try again in a more appropriate way. Our goal is always to help them understand, not to shame or blame.

### When Extra Support is Needed

If a child makes a choice that disrupts the classroom or affects others, the teacher or assistant will speak with them to explore what happened and find a solution together.

If the issue continues, we may offer closer support—such as having the child stay near a teacher for a short time (called "shadowing")—to help them regain calm and control. Once they're ready, we talk with the child about their feelings and actions before inviting them to rejoin the group.

### Always Respectful, Always Safe

Our approach to discipline always follows state licensing regulations and Montessori best practices. We do **not** use corporal punishment or any form of verbal abuse under any circumstances. Instead, we model and encourage respectful communication and emotional understanding.

We're here to partner with you in helping your child grow into a confident, compassionate, and self-aware individual. If you ever have questions about our approach, we're always happy to talk.

## 6.B) Positive Discipline

Positive Discipline and the authentic Montessori method are naturally aligned philosophies that emphasize respect, collaboration, and the development of intrinsic motivation in children. Both approaches view children not as passive recipients of adult instruction but as capable, self-directed individuals with an innate desire to learn and do well.

**Respect for the Child:** In Montessori education, respect for the child is a core principle. Dr. Maria Montessori believed that children thrive when they are treated with dignity and when their developmental needs are honored. Similarly, Positive Discipline, developed by Jane Nelsen and

colleagues, emphasizes mutual respect—disciplining with firmness and kindness at the same time.

**Encouragement over Praise or Punishment:** Instead of rewards or punishments, both Montessori and Positive Discipline focus on encouragement, which fosters intrinsic motivation. Children are guided to reflect on their actions and make responsible choices, developing a strong sense of self-discipline and accountability.

**Prepared Environment and Freedom with Responsibility:** The Montessori classroom is a carefully prepared environment that allows freedom within limits. Children are given choices but also held accountable for those choices. This aligns with Positive Discipline’s focus on giving children autonomy while teaching them to understand the consequences of their behavior in a respectful, non-punitive way.

**Problem-Solving and Conflict Resolution:** Positive Discipline encourages problem-solving and family/class meetings to build social and emotional skills. Likewise, authentic Montessori classrooms guide children in peacefully resolving conflicts through respectful dialogue and modeling emotional regulation.

**Focus on Long-Term Development:** Both approaches aim to cultivate qualities like independence, empathy, self-regulation, cooperation, and resilience—not just compliance. Montessori education seeks to “educate the whole child,” just as Positive Discipline aims to raise confident, capable, and compassionate individuals.

### Montessori Practices That Reflect Positive Discipline

**Grace and Courtesy lessons** teach children how to interact respectfully and navigate social situations.

**Natural consequences** are used instead of punishment to help children learn from experience.

**Observation without judgment** helps the adult understand the child’s needs and respond effectively.

**Encouraging independence** allows children to build confidence and take ownership of their behavior.

Positive Discipline and the authentic Montessori approach are deeply compatible. Both value respectful guidance over control, long-term growth over short-term obedience, and intrinsic

motivation over external rewards. When used together, they offer a powerful framework for raising emotionally intelligent, self-disciplined, and socially conscious individuals.

## **6.C) Working Together Through Challenging Behavior**

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we understand that all children are growing, learning, and sometimes testing boundaries as part of their development. When a child repeatedly shows behaviors that are intentionally harmful, unsafe, or disruptive to others, we believe in working closely with families to find supportive, thoughtful solutions.

### **A Collaborative Approach**

If a child's behavior becomes a recurring concern, we will invite parents or guardians to meet with us. Together, we'll explore the possible causes of the behavior and discuss practical strategies to support the child. If a disability or special need is involved, we'll work to understand how it may be affecting behavior and explore reasonable accommodations to help the child succeed.

### **Additional Support**

If challenging behaviors continue despite our efforts, we may suggest involving outside support such as a child development specialist, occupational therapists, art therapist, or licensed counselor to gain new insights and tools. All of which are welcome to observe in school and, if needed, work with your child.

### **When Safety Is at Risk**

In rare and more serious situations—when a child's behavior poses a risk to the safety or well-being of the group—we may need to ask the family to withdraw from the program. We will provide two weeks' notice whenever possible to give families time to make alternate arrangements.

However, if a child's actions present an immediate and serious threat to the safety of themselves, other children, or staff, we may need to proceed with immediate disenrollment to protect the safety of all.

Our goal is always to partner with families in a respectful, compassionate, and proactive way. We are here to support each child's growth while ensuring a safe and nurturing environment for everyone in our school community.



## 6.D) Montessori Standards of Behavior

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we believe that a respectful, peaceful environment supports the growth and success of every child. These community standards guide behavior throughout the school day and help us create a safe, kind, and productive place to learn and grow.

### Core Expectations – At All Times

- Treat yourself, others, and the environment with **respect**.
- Show **responsibility**, **self-restraint**, and **courtesy** in your words and actions.
- Keep personal space by **keeping hands to yourself**.
- Help maintain a **clean and organized environment**, including classrooms, hallways, and bathrooms.

### Hallway Expectations

- Walk **quietly** and respectfully.
- Travel in **single file**, staying on the **right-hand side**, like a road.
- Keep hands and body to yourself to ensure safety and order.

### Classroom Behavior

- Treat all materials with **care and respect**.
- Return items to their **proper place** after use.
- Follow classroom ground rules that support a peaceful and focused learning space.

### Recess & Playground Expectations

- Staff on recess duty should be **visible** and actively supervising by spreading out across the playground.
- Students are expected to follow **playground safety rules** at all times.
- If a child's behavior is unsafe or not grounded in positive discipline, the adult on duty will respond immediately with natural and appropriate consequences.

### Important notes:

- Adults on duty have the **final say** when it comes to safety.

- Repeated or serious safety concerns may result in **loss of recess privileges** and a behavior report being filed.
- Our ultimate goal is to help students develop positive social skills and safe habits through guidance and consistency.

### Respect for All Members of Our Community

All students are expected to follow directions from any staff member promptly and respectfully. If there are concerns about how a situation was handled, students and families are encouraged to speak with the administration for support and resolution.

## 6.E) Parent Conduct

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we believe in creating a respectful, safe, and supportive environment for everyone—children, families, and staff alike. As adults, we serve as important role models for the children in our care, and it is essential that we model appropriate, respectful behavior at all times.

To ensure a safe and positive environment, we expect all parents and guardians to conduct themselves in a calm, professional, and respectful manner while on school property or when interacting with staff, children, or other families.

The Mara Montessori Collective reserves the right to immediately terminate a family's enrollment if a parent or guardian engages in behavior that endangers the wellbeing of the school community. Behaviors that may result in immediate termination include, but are not limited to:

- Acts of violence, including physical assault
- Threatening or harassing behavior toward staff, children, or other parents
- Possession of illegal drugs or firearms on school property
- Verbal or physical abuse toward any child
- Use of profanity or aggressive language
- Indecent or inappropriate behavior

Our goal is always to foster open, respectful communication between home and school. If a concern arises, we encourage parents to bring it to the attention of school leadership so it can be addressed constructively and with care.

## 6.F) Child Abuse

As a licensed childcare provider, the Mara Montessori Collective is legally required to report any suspected or confirmed cases of child abuse or neglect. This includes situations where there is a **reasonable suspicion** that abuse, or neglect may have occurred.

We take this responsibility very seriously. All staff members are trained to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect, and we are committed to protecting the safety and well-being of every child in our care. In accordance with the law, any concerns will be promptly reported to the appropriate authorities.

## 7. Equity and Belonging

High-fidelity Montessori standards (AMI, AMS, and global Montessori organizations) emphasize that the prepared environment and the role of the adult are designed for *all children*. Montessori education fosters dignity, respect, and belonging through equity, cultural humility, and the celebration of diversity. When adults uphold these principles consistently, every child experiences safety, responsibility, and purpose within the community.

We are not a community of surface-level inclusion or mere acceptance. We intentionally create a school culture that:

- **Centers on Equity:** Every child, regardless of race, culture, language, neurotype, family background, or ability, is entitled to dignity, respect, and full participation.
- **Goes Beyond Inclusion:** We celebrate differences as strengths, affirming identity and learning from each other's perspectives.
- **Studies Culture & History Deeply:** Students and adults actively engage in cultural studies, history, and current events to better understand the world and grow as thoughtful change makers.
- **Seeks to Repair Omission:** We recognize that traditional education often omits marginalized voices. We commit to elevating these voices and ensuring that curriculum reflects diversity of cultures, histories, and family dynamics.
- **Celebrates Families:** Family traditions, languages, and cultural contributions are welcomed as part of the life of the school.
- **Supports the Whole Child:** Adherence to Montessori standards creates the nurturing space where each child is seen, heard, understood, and belongs — especially students who are

neurodivergent, trauma-affected, or experience social–emotional, developmental, or learning differences.

## Expectations for Adults

- **Equitable Support:** Provide consistent expectations while adapting supports equitably for each child's needs.
- **Cultural Responsiveness:** Integrate diverse perspectives in lessons, conversations, and curriculum.
- **Prepared Environment:** Ensure classrooms include designated spaces for peace, reflection, and self-regulation.
- **Model Respect:** Use inclusive language and approach differences with humility and curiosity.
- **Partnership:** Collaborate with parents and specialists to support each child with respect and understanding.
- **Trust-Building:** Create safe, dependable bonds with children, particularly those requiring consistent adult attachment for regulation.

## Expectations for Students

- **Respect for Differences:** Approach peers' cultures, needs, and perspectives with kindness.
- **Celebration of Diversity:** Participate in cultural studies, service, and history with openness and curiosity.
- **Responsibility for Community:** Act as peace makers, problem solvers, and contributors to classroom and school life.

## Prepared Environment for Belonging

Every classroom must intentionally provide:

- **Calm Regulation Spaces:** Areas for students to pause, regulate, or find quiet when needed (aligned with Montessori peace education and Positive Discipline best practices).
- **Peace Corners/Tables:** Spaces for conflict resolution, reflection, and problem-solving.
- **Accessible Materials & Routines:** Supports that allow all children to participate meaningfully.

## 8. Nutrition

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we are committed to nurturing the whole child—mind, body, and spirit. A key part of this commitment is supporting healthy eating habits that fuel learning, growth, and well-being. Our Nutrition Policy is designed to encourage lifelong, mindful eating practices in a positive and supportive environment.

### Healthy Eating Guidelines

**Balanced Meals:** We encourage families to pack meals that include a variety of food groups—fruits, vegetables, whole grains, lean proteins, and dairy. A well-balanced diet helps support children’s energy, focus, and overall health throughout the day.

**Smart Snack Choices:** Healthy snacks matter too! We recommend snacks that are low in added sugars and high in nutrients. Great options include fresh fruits, cut-up veggies, whole-grain crackers, yogurt, and cheese.

Often, the children help prepare snacks, and the groceries for our classrooms are chosen with a focus on natural ingredients and whole grains.

**Stay Hydrated:** Drinking water is essential. Students are encouraged to drink water regularly throughout the day, and we make sure they have easy access to clean drinking water at all times.

**A Positive Mealtime Experience:** We aim to make mealtimes calm, enjoyable, and respectful. Children are given the time and space to eat at a relaxed pace. Our staff models healthy eating habits and encourages polite table manners and social conversation.

**Lunchtime at Mara Montessori Collective:** Students enjoy lunch in the comfort of their own classrooms, where we focus on creating a calm, social, and respectful eating environment.

**Lunch Schedule:** Lunchtimes vary slightly depending on the classroom but generally fall between 11:30 AM and 12:30 PM.

### What to Know About Lunches

- **Lunch Containers:** All students should bring lunch in a reusable, easy-to-open lunchbox labeled clearly with their first and last name.

- **Hot Lunch Option (only at Laurel campus):** Our hot lunch program has been very successful! Each day, our in-house chef prepares a fresh, balanced meal in our well-equipped kitchen. A vegetarian option is always available.  
If you would like your child to receive hot lunch, please complete the monthly order form that includes the full menu. Be sure to submit the form by the due date, as we purchase groceries based on the number of orders received.
- **Food Guidelines:**
  - Pack a simple, manageable meal that does not require extensive heating.
  - Include plenty of fresh fruits and vegetables—we encourage healthy, whole foods.
  - Organic or natural snacks are preferred when possible.
- **Nut-Free Policy:** To keep everyone safe, the Mara Montessori Collective is a nut-free school. This includes all nuts and tree nuts. Your child's teacher will inform you of any additional allergy-related precautions in the classroom.
- **Utensils & Napkins:** We provide all necessary utensils, napkins, ceramic plates, and small glasses for mealtimes.
- **Leftovers:** Any uneaten food will be sent home so you can stay informed about your child's appetite and preferences.

### Supporting Independence at Mealtime

- For younger students, please **practice at home** to ensure they can easily remove food from their lunchbox and open their containers on their own.
- Containers and lunchboxes should be **easy for small hands to open and close** without assistance.
- For older students, we encourage you to let them **pack their own lunch**. This helps foster independence, builds awareness of nutrition, and cuts down on food waste due to picky eating.

## 9. Dress Code / Uniform

### 9.A) Dress Code

#### Infant, Toddler, and Primary Students

Children in these age groups should wear comfortable, easy-care clothing appropriate for active play. As some activities may lead to soiled or damaged clothing, please avoid dressing your child in formal or delicate attire.

Character-themed clothing and/or accessories (e.g. backpacks, lunch boxes, water bottles, etc.) are not permitted.

#### Clothing for Independence

Clothing should be easy for children to manage on their own:

- For toddlers, choose elastic-waist pants over styles with fasteners.
- Avoid bodysuits or outfits difficult to remove during bathroom breaks.
- Children should be encouraged to dress themselves daily and participate in selecting outfits (consider choosing options the night before).

**NOTE:** Please label **all items** (clothing, outerwear, backpacks, lunchboxes, gloves, shoes) with your child's **first and last name**. Labeled items are much more likely to be returned if misplaced.

#### Change of Clothing Requirements

- **Infants/Toddlers:** Minimum of 3 changes of clothing – including underpants, pants, shirts, socks. Also include diapers or training underwear as needed, plus a spare pair of gloves for winter.
- **Primary/Kindergarten:** Provide 2 changes of clothing – underpants, pants, shirts, socks. Gloves for winter.
- **Elementary/Adolescent:** Supply 1 full change of clothing, plus winter gloves

### 9.B) Uniforms / Casual Dress Code

Applicable to Primary, Elementary, and Adolescent programs.

A new branded casual dress line is available, featuring:

- T-shirts, sweatshirts, shorts, and sweatpants in fun, student-friendly designs
- Infant onesies
- Adult sizes for parents

## 9.C) Shoes and Boots

- Students should wear sturdy, closed-toe shoes with back and secured with buckles, Velcro, or slip-ons (no laces unless your child can tie them independently). **Comfortable sneakers are highly recommended.**
- Toddlers are also encouraged to wear slip-on waterproof alternatives for safety and ease of movement.
- Crocs-like shoes and/or slipper-like are not allowed for Primary, Elementary or Adolescent.
- **Shoes with lights, cartoon characters or distracting footwear are not permitted.**
- Please provide **1 (one)** labeled pair of seasonal boots to keep at school:
  - Rain boots for fall and spring
  - Winter boots during colder months

## 10. Field Trips - “Going Out Events”

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we believe learning extends beyond the classroom. Our Primary (Kindergarten), Elementary and Adolescent students enjoy thoughtfully planned field trips throughout the school year and during summer camp. These experiences offer real-world learning, foster independence, and build community.

### Transportation & Supervision

- **Kindergarten Field Trips:** Kindergarteners must be transported and supervised by a parent or guardian for most field trips, unless otherwise noted. Specific instructions will be shared in advance.
- **Elementary & Adolescent Field Trips** - Transportation may be arranged through:
  - **Parent carpools**
  - **School-arranged buses or vehicles:** details will be shared ahead of each trip.



**Note:** Communication on transportation needs will be sent in advance. The school does not assume liability for transportation arrangements made privately between families.

## 11. Celebrations

### Class Holiday Celebrations

Families will be informed in advance of any classroom celebrations. You'll receive details about **dates, attendance options, and volunteer opportunities** from your child's teacher or classroom guide.

### Birthday Celebrations: A Montessori Tradition

In many of our classrooms, birthdays are honored with a **Sun Celebration** (also known as the "Walk Around the Sun")—a special Montessori tradition that celebrates your child's life journey year by year.

To prepare for your child's birthday:

- **Please contact your Lead Guide in advance** to schedule and plan the celebration.
- Parents are asked to create a **simple timeline** of their child's life, illustrated with photos and short stories or memories for each year.
- **Summer birthdays** may be celebrated on or near the child's **half-birthday** if desired.

### Snacks & Sharing:

- Families are welcome to provide a **special, healthy snack** to share with classmates (no sugary treats, nuts, or egg-based items, please).
- **Goodie bags or party favors are not permitted.**
- Instead, your child is encouraged to bring a **culturally or personally meaningful item** to share with the class—this can be a temporary or permanent contribution to the classroom environment.

### Cultural & Ethnic Celebrations

We are proud to have a vibrant and diverse school community! Families are invited to share aspects of their **culture, traditions, and heritage** with the class in meaningful and age-appropriate ways.

### Ways to Share:

- **Cultural Tasting:** Each week, a new country is explored. Parents are invited to bring in a traditional dish for students to sample.
- Share through **art, music or dance, traditional clothing, stories, or family artifacts.**
- Work with your child to prepare a **short classroom presentation**—our Guides are happy to help brainstorm and support your ideas.

### Scheduling:

Please coordinate directly with your child's teacher to arrange a date and discuss how best to support your cultural presentation.

These celebrations enrich our learning community and help children develop a deeper appreciation for themselves, their classmates, and the wider world. Thank you for sharing your traditions and making these moments meaningful!

## 12. Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

**Timeliness Matters:** Arriving on time supports your child's learning and minimizes disruptions. Classes begin at **9:00 AM** for **all students**. Late arrivals disrupt the flow of the day, so we appreciate your commitment to punctuality.

**Safety First:** Please park only in designated areas. If no spaces are available, wait until one opens up. For quick drop-off and pick-up, you can park directly in front of the building. Always use caution when crossing and be courteous to others to help ensure everyone's safety.

### Arrival Procedure

**Infant Families:** Please park and walk your child to the front door or directly to the *Nido* or *Nest* classroom. A staff member will greet you and take time for any brief updates regarding feedings, diaper changes, or special instructions. To maintain the quality of the program, we ask that this transition remains brief. If your child is 2–5 months old, you may bring them in their car seat; however, they must be removed by a parent or guardian.

**Toddler Families:** Park and walk your child to the front door. A staff member will greet you and escort your child to their classroom. This is the ideal time for a quick goodbye, but please keep farewells short so we can warmly welcome all students in a timely manner.

**Primary Families:** Use the designated car line for drop-off. Pull forward as far as safely possible to help with traffic flow. Park, exit your vehicle, and walk your child to the designated Primary entrance.

**Elementary/ Adolescent Families:** Use the car line for drop-off. Pull forward as far as possible while maintaining safety. Students should exit the vehicle independently and walk to the designated entrance.

Note: All students arriving after their scheduled start time must be brought to the main entrance.

### Dismissal Procedure

**Infant, Toddler & Primary Families:** Park and walk to the entrance with your dismissal tag clearly visible. A staff member will bring your child to the door. Infant families may go directly to the *Nido* or *Nest* to pick up their child. Any information not recorded in the Procure app will be shared at handoff. For further communication, please message staff through Procure.

**Elementary & Adolescent Families:** Use the designated car line for pick-up. Pull forward as far as safely possible to keep traffic moving. Walk to the designated pick-up entrance with your car tag clearly visible to identify yourself as an authorized pick-up person.

**IMPORTANT:** If you need to pick up your child before dismissal time, or another registered adult is picking up your child/children, please call the office and email your child's guide as soon as possible. Make sure all adults who will pick up your child have been added to their Child Information Record; we are required by law to check for ID's if we don't recognize the adult who is picking up your child(ren). We will not release your child to any adult who is not registered. You may add more authorized people by requesting to update your Information Record Card at the front desk.

If someone not authorized on your Child Information Record is picking up the child, a written notification must be provided by the parent.

**NOTE:** If you have siblings at the school, they will be picked up at the dismissal location of the oldest child.

## 12.A) LAUREL MARA Specific

### Arrival Schedule

Community	Schedule	Arrival Time/Entrance
Infant, Toddler, Primary	Half Day & School Day	<b>Class starts at 9:00am</b> Drop off between 8:45 – 9:00am using the S. Livernois entrance
Elementary	School Day	<b>Class starts at 9:00am</b> Drop off between 8:45 – 9:00am using the South Blvd. entrance
All	Extended Day	Drop off starts at 7:30 using the S. Livernois entrance

### Dismissal Schedule

Community	Schedule	Arrival Time/Entrance
Infant, Toddler	Half Day	<b>12:00pm</b> Pick up at S. Livernois entrance
Primary	Half Day	<b>1:00pm</b> Pick up at S. Livernois entrance
Infant, Toddler, Primary	School Day	<b>3:00pm</b> Pick up at S. Livernois entrance
Elementary	School Day	<b>3:00pm</b> Pick up at South Blvd. entrance
All	Extended Day	<b>3:00 – 5:30pm</b> Pick up at S. Livernois entrance

## 12.B) SAGE MARA Specific

### Arrival Schedule

Community	Schedule	Arrival Time/Entrance
Infant, Toddler, Primary	Half Day & School Day	<b>Class starts at 9:00am</b> Drop off between 8:45am - 9:00am using the main lobby entrance (middle set of doors on the north side of the building)
Elementary & Adolescent	School Day	<b>Class starts at 9:00am</b> Drop off between 8:45am – 9:00am using main entrance
All	Extended Day	<b>Infant, Toddler and Primary</b> Drop off between 7:30am - 8:55am using the main lobby entrance <b>Elementary and Adolescent</b> Drop off between 7:30am - 8:25am using the main lobby entrance (middle set of doors of north side of the building)

### Dismissal Schedule

Community	Schedule	Departure Time
Infant and Toddler	Half Day	<b>12:00pm</b>
Primary	Half Day	<b>1:00pm</b>
Infant, Toddler, Primary, Elementary and Adolescent	School Day	<b>3:00pm</b>
ALL	Extended Day	<b>3:00pm – 5:30pm</b>

## 12.C) Delayed Opening and Early Closings

### Weather-Related Closures and Delays

The Mara Montessori Collective follow the **Avondale Schools calendar** for **snow and icy weather days**.

### Cold Weather Days

On "Cold Weather Days," the Mara Montessori Collective will **remain open**, as our students arrive by car and are not required to wait outdoors for buses.

The Mara Montessori Collective does not close for cold weather days.

### Late Start Days

If a Late Start is announced, school will begin at the earliest safe and practical time, depending on weather conditions.

### Early Release Days

On Early Release Days, **students must be picked up by the designated time** (typically 2:45 PM, though this may be subject to change). Official times will be communicated as needed.

### Other Emergency Closures

The school may also close due to **power outages, fire damage, health-related closures (e.g., disease outbreaks), or other unforeseen emergencies**. Parents are advised to have **alternate emergency childcare** plans in place for these situations.

**Note:** Tuition will **not** be adjusted for any school closures, regardless of the reason.

### How to Stay Informed

In the event of severe weather, school status updates will be available through the following:

- **Email or Procure notifications** – Used for official communication regarding emergency closures.
- **Social media** – May be used for updates but should not be considered official.
- **Free Press website:** [www.freep.com/closings](http://www.freep.com/closings) – Sign up for free text and email alerts.

## 12.D) Carpools and Transportation

The Mara Montessori Collective does **not provide transportation**, so **carpool arrangements are the responsibility of families**.

To support families interested in carpooling, a **School Directory** of registered parents will be made available. This allows families to connect with others in your area and coordinate transportation independently.

## 12.E) Child Release

To ensure your child's safety, the CIR (Child Information Record) must be fully completed and kept up to date. It is used to authorize emergency contacts and individuals permitted to pick up your child.

- ❖ **Emergency Contacts (Required):** Must include all parents/guardians; include at least one additional individual (up to four total) authorized to initiate medical care if necessary.
- ❖ **Authorized Pick-Up Only (Optional):** You may list up to four additional individuals as "Release of Child Only." This may include trusted family members, friends, or carpool participants.

### Identification Requirements

- All individuals listed on the CIR must show a student-specific car tag or valid, unexpired photo ID when picking up a student.
- No student will be released to anyone not listed on the CIR or without proper ID.

### Making Changes to the CIR

- You may update the CIR at any time by submitting a revised form to the front office or:
  - Update your Procare profile
  - Email the change, ensuring the CIR is updated to reflect changes
- Verbal/oral changes are not accepted.

### Important:

- Unlisted individuals will not be allowed to pick up your student; unless written notification has been sent to administration. Staff may request identification from anyone unfamiliar to them.
- The school cannot assess impairment or intoxication; and assumes no responsibility for release to any listed individual.

## **Child Custody Disputes**

Until a court order is on file in the Main Office, both parents/guardians listed on the CIR will retain equal rights to pick up the student. Legal documentation is required to restrict access.

## **Liability Statement**

The Mara Montessori Collective assumes no responsibility for injury or harm resulting from the release of a student to any person authorized by the CIR or formally approved through written request.

We are committed to your child's safety and act as their advocate at all times.

## **12.F) General Information**

### **BUILDING ACCESS**

For the safety of our students and staff, all exterior doors at the Mara Montessori Collective and affiliated campuses remain locked at all times.

- Please ring the doorbell at the main entrance to speak with a staff member for entry.
- During arrival and dismissal, parents are not permitted beyond the lobby, unless dropping off or picking up an infant.

### **LATE PICK-UP**

Timely pick-up is essential to the safety and well-being of your child.

- A Late Pick-Up Fee will be charged for any student picked up after their scheduled time (listed on car tags as: 12:10pm, 1:10pm, 3:15pm, or 5:30pm).
- Fees are assessed per student as follows:
  - \$16 base fee beginning at 1 minute late
  - Plus \$1 per additional minute (*e.g., 5:30pm = no fee, 5:31pm = \$16, 5:32pm = \$17, etc.*)

No student may remain at school after 5:30pm.



If a student is still on campus after 5:30pm or past their scheduled dismissal time, and no communication has been received:

- Staff will contact all individuals listed on the Child Information Record (CIR) until someone confirms they can pick up the student.
- If no authorized individual can be reached, local authorities (police) will be contacted for further instructions.

Your cooperation helps us maintain a secure and respectful environment for all students.

## 13. Attendance and Absences

Consistency and punctuality are essential for your child to receive the full benefit of our program.

Our academic calendar includes generous school holidays. We kindly ask that families plan out-of-town travel during these scheduled breaks whenever possible.

If your child will be absent for any reason, please notify us by:

- Messaging your child's guide or the office directly through the **Procare app**; or phone call.

Please note: **Tuition will not be adjusted** for absences due to illness, vacations, travel, holidays, appointments, funerals, or any other reason.

## 14. Volunteer Hours

Each family is required to complete 12 volunteer hours per school year. For families whose child is enrolled only for the second semester, the requirement is 6 hours.

Families are responsible for tracking their hours using the Volunteer Hour Tracking Form, which can be found on our website at [maramontessoricollective.com](http://maramontessoricollective.com) under the Parent tab. Printed copies are also available at the Main Desk of each campus.

Completed forms must be returned to the Main Office by the deadline listed on the form. To be accepted, the form must include the student's first and last name, as well as valid signatures from either a staff member or a Family Ambassador Network (F.A.N.) representative for each volunteer entry.

Please note that if a form is forgotten at the time of volunteering, those hours cannot be backdated. If a form is lost, families will need to start over, as previously recorded hours cannot be recovered.

Any incomplete volunteer hours at the end of the school year will be billed at \$25 per hour, up to a maximum of \$300, in accordance with your contract.

## 15. Illness and Medication

### 15.A) Illness

At the Mara Montessori Collective, we take precautions to prevent the spread of contagious illnesses. However, exposure may still occur. To help keep our community healthy, **please keep your child home if they are sick.**

**Do not send your child to school if they:**

- Have a fever over 100.4°F
- Have vomited or had diarrhea in the last 24 hours
- Have a rash (unless cleared by a doctor)
- Have discharge from eyes, ears, or excessive/colored nasal discharge
- Show symptoms or have been diagnosed with contagious illnesses (e.g., cold, flu, COVID-19, strep, chicken pox, etc.)
- Are not well enough to participate in daily activities or outdoor play
- Were sent home in the last 24 hours for any of the above symptoms

**Return to school only when your child has been symptom-free (without medication) for at least 24 hours.**

If a child shows symptoms at school, they will be sent home. Parents must pick up their child within **1 hour of being notified**. If parents cannot be reached, we will contact the emergency contacts listed on your child's form.

Parents will be notified via ProCare if a communicable disease is confirmed in the classroom.

To prevent further spread:

- Sick children's items (e.g., jackets, nap gear) will be sent home and must be washed before returning.
- All areas used by a sick child will be cleaned and sanitized.

**Please notify the school immediately** if your child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.

## **15.B) Medication**

Whenever possible, we ask families to arrange medication schedules with their physician that do **not** require doses during school hours. If this is not feasible, medications will be administered under the following conditions:

- A completed Medical Instruction & Administration Form is required for each medication. This provides written consent and clear dosage instructions.
- We will not administer the first dose of any medication due to the risk of allergic reactions.
- Prescription medications must be in their original pharmacy container, clearly labeled with:
  - Student's name
  - Physician's name
  - Dosage and frequency
  - Medication name and strength
- Over-the-counter (OTC) medications must be in the original, unopened packaging and clearly labeled.
- Medications will only be administered as instructed by the physician (for prescriptions) or according to package directions (for OTCs). We cannot follow any instructions that conflict with these sources.
- All medications must be passed adult-to-adult in a Ziploc bag containing the medication and the completed form. They will be returned in the same manner.
- We will maintain a record of all doses administered, including time and amount.
- Medications will be stored securely and returned to families once they are no longer needed.

## **15.C) Emergency Medical Care**

In the event of a serious injury:

- We will immediately contact the emergency contacts listed on your child's **Child Information Record (CIR)**, including their physician if necessary.
- If emergency medical treatment is required, **911 will be called** while emergency contacts are being notified.
- Any costs incurred from emergency services (including ambulance fees) are the responsibility of the parent or guardian.

## **15.D) Sunscreen**

Daily outdoor play is an important part of our program. To help protect your child from harmful UV exposure, we ask that you:

- Apply sunscreen to your child before arriving at school each day.
- Send a **labeled** bottle of sunscreen that is suitable for your child's skin, so we can reapply it as needed during outdoor time.

## 15.E) Child's Well-Being

Changes at home can significantly impact your child's behavior and emotional well-being at school. Please inform us of any major changes so we can offer additional support and understanding.

Examples include (but are not limited to):

- Prolonged absence of a family member
- Divorce or remarriage
- Serious illness in the family
- Death of a loved one or pet
- Moving to a new home
- Changes in custody arrangements

We value our partnership with you and are here to support your child through times of transition.

## 15.F) Pest Control

To maintain a clean and safe environment, the Mara Montessori Collective partners with a licensed pest control service to manage insects and other pests throughout the school year.

- All treatments are conducted after school hours to ensure student safety.
- Families will receive email notification at least two (2) days in advance of any scheduled service.
- A notice will also be posted on the Parent Information Board in the school foyer.

We appreciate your understanding as we take steps to maintain a healthy learning environment.

## 16. TERMS AND CONDITIONS

### 16.A) Student Confidentiality

Every student has the right to privacy and confidentiality. All records, reports, and personal information related to children enrolled at the Mara Montessori Collective are considered confidential and are used solely for internal purposes.

We will not share any student information with third parties without the written consent of a parent or guardian, except when required by law, court order, or licensing regulations.

### 16.B) Enrollment Commitment

Enrollment at the Mara Montessori Collective is a commitment for the full academic year.

- All tuition and fees are non-refundable.
- No discounts, refunds, or credits will be issued for absences, vacations, illnesses, or relocations within 30 miles of any campus.
- Withdrawn requests after January 15th—voluntarily or involuntarily—for any reason, will incur a financial penalty of \$2000/child.
- Withdrawal requests submitted after July 15th will be rejected, and the family will be charged full tuition for the subsequent school year.

### 16.C) Renewal Process

All individuals enrolled will receive a notification by **December 1st** via email and/or in-app message containing the following details:

- Enrollment start date and duration
- Any updates to tuition and/or fees
- Instructions for making changes to their enrollment

Participants may choose not to renew their contract for the upcoming academic year by submitting a non-renewal form within 45 days of receiving their notification (due January 15<sup>th</sup>). The form can be submitted via email to [registration@maramontessori.com](mailto:registration@maramontessori.com). This ensures transparency and provides ample time for informed decision-making.

There are no penalties for non-renewals within the designated period, and no further financial obligations will be incurred upon completion of the current contract which ends at the close of the current academic year (June of YYYY).

If written notice is not submitted by January 15<sup>th</sup>, the student will be automatically re-enrolled, and the tuition agreement for the upcoming academic year will become binding.

After January 15<sup>th</sup>, a withdrawal request will incur a financial penalty of \$2000/child.

If a withdrawal request is submitted after July 15<sup>th</sup>, it will be rejected, and the family will be charged the full tuition for the subsequent school year.

## **16.D) Tuition**

All families are required to save a payment method on file with Tuition Express to complete recurring tuition and fee payments.

### **Payment Schedule**

- Monthly tuition is billed August through May, with statements sent to families between 8<sup>th</sup>–15<sup>th</sup> and payment processed between 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup>.
- All accounts must be fully paid by June 1<sup>st</sup> of the current academic school year.

### **Additional and Annual Fees**

- Additional charges may include, but not limited to: monthly hot lunch; enrichment programs; late pick-up fees; incomplete volunteers' hours etc.

### **Payment Methods & Fees**

- A 3% processing fee applies to all credit card transactions.
- To avoid this fee, we recommend using a checking or savings account for recurring payments.
- Late, declined, or returned payments will incur a \$35 fee, listed as a "Late Payment Fee."

### **Refund**

- **All tuition and fees are non-refundable**, including Summer Camp payments.

**Financial Aid:** To apply for financial aid, visit <https://app.clarityapp.com/sign-in> and complete the application in full.

## 16.E) Documents

### REQUIRED ENROLLMENT FORMS

To complete enrollment, all required forms must be fully completed and submitted before your child's start date. Incomplete forms may delay or prevent your student from beginning school.

#### Annual Review

All forms must be reviewed and updated annually prior to the start of each academic year.

#### Enrollment Forms Overview

##### ❖ Required for All Students

- Child Information Record (CIR) – Emergency contact and medical release form (must be fully completed and kept current).
- Health Appraisal Form – Includes immunization record or waiver; must be updated annually or per age group requirements.
- Tuition Express Authorization Form – Sets up a recurring payment method (note: this is separate from the MyProcure “one-time payment” option).
- Parent Licensing Notification – Acknowledgment that the DHS Guideline Book is available for review on-site.
- Photography Release – Authorizes the use of your child's image for school-related educational and marketing purposes.
- Parent Directory Permission – Allows your contact info to be shared in the school directory (optional but encouraged).
- Medication Permission & Administration Form – Required if your child will need any medication administered during school hours.
  - FARE Form – Additional form for EpiPen or emergency medication use.

❖ **Only for New Students**

- Application for Admission – Initiates enrollment and provides developmental insight for classroom placement.
- Enrollment Contract – Must be signed by legal guardians; outlines terms of enrollment, including tuition, policies, and expectations.

❖ **Conditional Forms**

- Primary Ratio Agreement Form – For students aged 30 to 35 months, acknowledging the Primary classroom's 1:10 student-teacher ratio.
- Health Waiver (if applicable) – Issued by the county for families opting out of immunizations for medical reasons.

**Tips for Parents**

- Always **request updated Health Appraisal and Immunization records** at each wellness visit.
- Save and upload copies to your child's **Procare Documents folder**.
- **Health Appraisal Forms, CIRs and Waivers** are valid for **one year**.

## 17. Conclusion

The guidelines and policies outlined in this Handbook are designed with one clear goal in mind: to support and protect the health, safety, comfort, and overall learning experience of your child. Every procedure and expectation reflect our commitment to creating an environment where children can thrive academically, socially, and emotionally.

We view your family as a vital part of our school community and recognize that a successful educational journey requires strong partnership and mutual understanding. Your cooperation with these guidelines ensures consistency and care across all aspects of your child's day.

Thank you for entrusting us with this important role in your child's development. We look forward to working together to provide the best possible experience for your student.