

# **THE SPENCER HOUSE MONTESSORI PARENT'S HANDBOOK 2009/2010**

## **OUR SCHOOL'S COMMITMENT**

The Spencer House Montessori School was established to serve the Alachua area for infants through kindergarten. Our dedicated staff directs learning through exploration. Classroom environments and teaching materials are designed to make the most of a child's natural intellectual curiosity and love of learning. We are dedicated to providing children with the opportunity to excel in a program designed to meet their academic and social needs.

## **VISION OF THE SPENCER HOUSE MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

The Spencer House Montessori School embraces the belief that a great Montessori school is defined in the minds of all the people it touches by its institutional vision, identity and culture. We believe the people involved are the most important component of any great school. Each one of us, whether teacher or assistant, playground supervisor, office manager, parent, grandparent or sibling, plays a vital role in the ongoing life of the school. Maria Montessori stressed the importance of the school serving as a part of the larger community. Community, to us, is more than a common geographical location. It means a group of people united in a cause, with a similar vision and beliefs. It is an extension of family.

## **SCHOOL PROCEDURES**

### **ADMISSIONS**

The Spencer House Montessori School has a non-discriminatory admissions policy for children who are two months to eight years old. The school admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs and activities made available to students at our school. Parents and prospective pupils are encouraged to visit the school for an observation. Please contact the school office to make arrangements for an interview at (386) 418-1213. There will be a six-week trial observation period for all new enrollments. During this observation period, teachers will place children in the appropriate program based on their social and emotional needs and the age and gender mixes in each classroom.

### **ABSENCES**

If you have prior knowledge that your child is going to be absent or when he/she is absent unexpectedly due to sickness, please notify the school as soon as possible. Unfortunately no discounts can be made for absences.

### **ATTENDANCE AND TARDINESS**

Class sessions are planned and follow a Montessori curriculum. Therefore it is very important that your child attends regularly and that they arrive on time. School begins promptly at 9:00 am. Children arriving late distract both the other students and the teacher. The parents of students arriving habitually late will be contacted by the Directress for a conference. If you need to

discuss an issue with the teacher, please schedule a meeting with him/her rather than distracting the teacher during class time.

## **CLASS SESSIONS**

Montessori classes are not graded and meet Monday through Friday. School hours are as follows: For infant and toddler, beginner, and preprimary classes we offer programs 2, 3 and 5 days a week. Our VPK and Primary program is 5 days a week.

School opens: 7:00                      Full Day Program: 9:00-3:00                      After-School Program: 3:00-6:00

## **THE SPENCER HOUSE CAMPS**

The Spencer House offers a Winter Camp, Spring Break Camp, and Summer Camp. Enrollment for these camps will be available to all The Spencer House attending students prior to open enrollment for the public. Spaces are limited, so unfortunately no discounts can be made for absences or for withdrawal.

Camp Hours:

School opens: 7:30                      Full Day Program: 9:00-3:00                      After-School Program: 3:00-6:00

## **EVALUATIONS AND PARENT CONFERENCES**

Written evaluations are provided twice a year during January and May. A conference can be scheduled with the student's teacher after school hours during anytime of year. If you would like to schedule a meeting with your child's teacher, please contact our office to set up a time.

## **THE SPENCER HOUSE MONTESSORI INFANT/TODDLER & BEGINNERS PROGRAM**

The Spencer House offers an Infant/Toddler and Beginners program for children age's two months to 2 ½ years. Following the belief of Dr. Maria Montessori that learning begins at birth. We offer a stimulating program for toddlers encouraging social, emotional, and cognitive development. Our infant/toddler & beginner's program is open M-F 7am-3pm. After-school care is available at an additional charge.

## **THE SPENCER HOUSE MONTESSORI PRE-PRIMARY PROGRAM**

The foundation of the philosophy is respect - for your child, for other children and adults, and for the environment. Your child learns to be independent and to do things for himself. He prepares snack when he's hungry, chooses work that interests him, takes care of his own needs, helps others, gets excited about learning and actively seeks to know more. The classroom rules provide a framework to allow freedom and the emergence of self-discipline in the children. The rules are few logical and consistently reinforced. Children of this age feel secure when they have "freedom within limits". The children develop good work habits and a sense of responsibility. The classroom belongs to them and the teacher encourages them to keep it clean and orderly. They learn to concentrate and complete a sequence of steps. They return things to the shelf ready for the next person to use and take pride in their abilities and environment. The three-year age span lets children learn from one another and allows the older ones to develop a sense of responsibility as models to the younger ones. The third year students feel very capable and gain a marvelous self-image of being the "big kids".

The dress code for the Pre-Primary class is as follows: Children must wear clothing that is comfortable and easily managed by his or her self. (No sandals and no belts please). School uniforms are encouraged at this age but are not required. Spencer House T-shirts should be worn for any class field trips where children will be leaving school property.

To be admitted to the Pre-Primary class the child must be at least 2 and potty training.

### **THE SPENCER HOUSE MONTESSORI PRIMARY PROGRAM (Florida Voluntary Pre-K and Kindergarten)**

The primary class is ready to provide our children with the next stage of their education. In a Montessori classroom, the environment is carefully prepared to promote an enthusiasm for learning. The calm, quiet atmosphere of the class allows each child to focus on academic lessons and to develop social skills. The classroom is orderly to enable children to derive order from it. A Montessori teacher encourages controlled mobility from one academic area in the classroom to another. She also requires all students to respect each other, their teachers and their physical surroundings. In a primary class, each child will acquire knowledge at his or her development level and in an appropriate pace. In addition to hands-on experiences, the older Montessori child begins to internalize information and memorization begins. The fascinating practical life exercises, such as pouring, sorting, polishing, and slicing fruit continue in the primary class. These activities promote independence, order co-ordination and concentration.

The dress code for the Primary Class is as follows: A mandatory school uniform policy is in place for all of the children in our Primary classroom. The uniform consists of navy blue or khaki pants, shorts, or skirt and a white or light blue polo or button down shirt. Shoes should have a rubber sole and closed toe. Fridays are considered a free choice day. Spencer House T-shirts should be worn for any class field trips where children will be leaving school property or on Free Friday's only. If your child comes to school out of uniform, a reminder note will be sent home with your child. If your child repeatedly comes to school out of uniform, you will be called and asked to pick-up your child. If your child comes to school wearing inappropriate shoes, he/she will not be allowed to participate on the playground.

### **BIRTHDAYS**

Birthdays are celebrated with the child's class in a special and original way. We would like for each child, on his or her birthday, to bring a poster board with a picture and caption for each year of the child's life. If possible we would like for the parent or family to attend our circle time and tell about the birthday child. Children with birthdays 3 years old and up will get to walk around the sun as many times as the earth has rotated around the sun during their lifetime. Parents may bring in special treats, but we do not recommend sweets, candy or even cake. We would like to see something fun but healthy. Having sweets on these days will confuse our children as well as cause a disruption among others. Some examples of acceptable treats are muffins, cupcakes, fruit, or ethnic foods that represent the child's nationality.

### **HOME/SCHOOL PROBLEMS**

The basic ground rules of the school are no child may hurt another child in any way or disturb the work of another child. The purpose of ground rules is to aid in the development of respect of self and others. The school and home environment should be consistent.

## **ACCIDENTS**

In case of a serious accident at school, you will be notified immediately after first aid is given. If you cannot be reached, the emergency numbers you indicated will be called. If that person(s) is not available, your child's doctor will be called. Minor accidents are documented and copies are presented to parents when they pick up their child. The school retains a copy on file.

## **SPECIAL INFORMATION FROM HOME**

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home please consider informing the school as soon as possible. All information will be regarded as confidential. Some common causes of distress include: either or both parent(s) being away from home for any reason, a new person living in the home, illness or hospitalization of a family member, accident or death in the family, a new caregiver or any other employee, moving, death of a pet, or change in schedule. The teachers will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment, which may affect your child as well. All information given for these purposes will remain strictly confidential.

## **DISPENSING OF NON-PRESCRIPTION MEDICATIONS**

The school will not dispense non-prescription medication, such as aspirin or cough syrup. Prescription medications will be dispensed with the appropriate medical release forms signed by the parent.

## **SICK CHILDREN**

Do not send your child to school if he/she is ill and not feeling well enough to participate in the full day's activities, including outdoor play. Any child suspected of having a communicable disease will be placed in an isolation area until he/she can be removed from school. Signs and symptoms of a communicable disease include but are not limited to any of the following:

- Fever of 101 degrees or higher
- Yellow or green mucous discharge
- Severe cough
- Difficult or rapid breathing
- Diarrhea, which constitutes more than one abnormally loose stool in 24 hours
- Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)
- Exposed/Open skin lesions
- Unusually dark urine
- Gray/White stool
- Yellowish skin/eyes

Children may not return until fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of medication. Please notify school if family members come down with any communicable diseases.

## **NOURISHMENT**

Please do not send candy or gum to school with your child. Please send natural and sugarless drinks, snacks and lunches with fruit and vegetables. Children must bring a water bottle in a **non-glass container** with their lunch. All lunch boxes must be labeled. Please send appropriate utensils with your child's lunch.

## **FIRE DRILLS**

Random fire drills are conducted monthly by the office. The alarm is a special bell that rings continuously in the event of a fire. When the bell rings continuously, all the classes dismiss into designated areas and remain in groups. The teacher joins the class outside the building, takes roll, and notifies the office of attendance.

## **TUITION POLICIES**

The Spencer House Montessori School is a for profit organization completely dependent on tuition as its primary source of income. Student accounts must be kept up-to-date. We offer a discount for paying before the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. If payment is not received by the 10<sup>th</sup>, you will be sent a reminder, which will include a \$25 dollar late charge. Should payment not be made by the 15<sup>th</sup>, we must, regrettably, withdraw your child until such time as tuition payments are brought up-to-date. We reserve the right to fill your child's spot in the class while he/she is withdrawn.

We offer a 5% sibling discount when two children from the same family are enrolled. Please deduct 5% from the higher of the two tuition rates. Unfortunately no discounts can be made for absences. If your child must be withdrawn for any reason, a 30-day written notice is required. You are responsible for paying the tuition for that 30-day period. If you withdraw your child from any Spencer House Camp, you are required to pay tuition for the entire camp term.

## **AFTER SCHOOL TUITION**

After School billing is done twice a month. After School tuition is due on receipt of invoice. Children will not be permitted to participate in the After School Program if the After School account becomes more than 14 days past due until it is brought current. The After-School Enrichment Program ends at 6:00 PM, at which time The Spencer House Montessori closes for the day. It is essential that all children be picked up by closing time. A substantial late fee will be assessed of \$1.00 per minute should any child not be picked up by this time.

## **RETURNED CHECK POLICY**

If payment for your tuition is returned by the bank unpaid there will be a \$30.00 NSF charge added to your account. The payment and the NSF charge will need to be paid by money order, cash, or credit card immediately. If more than one check is returned, we will no longer be able to accept payment by check; the remainder of the tuition contract must be paid by money order, cash, or credit card.

## **AUTOMATIC PAYMENT BY CREDIT CARD**

We encourage families to set up automatic credit card billing with us. This is an excellent way to earn points on your card for something that has to be paid for anyway, and it helps the school by reducing our bookkeeping overhead. We use a major credit card transaction company and we do not store the numbers on a computer. This ensures that your numbers are kept safe. You will receive a paid statement in your child's folder of each transaction for your records. If you are interested in paying by credit card, please contact the office for the appropriate form.

## VISITORS IN CLASSROOM

Observers are welcome after the second week of classes. We ask that all observers not disrupt the class while it is in session. It is required that **all** visitors sign in at the office.

## PLAYGROUND RULES

For the sake of safety, we ask that all children be sent to school in sneakers. Please try to refrain from speaking in length with your child's teacher(s) when they are out on the playground. This is a time when it is imperative that all eyes are on the children. If you need to set up a conference with a teacher, please contact them before or after class. Appointments can be scheduled by contacting the school office @ (386) 418-1213 or [shmoffice@windstream.net](mailto:shmoffice@windstream.net).

## PICTURES

The staff members take pictures of the students during many special events throughout the school year. If your child is enrolled in our school program, his/her picture may be used for school advertising, either written literature distributed by the office or on the school's web site at [www.spencerhousemontessori.com](http://www.spencerhousemontessori.com).

Please sign below and return the bottom portion to the front office no later than the first day of your child's enrollment; indicating that you have received a copy of the Parent Handbook and you know it is your responsibility to read and understand it.

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I \_\_\_\_\_ have received a copy of the 2009-2010 Parent Handbook and have read and understand it.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signed

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date