



Parent Handbook

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Amarillo Montessori Academy

Parent Handbook

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LETTER FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear Parents and Students,

Welcome to the Amarillo Montessori Academy (AMA). We are pleased that you chose the Academy for your child, and we anticipate your involvement and cooperation in making this a successful year.

This handbook has been prepared to help answer the many questions students and parents often have concerning the activities, procedures, and rules for the successful daily operation of our school. We believe that following these guidelines will help us to have an orderly environment conducive to learning. Any changes to our policies that occur during the school year will be posted on our website, www.amarillomontessori.com and will be provided to you in writing.

Parents are invited to drop by the school any time during the operating hours of 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM to observe their child, AMA's operation, or the school activities without scheduling an appointment. Please keep in mind that you need to schedule a time if you would like to visit with the director or your child's teacher.

A copy of the minimum standards for licensed childcare centers is available for parents' perusal in the office. Please ask the Executive Director or the Administrative Assistant if you would like to look at the standards. We would be happy to make a copy of a standard for you or you can download the entire book from the website:

www.tdprs.state.tx.us/childcare .

A copy of our most recent Licensing inspection report is available on the bulletin board in the office hallway. Parents may contact the local Licensing office at 354-5307 and the National Child Abuse hotline at 800-422-4453.

With this Parent Handbook, it is not our intent to develop a set of expectations, which are confining or restrictive. Instead, a common ground of clearly understood policies as formulated by the Board of Directors and as followed by dedicated team members will enable us to provide the best possible care and education for every student. If problems or concerns occur, we are available to discuss and help resolve any situation. Feel free to call me at 353-3871 and arrange a conference if the need arises.

Sincerely,

Adrianne Kozar
Executive Director

MISSION STATEMENT

Amarillo Montessori Academy's mission is to foster independent, confident, academically prepared, and socially responsible citizens, who will be lifelong learners and problem solvers.

NOTICE OF NONDISCRIMINATION POLICY REGARDING STUDENTS

This school admits students of any race, color, national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship and loan programs, athletic and other school-administered programs.

SCHOOL HOURS

Amarillo Montessori Academy is open 7:00 AM to 6:00 PM Monday through Friday. Office hours are 7:30 AM to 6:00 PM. Elementary school hours are 8:30 AM to 3:30 PM. The Amarillo Montessori Academy calendar is reviewed annually by the Board of Directors and Executive Director. Please check AMA's website for the current calendar.

ENROLLMENT REQUIREMENTS

Amarillo Montessori Academy accepts Infants, Toddler students ages 14 months-2; Bridge class students ages 2-3 (not potty-trained); Early Childhood students ages 3-6; and children in grades 1st-5th, into the Montessori program.

We must have an enrollment form and a medical history form BEFORE the first day of school. We must also have an immunization record and a written statement from a licensed health care professional who has examined the child within the past year, certifying that each child under the age of five can participate in the program within one week of admission. (This is not necessary for the elementary students.)

In the case of divorce or grandparents with custody, guardianship may need to be proven by submitting a legal document.

Returning students are required to fill out a new enrollment form and update medical history and immunization forms.

A non-refundable fee is due upon enrollment. Early registration in the spring prior to the academic year guarantees that a place will be held for the child.

Enrollment changes must be done through the office and go into effect on the first of the following month. The school needs a two-week notice of change in enrollment status so that teacher/student ratios will comply. Failure to give two weeks' notice of withdrawal will result in tuition being charged for two weeks past a student's unenrollment.

NOTICES TO PARENTS

Notes from teachers and the office will go home periodically in the student backpacks and lunchboxes. Information pertaining to every student will be sent via e-mail. Information pertaining to every student will be sent via e-mail and/or Brightwheel. Parents are expected to check Brightwheel regularly.

HEALTH INFORMATION

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS: MEDICAL HISTORY

By Texas state law, all children are required to have current immunizations to enter a school or day care center: Mumps, Measles, Rubella, Diphtheria, Tetanus, Pertussis, Polio, Varicella (Chicken pox), Hepatitis B, Hepatitis A, Hib and PCV-7. Recommended, but not required, is a tuberculosis test. A copy of your child's immunization card from your family physician, clinic, or public health department documenting the number and types of doses and the date on which they were given, is preferred. If your physician does not give all the immunizations listed, he/she must supply a written statement to that effect. There are only two exceptions allowed to this requirement for immunizations. One is a doctor's statement that the required immunizations would be injurious to the health or well-being of the child; the other is an affidavit signed by the parents.

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Service require that a current medical history form, or an acceptable substitute, must be in the child's file in the office **WITHIN ONE WEEK OF THE CHILD'S ADMISSION**. This form also contains a history of childhood diseases, chronic conditions, and physical limitations that the school should know about. Returning students must renew this form annually, due to changes in immunization requirements and physical conditions. We must also have a physicians' statement stating your child is well enough to attend day care.

Amarillo Montessori Academy does not require proof of vaccines for employees; however, we encourage employees to immunize themselves based off the recommendations of the Advisory Committee on Immunization Practices of the Center for Disease Control Prevention.

LEGAL REQUIREMENTS: SCREENING

All children 4 years old or older are required by Health and Safety Code: Chapter 36, "Special Senses and Communication Disorders," to be screened for possible hearing and vision problems. The screening must be done "prior to completion of the first semester of enrollment or within 120 calendar days of enrollment, whichever is longer, or must present evidence of screening conducted one year prior to enrollment."

By this law, Amarillo Montessori Academy is required to report the vision and hearing screening to the Texas Department of Health and each child's record must be in his/her file always. The school provides these screenings by having trained professionals conduct them. Parents may choose to have their health professional do the screening and bring the forms to the school during the first semester of the school year.

TRANSPORTATION

Parents provide all transportation for their children enrolled at the Academy. Safety on the parking lot at arrival and dismissal time is the responsibility of every staff member of the school as well as every parent.

Arrival: Parents with children in before-school care, 7:00 to 8:15, must bring the children into the building and leave them with a staff member.

Dismissal: Infant/Toddler will be dismissed from their classrooms and Bridge/Pre-school/Elementary children will be dismissed from the front for school day and half-day. All other children will be dismissed from their classrooms. Parents will be billed six dollars per hour for after school childcare after 3:30 pm. Parents should park and come into the school to sign the child out of the after-school program. If your child is in late care and is still here after 6:00 you will be charged \$5 per minute. We are licensed to be open until 6:00 p.m., having children here after 6:00 p.m. puts our license in jeopardy.

RELEASE OF CHILDREN

Children may only be released to parents, or a person designated by the parent. Parents must call the school or send a signed note when designating someone to pick up their child. The staff will ask to see a picture ID of the person, may photocopy it, or write down the driver's license number, and the school will keep this record in the child's file for three months. If the staff member does not recognize the parent, they may ask to see the parent's photo ID.

Gang Free Zone

House Bill 2086 passed during the 81st Legislature, Regular Session, Chapter 42 of the Human Resources Code includes section 42.064, effective September 1, 2009. This

statute requires that information about gang-free zones be distributed to parents and guardians of children in care at licensed childcare centers. A gang-free zone is a designated area around a specific location where prohibited gang related activity is subject to increased penalty under Texas law. The gang-free zone is within 1000 feet of your childcare center.

PROCEDURES FOR ILLNESS AT SCHOOL

TDFPS Minimum Standard 746.3601 states that: An ill child must not be admitted for care if one or more of the following exists:

1. The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in activities.
2. The illness results in a greater need for care than the staff can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children.
3. The child has any of the following:
 - a. Armpit temperature of 100 or greater that is accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness until medical evaluation indicates that the child can be included in the center's activities.
 - b. Symptoms or signs of possible severe illness [such as lethargy, uncontrolled breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, vomiting illness (two or more episodes within 24 hours)] rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, wheezing, behavior changes, or other unusual signs until medical evaluation indicates that the child can be included in the facility's activities.
4. The child has been diagnosed with a communicable disease, until medical evaluation determines that the child is no longer contagious and can participate in the facility's activities.

If a student becomes too ill to remain in class, we will reach you by phone and expect you to pick the child up within half an hour. This is one reason it is so important that we have an updated, working phone number on the emergency card to reach you. If you are not available, we will call the emergency contact number on your enrollment form. Your child may wait in the office, or he/she may lie down on a mat, whichever is most comfortable, until you arrive.

Please notify the school if the child is to be out more than two days because of illness, and in the case of communicable disease. Written permission from the child's physician, or other readmission criteria, is necessary for the child to return to school after having a communicable or serious disease.

MEDICATION

If medication is to be administered at school, these guidelines must be followed:

1. Prescription medicine must be in the original container with the doctor's instructions.
2. Over the counter medicine must be in the original container.
3. Parents must fill out a medical administration form (available in the classrooms) with dates and times to administer medicine and the amount to be given.
4. Medicine will be stored in and administered from the classrooms.

IN THE EVENT OF INJURY AT SCHOOL

If your child receives a minor injury on the playground or in the classroom, we will clean it with hydrogen peroxide, put a band-aid on it, and give the child a hug, and send him or her off to play. Minimum Standard 746.3607 states: "If critical illness or injury requires the immediate attention of a physician, you must:

1. Contact emergency medical services or take the child to the nearest emergency room.
2. Give the child first-aid treatment or CPR when needed.
3. Contact the physician identified in the child's record.
4. Contact the child's parents.
5. Ensure supervision of other children in the group."

The child's medical history form has a place for you to sign, authorizing emergency medical care in the event of serious injury. It is imperative that we have the name of your physician on your child's medical history form.

We inspect our building and playground for safety hazards continuously. In addition, we are required by law to have several official inspections done every year. Your child's safety is one of our main concerns.

SAFETY PREPAREDNESS

Each year the staff of Amarillo Montessori Academy is trained in First Aid and CPR. The school holds regular drills to teach pupils and teachers to respond calmly in the event of an emergency. Fire drills are conducted monthly and storm drills are conducted four times a year. Detailed escape plans are posted inside the door to each classroom. Each class has an escape route to an outside area a safe distance from the building. During tornado drills each classroom goes to a designated area within the building. All children sit with hands covering their head, which rests on their knees. Since the school is located near an Interstate Highway, the staff has been trained with RANDALL LOCAL EMERGENCY PLANNING COMMITTEE to learn the proper procedures for a hazardous materials incident. Lockdown drills are also conducted every other month.

SEVERE WEATHER POLICY

In the event AISD closes, the Academy will also be closed. Please watch television, Brightwheel and AMA's social media pages for announcements.

PETS AT SCHOOL

Staff members may, from time to time, bring pets to school. Parents will be notified when pets will be present at the school. Parents have the right to refuse contact between their child and the pet. All records for pets are kept on file in the office and parents are welcome to review these records.

ATTENDANCE

Students are expected to be in school except in cases of illness, emergency, or school-approved absences. Students are expected to maintain a level of attendance, which enables them to meet their responsibilities as learners. Students and their parents/guardians hold the main responsibility for school attendance; therefore, the school asks for your cooperation in these matters so that students can receive the best education possible.

Steps to follow when absent:

1. Parents should call the school by 8:30 AM every day the student misses. (Please leave a message on the answering machine.) Parents may also send a note to the teacher stating the reason for the absence.
2. A doctor's statement may be required for an extended illness.
3. If your child cannot go outside to play, he/she must bring a note stating the reason for being excused. Frequent or extended absences from recess or P.E. may require a doctor's statement.

Early Departures check-out procedures:

If the child needs to leave during the day, the teacher should be notified in writing. The teacher can then share this information with office personnel so that all staff members responsible for your child will be aware of this.

TARDINESS

Many classes have their group time first thing in the morning. Many classes do most of their group activities now, such as science or Montessori lessons on Grace and Courtesy. Missing the beginning of class affects the child like missing the start of a race affects a runner. They never seem to catch up, and they're not sure what they missed. The children will miss many valuable experiences if they are arriving late each day. We ask that you weigh this when considering what time, you will bring your child to school. Your child may not be dropped off at the school later than 9:00 without prior approval from the office. A pattern of late arrivals, as recorded on the attendance records, will be

discussed at the parent-teacher conferences. If the child is not making the expected progress, the issue of tardiness will need to be examined.

TOYS

No toys should be sent to school. The Montessori prepared environment is rich with materials and activities that interest the children and meet their need for meaningful occupations. Toys are a distraction for all the children. Toys have been known to go home with the wrong child, leaving everybody feeling bad.

CLOTHING FOR THE TWO TO FIVE-YEAR-OLD CHILD

Children should be dressed in washable, comfortable clothing for school. Much of the child's work is done on rugs on the floor. The children work with water and paint, and even though cover-ups are worn, the children can sometimes get wet. *Please bring an extra outfit of clothing to school for all 2 to 5-year-old children.*

Canvas athletic shoes or soft leather shoes are recommended. Quiet and graceful movement is emphasized. Boxer pants that will pull down easily are recommended for little boys. If your little girl wears a dress, please have her wear shorts or leggings underneath. Belts, buckles, hard snaps, and zippers are very difficult for young children to control. Label all clothing with your child's name.

Dr. Montessori said, "Help your child help himself." Please be observant of what clothing is bought for the child. Young children can and should dress and undress themselves. Buying clothing that will be easy for him/ her to get in and out of is always wise.

NAP AND REST TIME

The Texas Department of Family and Protective Services, through the "Minimum Standards for Day Care Centers," regulate much of what we do in our preschool classes. Minimum Standard 746.2901 states, "a supervised rest period after the noon meal and not lasting longer than three hours, must be provided." All full day pre-kindergarten children are required to bring something to lie down on for rest time.

If the pre-K child goes to sleep, he/she is allowed to sleep until 2:00 PM. Children who do not sleep are allowed to get up after one hour and can work quietly. Folding mats and blankets are preferred for preschoolers. No sleeping bags or full-size pillows are allowed due to limited storage space. These mats and blankets will be sent home weekly to be cleaned and are to be returned the next school day.

LUNCH BOXES

Please enclose an ice pack with cold lunches and put warm food in thermoses. We have limited refrigerator space and we have limited time to warm foods. Microwaves are

available in each class; however, time is limited to two minutes for warming foods. We cannot “cook” frozen lunches or foods that take more than two minutes to prepare.

AMA provides meal options every day at an additional cost. Raising Cane’s-Monday; Sonic-Tuesday; Chick-fil-A- Wednesday; Firehouse Subs-Thursday; and Little Caesars-Friday. These choices are voluntary, and the cost will be determined each school year.

BREAST FEEDING POLICY

AMA welcomes mothers to breastfeed their child while they attend. The mother is welcome to breastfeed in the infant classroom or in the room beside Room 1 if they prefer privacy.

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

In our efforts to keep parents informed about student progress, the following measures are employed:

1. Pupils’ sharing of papers and experiences is encouraged.
2. Intermittent notes, phone calls, and conferences are utilized.
3. A half hour parent-teacher conference will be held each fall and spring for all students. Other meetings can be scheduled as needed.

DISCIPLINE POLICY

The Montessori philosophy is such that each person within the environment has certain rights and privileges. Ground rules are set up by and for the class and are expected to be followed for the social cohesion of the group. The aim of the method, in the words of Dr. Montessori, is *“The idea is to like what we do, but not do as we like.”* When the rights of an individual within the environment are infringed upon, positive steps for correction are taken.

The following shall be measures taken in disciplinary actions:

1. A positive example is modeled by the teacher.
2. The teacher will counsel with the child.
3. The lesson on proper conduct will be repeated with the child.
4. If the child cannot control him/herself, the teacher will hold the child’s hand
5. The child may sit in a quiet area of the classroom.
6. The child may be isolated with supervision.
7. The teacher and/or child will communicate with the parents about the problem.
8. If necessary, a meeting will be arranged with the director, parents, and teacher.
9. If determined to be appropriate or necessary by the Executive Director, a child may be suspended from AMA.

10. If determined to be appropriate or necessary by the Executive Director, a child may be disenrolled/expelled from AMA.

DISCIPLINE POLICY FOR ABUSIVE AND OBSCENE LANGUAGE

The use of abusive and/or obscene language will not be tolerated at the Amarillo Montessori Academy.

1. The child will be advised one time not to use abusive or obscene language and the parents will be notified.
2. Upon recurrence, the child will be removed from the school and the parents will pick up the child and take him or her home.
3. If the offense is repeated, the child will be suspended and will not return to school until he/she understands that the offense will not be repeated.
4. The final step will be withdrawal from the program.

DISENROLMENT/WITHDRAWAL

AMA believes in working collaboratively with parents and students to address any behavior issues or concerns that may arise. Unfortunately, from time to time, issues or concerns cannot be resolved in a manner that protects the child or other children at AMA. AMA reserves the right to disenroll a student if it is in the best interest of the child, or other children at AMA.

NUTRITION

Full-day children bring a lunch. Please pack the lunch with the following 5 components.

1. Meat or meat substitute: egg, cheese, peanut butter, beans
2. Bread, crackers, pasta, rice
3. A Vegetable (or substitute 2 fruit components)
4. A Fruit (or substitute 2 vegetable components)
5. Dairy product

Please do not send juice, soda, or candy in the child's lunch box. These items will be sent home.

How often children must be fed?

1. You must offer each child in care for less than four hours at least one snack as specified in 746.3307 of this title (relating to What kind of foods must I serve for snacks?).
2. Must offer each child in care for four to seven hours one meal and one snack,
3. Must offer each child in care for more than seven hours two meals and one snack, or two snacks and one meal, equal to $\frac{1}{2}$ of their daily food needs.

How do I know what a child's daily food needs are?

1. You must serve enough food to allow children second servings for the vegetable, fruit, grain, and milk groups.

Some suggestions from parents for lunch items (remember, we have a microwave in each classroom):

- Leftovers from the night before
- Flat bread or tortillas with lunch meat, cream cheese, cheese or peanut butter rolled up
- Raw vegetable sticks with dip
- Fresh fruit cut up (lemon or orange juice will prevent discoloration)
- Mandarin Oranges
- Macaroni and cheese
- Peanut butter sandwiches cut with a cookie cutter
- Rice cakes with peanut butter & bananas, pimento cheese or cream cheese & cucumber
- Cottage cheese with fruit
- Salad veggies in a bag with dressing on the side to toss in the bag
- Hot dog wrapped in a tortilla
- Boiled eggs
- Refried bean dip with chips and veggies

One of these dessert items would be acceptable:

- Fruit roll-ups
- Fruit snacks
- Jell-O
- Pudding
- Sweet Muffins
- Rice Crispy Treats
- Cookies
- Cakes
- Philly Cream Cheese Bars
- Kudos bars
- Cracker Jacks

TDPRS Minimum Standard 746.3309 states parents must provide the daily nutritional needs for their child if the childcare center does not provide meals for them. However, an enrollment agreement signed by the parent must include a statement that the parent is choosing to provide the child's meals and/or snacks from home and the parent understands the child-care center is not responsible for its nutritional value or for meeting the child's daily food needs.

**I, THE UNDERSIGNED PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN OF _____,
UNDERSTAND THAT THE CHILD CARE CENTER IS NOT RESPONSIBLE FOR MEETING MY
CHILD'S DAILY FOOD NEEDS AND I AGREE THAT I WILL UNDERTAKE THAT
RESPONSIBILITY.**

PARENT/LEGAL GUARDIAN SIGNATURE: _____

SPECIAL OCCASIONS

The school plans several special occasions each year that include all parents, children, and other interested people. The all-school special events include a Covered Dish Dinner in the fall and the spring. Additionally, we hold Wing Wars in the fall and Hullabaloo in the spring.

Parents can plan holiday parties and birthday celebrations for each class. We ask that you plan for treats that are not an overdose of sugar. Many students are sensitive to sugar. The overactive, aggressive behavior that can be caused by sugar can ruin the rest of the day for the entire class. We also ask that balloons not be brought to school as party favors. Balloons are not appropriate for children under eight years of age due to the choking hazard.

As a non-profit corporation, the Academy holds an annual meeting of members in the Spring. All parents with children in the school are members and are encouraged to attend.

CHILD ABUSE REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

AMA staff are required by Texas state law and licensing requirements to report immediately to the police or Child Protective Services any instance where there is reason to suspect the occurrence of physical, sexual, emotional child abuse, child neglect or exploitation. Our staff receives annual training on recognizing and preventing abuse and neglect, including sexual abuse. (Please see flyer regarding the signs of abuse and neglect at the end of the manual.)

The staff may not notify parents when the police or CPS are called about abuse, neglect, or exploitation, except on the recommendation of CPS or the police when they are called.

If parents feel they need assistance with possible child abuse, neglect, or sexual abuse, we encourage you to get help. Please call the National Parent Hotline at 1-855-427-2736 or visit www.helpandhope.org/find-help.html.

The statewide Abuse and Neglect phone number is 1-800-252-5400, if you would like to report and suspected abuse or neglect.

Once again, welcome to the Amarillo Montessori Academy! The staff is here to work with your family to make your child's education and care the very best it can be.

I acknowledge that I have received and read the parent handbook for AMA.

Signature _____

Date _____

DIGITAL RECORDING & VIDEO SURVEILLANCE POLICY

To ensure the protection and security of the children who attend Amarillo Montessori Academy (the “Academy”), the teachers and staff employed by the Academy, parents of children and visitors to the Academy, the Academy is equipped with a video surveillance system and security cameras that monitor and record each classroom, as well as common areas of the Academy facilities and property. Cameras are in childcare areas but are not in bathrooms, diaper changing areas, or administrative offices.

Because we value and respect the privacy of all children, parents, teachers, and staff at the Academy, the video surveillance system and security cameras are for internal purposes only. The video feed and images are stored off site on a secure hard drive and are viewable at the Academy on a mounted television screen and/or computer located in the Academy’s Administrative Offices. Video cannot be viewed remotely by parents and will not include a live video-streaming system for parent observation.

The video footage will not be used for any unlawful or inappropriate purpose, including but not limited to any violation of the legal rights (including the rights of privacy and publicity) of other or the transmission of any defamatory, harmful, obscene, threatening, vulgar, profane, abusive, or racially, ethnically, or otherwise objectionable or unlawful material.

Video footage will be viewed only in certain circumstances, including: (1) when an incident occurs requiring report and investigation by Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Child Care Licensing; (2) when any child is injured requiring medical attention; (3) when any employee is injured requiring medical attention; and (4) when any inappropriate behavior is alleged or suspected to have occurred.

If any incident delineated above occurs, the applicable video footage will be viewed first by the Executive Director. At his/her discretion, the footage may then be viewed by the member of the Executive Board. At the request of the Executive Director and/or a member of the Executive Board, the footage may also be viewed by the Academy’s attorney. In the event the matter is not resolved at this point, the footage

may, upon request, be viewed by a teacher, staff, or other employee involved in the delineated incident and his/her legal representative, if any. At the Executive Director's discretion, video footage may be used for training purposes with staff.

At any time, the footage may be viewed by a representative of the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services Child Care Licensing. The Academy will maintain video footage for a period of thirty (30) days. The Academy will not, and is not obligated to, archive or otherwise maintain videotape or other reproduction of the content which appears on the video for future reference beyond thirty (30) days.

I, undersigned, agree that I have read and understand this Digital Recording & Video Surveillance Policy and I agree to comply with all policies and procedures contained herein.

Signature_____

Date_____