

First Presbyterian

Montessori   ri

LaGrange, Georgia

Class Handbook

First Presbyterian Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten

120 Broad Street LaGrange, GA 30240

Phone: (706) 812-8513 Fax: (706) 884-6021

www.lagrangemontessori.org

The child can only develop by means of experience in his environment. We call such experience work.

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Mission Statement: *The purposes of this Kindergarten are to help each child develop within himself the foundation for a lifetime of creative learning through the principles and concepts established by Dr. Maria Montessori; to provide an environment for growth in Christian living, and to provide opportunities to learn about and celebrate events of the Christian year.*

The Montessori Classroom

The Montessori classroom is a carefully prepared learning environment designed to serve and belong to the children. It is an environment in which each child has the opportunity to discover the intimate relationships between freedom and responsibility, between order and learning, and between work and joy. It is in this environment that each child has the opportunity to develop to his fullest potential, through a process of individualized activities, which match his own personal needs and rate of development. All of this is achieved in a group setting within which there is a harmoniously rich and purposeful social life.

The purpose of the Montessori School is to provide an early education program in which the foundation for a lifetime of creative learning is developed effectively and efficiently in the child. The classroom is a learning environment, which surrounds the child with maximum motivation and opportunities to learn and achieve in directions consistent with his individual level of maturation. Objectives which we strive to develop within each child are:

- To provide an environment that allows each child to develop at his own pace and fullest potential.
- To encourage care of oneself and the environment.
- To aid the continued development of respect for others and the materials.
- To foster a love of learning, creativity, logical thinking and skills for life.
- To build community between home and school.

Tuition

All tuition is due by the 1st of each month (August – May). **Unless prior arrangements have been made with the director**, all payments received after the 10th of the month will be assessed a \$20 late fee.

Because our budget is set up on a yearly basis of 84 enrolled children, we are unable to exempt tuition for lengthy illnesses, family vacations, etc. A parent's continued failure to comply with his financial responsibilities will result in the child being withdrawn from the school.

Withdrawal

We assume that anyone who enrolls in our school is doing so for the entire year and our budget is set up accordingly. Realizing that unforeseen circumstances might arise, we ask that you give us 30 days notice before withdrawing your child from school. If you need to withdraw your child before **March 1st**, we will adjust your tuition accordingly. If you withdraw after **March 1st**, you will be required to pay tuition for the rest of the school year.

Arrival and Dismissal

School hours are **8:45 a.m. to 12:00** noon (Toddler class dismissal is 11:45 a.m.). A teacher will be at the school entrance to greet children from 8:45 a.m. until 9:05 a.m. **After 9:05 a.m., you will need to park your car**, enter through the front church office and walk your child down the stairs

and into the classroom. Please do not knock on the classroom windows for someone to let you inside. **Do not park or leave your car unattended in the drive-through.** We ask that you not engage in conversation with the directresses at this time. Written messages for teachers may be left with the greeter.

Please turn right from North Lewis Street when entering the parking lot adjacent to the playground and turn right when exiting onto North Lewis from the drive-through. For safety purposes **only right hand turns** will be permitted onto North Lewis Street. For further safety purposes, **please refrain from using your mobile phone in the carpool line.**

Carpools

A complete class list will be sent home the first week of school to assist in forming carpools, if desired. Please list all persons authorized to pick up your child from school on the child release form. **A written notice is required if your child is to be picked up by anyone not listed on your form.** Anyone picking up your child should be prepared to show identification before the child will be released. This is for your child's safety and protection.

In the case of divorced or separated parents, it is important that the parent registering the child indicate on the enrollment application who has legal custody and who may pick up the child. By doing so, the parent guarantees that the authorization is not restrictive of another parent's rights or contrary to the law. We will abide by all legally served court orders. We must have on file a notarized court order in matters regarding parental custody.

Health Care

All students must have an up-to-date immunization form on file. These may be obtained from the Troup County Health Department or from your pediatrician. A current Emergency Information Form should be on file with the school on or before the first day of school. One of these forms will be given to you to complete and return at your earliest convenience. We trust the good judgment of the parents to ensure that no child attends school with a possible contagious infection. In the event of a communicable disease, please notify the school promptly.

Illness

Children who are ill should not be sent to school. If your child should become ill while at school, you will be notified according to the information on the Emergency Form. The following guidelines should be considered in determining if your child should be kept at home:

- Your child now has a fever or has had a fever within the past 24 hours
- Your child has a constant cough, wheezing, colored nasal discharge, pink or discharge eyes, vomiting, or diarrhea.
- Your child has strep throat or scarlet fever.
- Your child has ringworm or impetigo.
- Your child has the flu
- Your child has chicken pox.
- Your child has lice or mites.

Information provided by Children's Healthcare of Atlanta

- **Runny Nose:** A runny nose is the way many children respond to pollen, dust, or a cold virus. Minor cold or allergy symptoms should not be a reason to miss school.
- **Coughing:** A cough, especially if persistent during the day, can indicate a worsening of a cold or allergy. It may be a sign of a secondary infection (sinusitis, pneumonia), that may require medical treatment. It may also indicate asthma. If your child's cough is worse than expected, you need to consult their doctor. You should do so immediately if the child is not acting normal, has a fever, or has difficulty breathing.
- **Vomiting, Diarrhea, Fever:** A single episode of vomiting, without any other symptom, may not be reason enough to miss school. But, make sure the school can reach you if symptoms occur again during the day. A single episode of diarrhea probably warrants not going to school. It could be very embarrassing and uncomfortable for your child to have another episode while at school. Fever (100.4 or above) especially if it occurs along with a sore throat, nausea, or a rash could indicate a contagious illness. A child should stay at home until they are without vomiting, diarrhea, or fever for 24 hours.
- **Strep throat and Scarlet fever:** are highly contagious bacterial infections. They usually arrive with a sore throat and fever, and often stomachache and headache. With scarlet fever there is a rash. A child with these symptoms should see the doctor for diagnosis and treatment, and should remain out of school until they are without ever and have been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- **Pinkeye or conjunctivitis:** can be viral or bacterial which are both highly contagious. May also be caused by allergy. The eye will be very red, and a discharge is usually present. It is school policy that a student with a red eye/s accompanied by a discharge not attend school until symptoms subside and he has been on antibiotics for 24 hours.
- **Ringworm and Impetigo:** Ringworm is a fungus infection of the skin and is contagious by skin to skin contact. A child should see their doctor for diagnosis and treatment. The student can return to school after obtaining a note from the doctor indicating treatment and cleared by the doctor to return to school. Impetigo is a contagious infection that creates a red, oozing blister-like rash. Consult the child's doctor for treatment and a note indicating when they can return to school.
- **Flu:** Highly contagious virus. When a child is diagnosed with the flu, they need to stay home to rest. Consult the child's doctor on when to return to school.
- **Chicken pox:** highly contagious viral illness causing fever and itchy rash. The child should stay at home until all bumps are dry and no new bumps have appeared. There is now a vaccine available for children who have not had the chicken pox. Pregnant women exposed to chicken pox may harm the baby.
- **Lice and Mites:** cause itching and spread quickly in the school setting. Lice are parasites that thrive in the scalp and cause itching. Mites are tiny insects that burrow under the skin and cause severe itching. Both conditions should be treated immediately. Children need to stay at home for 24 hours after initial treatment. In the case of head lice, they need to stay at home until all nits/eggs are removed. Proof of treatment must be provided. Consult a doctor before a child returns to school to make sure they have been cleared of all lice. Manual removal is the most effective treatment for head lice.

All of these illnesses can be easily spread, both in school and in the family. Handwashing is the single most important thing you can do and teach your child to do to help prevent the spread of infections.

Clothing

Children should be suitably dressed for the weather because they will be outside for a short recess everyday except on bad weather days. Our normal time for going outside is 11:30 a.m. If for any reason you would not want your child to go outside, please plan to pick them up early from the classroom.

When choosing clothes for your child, look for those he can manage himself, especially in the bathroom. We ask that you send in a change of clothes in case of water spills or bathroom accidents. We do wear aprons for messy work, but there are still accidents at times. Please make sure all of their outer garments are labeled (sweaters, sweatshirts, jackets.)

Parent Conferences

Parent conferences are scheduled mid-year (January) and then again at the end of school. These conferences provide an opportunity for parents and teachers to discuss the child's progress at school and at home. We ask that you attend any conferences without your child, as we do not like to talk about the child in his/her presence.

Parents should feel free to call teachers at any time to discuss any aspects of the school program or any matter concerning their child. Please try not to discuss your child's progress or other matters during arrival or dismissal time. We want you to be fully informed and feel free to communicate with us; however, we need to keep classroom interruptions to a minimum. Teachers are available each day before and after class.

In the event that a significant change occurs in your home, please inform the teacher as soon as possible. All information will be regarded as confidential. Common causes of distress include, but are not limited to the following: one or both parents being away from home for an extended time, a new person living in the home, illness or hospitalization within the family, accident or death within the family, or a new caretaker.

Food

The children are provided with daily nutritious snacks, which are as low in sugar as possible. The snack is available from the beginning of each morning until about 11:00 a.m. when we begin our group activities. This allows the children to monitor their own food needs. Each family will be asked to provide the snack for one week during the school year. The children greatly enjoy this responsibility and sharing a special snack with their friends. We supply water for the children to drink.

Birthdays and Special Events

Children may celebrate their birthdays at school by bringing a snack to share with the group during "line time". Parents are welcome to join their children for this special occasion. We ask that parents limit the birthday celebration to only a snack. Your child's teacher will make plans with you ahead of time for the day you would like to celebrate his/her birthday.

We also celebrate traditional holidays in the classroom. We will have a room parent for each class to help coordinate these parties.

Articles from Home

Please do not permit your children to bring toys, dolls, candy, or gum to school. They often become lost or damaged and can cause friction among other children. They also tend to foster a child's insecurity and do not encourage him to pursue the wealth of classroom activities. We will send home regular newsletters to announce specific projects, nature and cultural studies and at that time would welcome any contributions which would enhance our special studies.

Montessori materials are expensive and very difficult to replace and are also quite appealing to children. If your child should bring home a block or any other item, please return it to the school as one missing piece can make an entire set unusable. We often use materials that are fragile and might be broken. Accidental breakage is anticipated and will be replaced by the school. If a child deliberately breaks something, then his teacher will confer with parents on how they can repair or replace the item.

Visiting the Classroom

We encourage you to come and observe your child after the sixth week of school. This gives them enough time to feel very secure in the room and with the materials. It is best to observe without any younger siblings. Several observations before scheduled conferences help to make the conference more beneficial. **We do ask that you refrain from using your mobile phone when visiting your child's classroom.**

Discipline

First Presbyterian Montessori has a strong commitment to implementing the discipline of students in a respectful, firm, fair, and consistent manner. One of the ultimate goals of Montessori is to develop a self-disciplined individual. We establish clear limits and provide consistency in maintaining those limits. When a classroom rule is broken, the teacher talks with the child to see that he understands the rule. The child's activity and work area may be changed. If that does not work, or if it is a recurring problem, then the child is asked to sit in a "thinking chair" until he can calm down and regain control. If the problem persists, the parent is contacted so we can work on a behavior change together.

Every child has the right to express his/her feelings: anger, hurt, frustration, etc., in an acceptable manner. When aggressive behavior occurs, the children involved are taken aside by a teacher. The teacher will try to help them express their feeling verbally. With younger children, a teacher assists by giving them the language to communicate their feeling. Parents will be consulted on ways to deal with these problems together.

In the event of a recurring problem with aggressive behavior where the safety of other children or the well-being of the class is a concern, the following steps are taken:

1. The Lead Teacher will schedule a conference with the child's parents to discuss the situation, concerns, suggestions and next steps.
2. If the aggressive behavior (including, but not limited to: biting, hitting, scratching, pinching and spitting) continues after a reasonable amount of time and effort, and the teachers are unable to assist the other students as needed due to the disruption, the Lead Teacher will schedule a second conference with the parents. The conference will include the Lead Teacher and the Director.

3. During the conference, several options will be explored taking into consideration the specifics of each case. Parents are encouraged to suggest options as well. One or more options will be chosen. These might include requiring a parent to accompany the child to school and stay with the child during school hours for a set period of time, temporary removal of the child, or dismissal, etc.
4. If the aggressive behavior continues and all other efforts have been unsuccessful, the school reserves the right to ask parents to withdraw their child from First Presbyterian Montessori. Any advance tuition for the remainder of the year will be refunded to the family if the school asks the child to leave. The school reserves the right to dismiss a student whose presence in the school is considered detrimental to the best interest of the student, or one of his/her peers, or the school in general.

Calendar

First Presbyterian Montessori School is similar to that of the Troup County system. Any weather related school closings of Troup County will automatically be followed by our school. For weather related closings listen to 98.1 or WTRP on the radio.

Every month a newsletter will be e-mailed and posted on the website with events and concepts, which will be covered during class time. This is an excellent reference for at home conversation starters about what happened at school during the day. It will also remind parents of specific upcoming events and happenings at our school. Please take the time to read the newsletters carefully.

Open House

An Open House will be held each February to allow parents and interested persons to see our classrooms and for the children to show families the works they enjoy. This is one of the favorite events of the year and is also the kickoff for registration for the upcoming school year.

Chapel

On the first Wednesday of each month, the 3-6 year old classes will have a 15 minute visit in the sanctuary, usually from 11:15 a.m. – 11:30 a.m. The purpose of this time is to educate the children about church etiquette, respect for religion, Christian holidays and to sing some Christian songs. All parents are invited to attend.

Phone Calls

During school hours, teachers are unable to leave the children to receive phone calls. If there is an emergency situation, please call 706-884-4064 and explain it to the church secretary and she will let us know in the classroom. The best times to call the school and talk to a teacher are in the morning from 8:15 a.m. to 8:45 a.m. and after school from 12:15 p.m. to 1:30 a.m. The school's phone number is 706-812-8513.

Enrollment

Application forms are accepted through the year. Registration for the new school year will begin in January. Members of the First Presbyterian Church are given first priority for opening during the month of February. After that time, they are given the same status as the general public. Applications are dated as they are received and given priority in that manner. Each classroom is filled by returning students, siblings of Montessorians, transferring Montessori students, members of the First Presbyterian Church (during February) and then the public. A balance of ages and sexes within each class is maintained as carefully as possible. **It is possible that your child may be lower on the waiting list, but be admitted first as he or she meets the enrollment requirements of the classroom (i.e. a 3 year old girl is needed versus a 4 year old boy.)** There are often vacancies during the class year and we seek to fill them immediately. Please refer to the withdrawal section for these policies.

We welcome you to our First Presbyterian Montessori Preschool and Kindergarten family. If there is any way we may better inform you of our policies and procedures, do not hesitate to call. We are looking forward to meeting those of you we have not met and to renewing old friendships.

THE MONTESSORI TODDLER COMMUNITY:

The Toddler Program is designed to meet the specific needs and tendencies of children two years old. Dr. Montessori, realized that once a child stands upright and walks, he experiences a “second birth”. Having experienced the independence of free movement the child is able to move into the larger social community.

The toddler experiences a biological necessity to move. The rapidly developing bones, muscles and nerves demand exercise. Gross motor control and large muscle movement are an integral part of the Toddler Program.

Language activities are equally important, as the child from birth to 3 is in the most sensitive periods of language development. Vocabulary enrichment is developed through the use of objects, language cards, songs, stories and conversation.

Toddlers develop movement and self-help skills through practical life experiences such as watering plants, carrying chairs, rolling mats and sponging tables. They are encouraged to dress and undress themselves. Through their own observation, the children develop an interest in toilet training and are encouraged to toilet train themselves independently.

The environment is divided into several areas including movement, eating, bathroom, and an area for cognitive materials. In each area, materials are provided to foster coordination and control of movement, articulate language, and social interaction. The environment fosters independence, trust and individual achievements as well as a strong self-esteem.

Independence and determination – assets of a strong personality are developed through work carried out with full concentration. This happens through an activity, which completely absorbs each child and fulfills their urge to explore the world.

Your Toddler’s First Day:

To help get into the routine of Montessori, please send with your child the following:

1. A family **photograph** or one of your child with a pet to keep on his/her basket.

2. **Change of clothing:** a pair of socks, a shirt, shorts, underwear or 4-5 diapers (no pull-ups) or cotton training pants. Please place them in a gallon zip-lock bag with your child's name on it. The children will be participating in a lot of "practical life" water activities. When wet clothes are sent home, be sure to replace them the next class day.
3. Snack: **The school will provide snack the first week.** Each month we will post the snack calendar on our website showing which day your child is to bring snack for the class. The calendar will have suggestions for nutritious food. The purpose of our snack is to encourage the sense of sharing what each child brought and the communal experience of social preparing and sharing a meal with others.

Transition Times:

Your child's arrival at Montessori has a psychological importance as a transitional activity between the home and the child's community. There will be a greeter at the school entrance under the covered drive-through. This greeter will walk your child to the Toddler classroom where the Toddler teachers will meet your child and assist him/her in putting away their belongings. **Here are some tips to remember to facilitate this transition:**

- Allow your child to get out of the car from the carpool line and enter with the greeter if he/she is comfortable with this.
- Or, park your car and let your child walk holding your hand from your car to the door. **Do not park in the drive-through, please.**
- Remember to follow your child's lead rather than hurrying him/her along.
- Please try to allow enough time so your child doesn't feel rushed.
- Please refrain from talking on mobile phones in the carpool line.
- Please allow toddler teachers to bring your child to the car at dismissal.

Observations:

You are more than welcome to observe in the classroom once the children have adjusted to the new environment. We try to maintain a serene atmosphere, so please try to keep a "low profile" – using a soft voice (indoor voice) and refrain from calling across the room to your child, thus distracting others. Try to have eye contact with your child at his/her level. We ask that you silence your mobile phone when visiting your child's classroom.

Birthdays:

We are more than happy to celebrate your child's birthday at Montessori. We will celebrate during our regular snack time (10:00 a.m.). Please let us know a day in advance what you plan to bring. Some suggestions are: mini-muffins, banana bread with cream cheese, yogurt, and rice crispy squares.