

Starlight Montessori Preschool Parent Handbook

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Dear Parents,

Welcome to Starlight Montessori Preschool. This is a handbook for reference, which will answer some questions you may have. It will be revised as needed. SMP is a center-based preschool that provides care and instruction using Montessori methods. The school serves children ages 3 years to first-grade entry. The school is open Monday through Friday from 9 am to 3:30 pm. Extended care is also available for families needing it from 8 am to 9 am and from 3:30 to 5 pm. Its license number is #483008883.

SMP is committed to providing a nurturing environment and quality care. We offer materials and activities which promote academic, emotional, and social growth according to the capacity of each individual child. The qualities of grace, courtesy and respect are modeled and encouraged. Character development is a primary goal here. We believe that the child who displays virtues such as self-confidence, empathy, independence and compassion is able to take on academic and social challenges with relative ease. SMP is also committed to fostering the understanding of world cultures.

Philosophy

Montessori schools begin with a deep respect for children as unique individuals. They work from a deep concern for their social and emotional development. They consciously teach children to be kind and peaceful. The staff at SMP is Montessori-trained and committed to the well-being of all the children. Montessori schools are warm and supportive communities of students, teachers and parents. Montessori classes bring children together in multi-age groups. Normally, the classes span three age levels, allowing the children to stay with their teachers for three years. This allows teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their pupils so that they will come to know each child's learning style very well and encourage a strong sense of community among the children. Students are involved in managing their own community and develop uncanny leadership skills and independence. Montessori philosophy assumes that children are born intelligent, they simply learn in different ways and progress at their own pace. The Montessori approach to education is consciously designed to recognize and address different learning styles. Dr. Montessori's research led her to conclude that intelligence is not rare among human beings. It manifests itself in the natural spontaneous

curiosity of the young child from birth. Montessori observed that when children grow up in an environment that is intellectually and artistically alive, warm, and encouraging, they would spontaneously ask questions, investigate, create and explore new ideas.

Schedule

Children arrive at 9 am. Please be punctual as the first 15 minutes of school allows the children to connect socially with their peers and start their day with the rest of their friends. Circle time begins at approximately at 9:15 as we sing a greeting song which includes each child's name. A time for sharing is also included here. Teachers use this first circle time to present new materials, reinforce appropriate behavior and discuss topics at that time. At 9:30 the work period begins. Children are free to explore all areas of the environment and make their own choices for activities (works). The areas available are Practical Life, Sensorial, Math, Language, Culture, Music, Science and Art. The work period ends at 11:15 at which time the children come together for a second circle where songs and stories are shared. They are outside on the playground from 11:30 to noon. Morning children are dismissed at noon. Full-day children have lunch from noon to 12:30. At 12:30, afternoon children arrive and circle time is at 12:30 with the afternoon following the morning schedule closely.

Snacks

We are a completely nut-free and low-sugar school. Families are assigned days to provide fresh fruit and vegetables, enough for 15 children.

Admissions and Enrollments

There will be an interview process between SMPI and parents before a child can be admitted.

Enrollment in the preschool program is open to children ages 2.9 to 6 years who are fully toilet-trained and physically and emotionally able to function in the school environment. Parents are required to sign their child in and out of school using their full name. The Montessori preschool program can be a 2 or 3-year commitment. Consideration will be given to age and gender in balancing the class. Admissions are based on availability of space and determination of staff that a child will benefit from the environment. SMP does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, family make-up or national and ethnic origin in its admissions or other program policies. Prior to applying for admission to SMP, parents are asked to observe the classroom while it is in session. In order to reduce disruption to the class during observations and make a visit more productive, we ask that you come by yourself.

Re-enrollments

In order to reserve a place for the following year, current parents are asked to submit a completed application and a non-refundable registration fee by February 1st. Returning children will be given priority for enrollment, followed by siblings of currently enrolled children. On February 1st, enrollment will be open to the public to fill any remaining openings.

The first few days of school operate as a phase-in period for the children to help them in the transition to school. For many, it will be a very new feeling having had no previous preschool experience.

The first day, parents accompany their child and visit for only 15 to 20 minutes, meeting the teachers and other students, seeing the classroom, and trying out the materials. The following days the child comes by him/herself. Sometimes separations are difficult, but it is best if the child comes alone. The teachers will comfort the child if needed. Quick good-byes are best in the long-run. Parents are always welcome at SMP, but it is best if parents wait outside of the child's view. All children enter the school on a probationary basis. The health and safety of all children and staff members requires the withdrawal of any child whose behavior is determined to endanger him/herself, other children or staff members. A child may also be dismissed if it is found that the program is not meeting the child's needs.

Withdrawal

If either the parents or SMP determines that the placement of the child in this program is not in the best interest of the child or the school, a conference will be scheduled to discuss appropriate action. If it is decided that the child should be removed from the school, the registration fee and tuition will be forfeited. If for any reason, you decide to withdraw your child from SMP, a thirty days notice is required. Parents will be responsible for tuition fees for the next thirty days following their intent to withdraw their child.

Tuition/Fees/Payment

SMP tuition is an annual fee of 10 equal payments plus a registration fee. The first payment is due on September 1st. The other 9 payments are due on the first day of each month, October through June. **Equal tuition is charged for all 10 months, even though some months have more scheduled holidays. Full tuition is due for each month even if children are away for vacation, sickness or holidays not observed by SMP. There will be a \$10 per day late fee for tuition paid after the 5th of the month.** The registration fee is due upon enrollment. Parents will be given at least a 30-day advance notice of tuition increase. The school is committed to creating a close collaboration between it and the parents. The following are required forms that need to be completed upon enrolling your child:

- Tuition contract and registration fee
- Notice of Parents Rights
- Personal Right's
- Health History
- Identification and Emergency Information
- Consent for Medical Treatment
- Immunization Record
- Physician's Report

Holidays

SMP follows the same holiday schedule as the local school district. The school observes the following holidays:

Labor Day
Veteran's Day
Thanksgiving Vacation
Winter Vacation
New Year's Day
Martin Luther King Jr Day
Presidents Day
Memorial Day

Releases

For your child's security, parents are responsible for notifying the school if someone other than the parents or individual listed on the emergency form is going to take the child from school. Children will not be released to anyone unless a phone call or note is given to the school. This person should be recognizable to the child. SMP will check an unknown person's photo I.D. to verify the person's identity.

Birthdays

At SMP, a candle is lit to represent the sun, and the child carries the globe around the "sun" to represent the passage of each year. Children are invited to bring in pictures, one from each year of life, beginning at birth. The teacher tells the story of the child's life during each year and the children sing "Happy Birthday".

Clothing/Shoes/Supplies

Children are encouraged to wear comfortable, practical clothes, which allow for free movement and which are suitable for art projects. Fasteners, zippers and buttons should be easily manageable for the child. Belts are difficult for children who wait until the last minute to get to the bathroom. Overalls can be difficult unless they practice. Please bring in a ziplock baggie of clothes for your child labeled with their name to keep at school including pants, top, socks, underwear. Please label all jackets and/or sweatshirts. Children must come to school in non-skid, closed-toe shoes, which are safe and comfortable for play. No cowboy boots please.

Discipline

The staff at SMP relies greatly on the natural and logical consequences relating to behavior, consistency in reinforcing the playground and classroom rules and constructive redirection to maintain discipline within the school. We believe that children find security and direction when there is consistent adult guidance and discipline. Children explore, observe, feel, interact and learn through the process of being involved with people and things in their world. All behaviors are learned. Teachers, in their role of caring for children, model and teach appropriate behavior. Children need to know what we expect from them before they can follow the natural

order of the classroom. No corporal punishment will be used at SMP. **There is a zero-tolerance policy here at SMP. No bullying or aggression will be tolerated. You will be called to come pick up your child.**

We, therefore, expect teachers to use constructive and preventative methods of discipline and to maintain an atmosphere of love, acceptance, and order. This atmosphere is one in which children respect themselves, their peers and their teachers. The teachers plan ahead for possible areas of conflict. A teacher will redirect a child by distracting the child's attention away from the disruptive behavior and directing the child to some other activity, which is acceptable. The teacher will make sure that the child understands what will happen if he or she persists in the unacceptable behavior. This will be done using words that the child can understand with the teacher sitting or kneeling at the child's level. The outcome must be appropriate to the behavior being corrected. Our goal is to work in partnership with parents to create an environment in which the child's self-esteem and skills for expression and conflict resolution are enhanced. No time outs will be given, but the child might be asked to hold the teacher's hand and stroll through the classroom in order to calm the child. When the child has calmed and is ready to go back to work, the teacher will help the child find something constructive to do.

Dismissals

All children enter on a probationary basis. The health and safety of all children and staff members requires the withdrawal of any child whose behavior is determined to endanger him/herself, other children or staff members. A child may also be dismissed if it is found that the child's needs are not being met with the program provided. SMP reserves the right to dismiss any child whose tuition payments are delinquent for more than thirty days.

Disasters

We will hold regular fire and earthquake drills so that your child will know exactly what to do and how to respond in an emergency situation.

Field Trips

From time to time, we may take small excursions or field trips. Parents are expected to drive their own or other parents' children. Field trips may include a pumpkin patch, zoo, library...

Health

All children entering the program at SMP must have valid proof of the required immunizations before they will be allowed to attend.

Allergies

It is important to list all allergies on the emergency or medical consent forms. Advise the school immediately of any new information to be added to the forms. Children experiencing severe

allergy reactions, which inhibit their ability to comfortably cope within the school setting, are asked to remain at home.

Illnesses

Children with fever, sore throat, active colds, vomiting, diarrhea or undiagnosed skin rashes should be kept at home. If your child has a communicable or highly contagious disease (chicken pox, pinkeye, head lice or impetigo), please notify the school immediately. If your child becomes ill at school, we will request that you, or your designated emergency contact take your child from school. A child must stay home for 24 hours after a fever breaks. Please do not send medication with your child. No medication will be administered at SMP. In situations of emergency or injury, staff will administer first aid as necessary or will call 911 as necessary. One of the most effective ways to prevent the spread of illness is by frequent hand-washing and the proper use and disposal of used tissues. Children are expected to wash their hands when soiled, before eating, after blowing their noses and after using the toilet. Children are expected to know how to use the toilet and how to wipe themselves. Reinforcement of these life skills at home and school will help the child gain independence.

Positive routines are important at bedtime to insure a restful night with adequate hours of sleep for young children. Children who stay up late and rise early for an active day will be fatigued at school and will not get the most out of their environment.

Inspection of Facility

Parents are allowed to visit the facility without advanced notice at any time during the normal hours of operation. However, when the parent's behavior poses a threat to the health and safety of the children, the entrance is denied. Respectful behavior is expected by everyone.

The Department of Licensing shall have the authority to interview clients, including children or staff, and to inspect and audit client or facility records without prior consent. The Department of Licensing shall have the authority to observe the physical condition of the client, including conditions which indicate abuse, neglect or inappropriate placement, and to have a licensed medical professional/physician examine the client.

The state of California requires that several health forms and medical releases be on file with the school for each child. Therefore, all forms that are issued upon acceptance of your child at the school must be returned to the school by the first day of your child's attendance.

Conferences

There will be a parent meeting in the fall to acquaint parents with other parents, the teachers, and the school. Informal conferences will be held with parents when necessary. Two formal parent conferences will be scheduled, one in November and one in May. We will do our best to bring up questions or concerns as soon as we have them, and to make sure you are informed at all times of your child's progress.

Parisa Kelly received her B.A. from Cal-State East Bay in 1984, a Teaching Credential from San Francisco State in 1985 and a Montessori Primary Certificate from Fountainhead Montessori Teacher Training Program in 1998.

From 1996 to 1998, Parisa was employed as a Montessori preschool teacher at Garden School in Danville, CA. She worked as a child-care provider for children ages 6 months to 10 years in her home from 1989 to 1995. Previous to that, she worked as an elementary school teacher for grades 1 through 4 in the Dublin, Manteca and Pacifica school districts. She was employed as a preschool teacher at Serendipity Learning Center in 1981. She worked as a behavior specialist at Spectrum Center in 1984. She has worked as a teacher of 6-8 year olds at a Baha'i Sunday School for 6 years, has served on its Board of Directors for 4 years. She has owned Starlight School in Alamo since 1998 and Starlight Montessori Preschool in Benicia since 2013. She has 3 adult daughters and has traveled and lived in several countries including Iran, various countries in Africa, South America and Europe. She enjoys cooking, drawing, gardening, singing and salsa dancing. She is married and lives with her husband in Benicia.