

Willow Oak

Montessori

CHILDREN'S HOUSE

Parent Handbook 2016-2017

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Section 1: About Willow Oak Montessori

Introduction

Welcome to Willow Oak Montessori Children's House. We are very grateful that you have chosen to be a part of our vibrant Montessori community. This handbook has been developed to help you as parents understand both what is expected of you and what you can expect of us in return. Our goal is an open and trustworthy community that models the respect and interdependence we hope to cultivate in our children. Questions and comments are both welcome and necessary for us to continue to grow and share the benefits of a Montessori education with more children in our community. Thank you again for your support in building a healthy Montessori community here in Chatham County!

Our Mission Statement

Willow Oak Montessori strives to assist children in achieving their unique potential as responsible global citizens by nurturing self-confidence and independent decision making in a stimulating, creative, and diverse Montessori community.

A Brief History

In 1996, Pittsboro Montessori Preschool was formed by a group of parents as a non-profit organization with the goal of creating "a quality Montessori preschool at an affordable price." Originally housed in Hill House, the old rectory at St. Bartholomew's Episcopal Church in Pittsboro, the Preschool moved to its current location in the North Chatham Community Center in 2003.

Due to difficulty securing a Montessori-certified teacher in 2004, the school ceased operations at that time until a group of parents again worked together to reopen the school in August 2007 at the Hamlet Chapel Road location. The school had a wait list by October of that year.

Pittsboro Montessori hired its first part-time Director in August 2008. In 2009, the Board engaged in a robust process to develop its internal capacity for governance and expanded the role of the Director into a true part-time Head of School. We opened our second primary classroom that same year.

In 2012, the School changed its name to Willow Oak Montessori Children's House and the Board of Directors submitted a successful application to open a public Montessori charter school in Chatham County. The Willow Oak Montessori Charter School opened as a separate legal entity in August of 2013. The Willow Oak Montessori Foundation was formed shortly thereafter to financially support both schools and be the ownership organization for large assets, like the shared campus being planned for Andrew's Store Road in Chatham County. Occupancy of the new campus uniting both the Children's House and Charter School is anticipated by August 2018. Openingdoors.willowoakmontessori.org

Statement of Non-Discrimination

Willow Oak Montessori admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to its students. The School does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, sexual orientation, family structure, or national and ethnic origin in administration of its admission policies, educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other programs administered by the School.

Code of Ethics

Willow Oak Montessori Children’s House is an Associate Member School of the American Montessori Society (AMS). As such, we have adopted the [AMS Code of Ethics](#), which can be reviewed on the American Montessori Society website.

Board of Directors/Administration

Willow Oak Montessori Children’s House, Inc. is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization governed by a volunteer Board of Directors. The Board of Directors has hired a Head of School to implement its policies in the day-to-day operation of the school. The same Board governs the Willow Oak Montessori Foundation and the Willow Oak Montessori Charter School. Board meetings are held once a month at 50101 Governors Drive, Suite 170, Chapel Hill, in the evening and are open to the public. There are also several Committees that serve Willow Oak Montessori Children’s House, Charter School and Foundation. For a listing of our current board members and their bios, please visit <http://foundation.willowoakmontessori.org/board-of-directors>. For a listing of current administration and faculty at Children’s House, please visit <http://childrenshouse.willowoakmontessori.org/faculty>.

Organization Structure

Effective communication is critical to ensure a healthy community. To ensure that your questions or concerns are answered most effectively and efficiently, please use the following organization chart as a guide when deciding whom to discuss a particular concern with.

Area of Concern	Contact
Montessori Curriculum Inquiries Child-specific questions or concerns Academics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Classroom Activities ● Classroom Procedures Parent/Teacher Conferences Classroom Volunteer Opportunities	Your Lead Teacher(s) Julie Killian julie@willowoakmontessori.org Veda Puglia vpuglia@willowoakmontessori.org
Leadership & Oversight of day-to-day Operations Community Building Volunteer Opportunities Suggestions for Parent Partnership events	Assistant Head of School Luanne Bannan lbannan@willowoakmontessori.org
Admissions <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Inquiries ● Enrollment Scheduling <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Classroom Observations ● Parent/Teacher Conferences ● Family Consultations re: Admissions 	Director of Admissions and Scheduling Julie Killian Julie@willowoakmontessori.org
Administration <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● School Operating Policies ● Staff and Personnel ● Substitute Teachers ● School Calendar Financial Aid/Scholarships Marketing & Public Relations <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Advertising 	Head of School Pete Rubinas Pete@willowoakmontessori.org Business Manager

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Website 	<p>Melissa Frey mfrey@willowoakmontessori.org</p>
<p>Governance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head of School and Board • Board Policies • Development/Fundraising • Board Development/Board Membership 	<p>Board President</p> <p>Heather Rainville hrainville@willowoakmontessori.org</p>
<p>Financial Policies and Procedures</p>	<p>Board Treasurer</p> <p>Brystana Kaufman bkaufman@willowoakmontessori.org</p>

Communication

Willow Oak Montessori will use a variety of methods to help keep you informed about what is happening at the school on a regular basis. Most school-wide reminders and communications will be sent via e-mail to conserve paper and enhance efficiency. Lead Teachers have flexibility regarding how they will communicate with the parents in their classrooms. Classroom-specific communication procedures will be discussed during the Parent Orientation session at the beginning of the year.

The school calendar can be located on the school's website. Please check the calendar on a regular basis to ensure that you are aware of teacher workdays, holidays, and parent information nights.

If a child's parents are separated, divorced, or not residing at the same address for some other reason, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and other school matters. Given permission, we will send all correspondence to any parent with whom the child does not reside. Please notify the Assistant Head of School and your teacher if this applies to you. When parent/teacher conferences are scheduled, please make every effort to avoid separate conferences. It is very important that we be able to communicate the same information to both parents at the same time.

Willow Oak Montessori has an open door policy between families and staff. Any time you need to speak with a staff member, please consult the chart on page 4 and contact the appropriate staff member to set up an appointment. We welcome your comments, questions, and observations.

The Montessori Philosophy

And so we discovered that education is not something which the teacher does, but that it is a natural process which develops spontaneously in the human being. It is not acquired by listening to words, but by virtue of experiences in which the child acts on his environment. The teacher's task is not to talk, but to prepare and arrange a series of motives for cultural activity in a special environment made for the child ... our educational aim with very young children must be to aid the spontaneous development of this mental, spiritual and physical personality.

-Dr. Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori, M.D. (1870-1952) was a leader in the field of early childhood education. Her outstanding success first at Rome's Orthophrenic School and later at the first "Children's House" was attributed primarily to her methods and materials.

Dr. Montessori discovered that children have an inherent drive for independence and that their physical, mental, and emotional development is linked to purposeful movement. She observed that even very young children have exceptional powers of concentration. Most importantly, she noted that children learn

in a manner that is unique to each age (e.g., the very young child unconsciously absorbs his environment). She concluded that adults do not teach children - children teach themselves.

A Montessori classroom is a multi-age setting in which children learn **from** each other and **because of** each other. Younger children are excited to "see what is coming" as they observe older children work. Older children reinforce their knowledge as they share it with younger children. Everyone learns to take responsibility for themselves, the group, and the environment.

Montessori staff prepare a beautiful, rich, and ordered environment so that each child will feel safe, secure, challenged, and respected. When the child first becomes intensely absorbed in his/her work, he/she has taken the initial step toward genuine self-discipline. In the words of Dr. Montessori, "A child who can control himself is free to learn." Our job, as educators, is to assist in this process.

The Montessori teacher is often described as the spark that links each child to the environment. She/he guides the child through the curriculum, based upon observations of each child's interests and periods of readiness. The Montessori method is itself oriented toward the experience of learning so that children learn how to learn. In this way, Dr. Montessori described her approach as a "help to life" rather than an educational system in the conventional sense.

A child who is observant, organized, excited, self-disciplined, and task-oriented discovers the feeling of self-confidence that accompanies a job well done. Such a child becomes a life-long learner.

Section 2: Financial Information

Tuition and Fees

All new students must pay a one-time non-refundable joining fee of \$350. Tuition is \$5,640 for the year. Monthly tuition payments are due by the 15th day of each month (on the 5th, 10th, or 15th of the month) between July and May, except February. We offer a break in February since that is re-enrollment time. A late fee of \$29 applies for all payments received after the due date selected in TADS. Any payment not made within 30 days of the due date will result in forfeiture of the security deposit on account and immediate withdrawal of the child from the School. Additional information about tuition and fees is detailed in the Tuition Agreement, which must be signed to secure a spot in the classroom.

Security Deposit

A security deposit equal to one month's tuition (\$564) must be submitted within 14 days of a spot being offered to hold that spot in the class. Because tuition is paid one month in advance, 1/10th of the security deposit will be applied to the account each month until tuition is paid in full for the year. Failure to provide 30 days' written notice of student withdrawal from the School will result in forfeiture of an amount equal to the original security deposit (one month's tuition) when any refund is calculated.

Miscellaneous Expenses

Other expenses that will occur during the school year include the cost of restocking the food pantry for the classroom for approximately two to three weeks of the school year, purchasing flowers for the classroom, purchasing items for classroom pet care, purchasing items for special days (Juicing Day, Tie Dye Day) and possible field trip fees. You may also choose to participate in fundraisers and other optional activities that occur over the course of the school year.

Financial Aid

Willow Oak Montessori strives to keep a high-quality Montessori education accessible to as many families as possible. A limited number of financial aid scholarships are available to the families most in need of assistance, as determined by an independent third-party financial aid firm. Additional information can be found on the [Admissions page](#) of our website. To be considered in the first round of financial aid decisions, please apply as early as possible.

Development

Willow Oak Montessori Children's House is a non-profit organization which is aided in various ways including by the Willow Oak Montessori Foundation, a non-profit support organization for both the Children's House and Charter School. The Foundation runs an Annual Fund for the Children's House to support daily operations in addition to an annual Spring Festival and a capital campaign, Opening Doors to the World, to support the creation of a shared campus for both schools. We are very grateful for all contributions of time and money to further the development of our school. Please visit openingdoors.willowoakmontessori.org for more details on the capital campaign.

Section 3: Admissions and Enrollment

Admissions Procedures

The admissions process for Willow Oak Montessori Children's House begins with attending one of our Open Houses or scheduling a "parent only" classroom observation. Open Houses are great opportunities for parents and children to visit our school and see the classrooms. Open Houses are designed to acquaint prospective families with the mission of the school, the Montessori philosophy and its implementation in the classroom through Montessori methods. The adult only classroom observation is a great opportunity for parents to see the classroom in action.

The next step is to complete the online admissions application. A link to the application is available on the school's website. Interested families should complete and submit an application with the non-refundable application fee to TADS. Once an application has been received, the School will contact the family to arrange a Family Consultation.

The Family Consultation is designed to allow families a chance to ask questions specific to their child/children and the Montessori method. Potential students are required to attend the Consultation. A Family Consultation and a completed admission application are required for a student to be considered for admission.

Applicants with special needs or family members of applicants requiring any type of accommodation during the admissions process are encouraged to indicate what type of accommodation is needed.

Siblings of current students must also complete an application by the due date and participate in a Family Consultation specific to that child.

Re-enrollment/Enrollment Timetable

Prior to the start of the admissions process each year, Willow Oak Montessori will conduct a review of each student's growth to determine if the school can continue to meet the student's needs and will discuss that review with the student's parents, if necessary, before issuing a new tuition agreement for the coming year. In order to secure a space for their child for the following school year, parents must submit their security deposit and complete the re-enrollment forms issued by TADS by the specified due date.

Specific dates for newly enrolling students will be published in January of each school year, but the admissions process typically follows this general timetable:

Beginning of February.....	Online Applications available via website
End of February.....	Applications due for new students to be considered in first admissions pool
Beginning of March.....	Families notified of admissions decisions (admitted, placed in waiting pool, etc.)
Beyond March.....	Applications continued to be accepted

Placement of Students

Since Montessori values each child's uniqueness, Montessori schools place students according to readiness, not age. Several important factors are considered when placing a child in a particular classroom, including age and gender balance, ethnic diversity, and volume of diverse learning needs served by that classroom.

It is always our hope that every child admitted to Willow Oak Montessori Children's House will thrive here, but despite our best efforts, this is not always possible. We sometimes find that even after receiving the benefit of educational support services and intervention strategies as described in our Policy on Learning Differences, a child may continue to exhibit either a lack of academic progress or a pattern of situationally inappropriate behavior that disrupts the student's own learning and/or the learning of others. In these cases, the School may need to meet with the child's parents to discuss educational options other than Willow Oak Montessori Children's House. If the school and family decide that Willow Oak Montessori is not an appropriate placement for the child, we will work with the child's family to explore alternate appropriate placements.

Official classroom assignments are released to parents during the week prior to the start of the school year or sooner if we are able. Children will remain in the same classroom while enrolled at Willow Oak Montessori. The stability afforded by this practice is foundational to the success of a Montessori classroom.

We do not generally entertain requests for specific classroom assignments. In the event that a parent feels that there are extraordinary circumstances regarding their child's classroom placement, the parent may send a written request to the Head of School explaining those circumstances. The Head of School and the Assistant Head of School will meet with the parents to discuss the circumstances outlined in the request.

In the event that classroom teaching partners will change from one school year to the next, parents of children returning to that particular classroom will be notified as soon as possible.

Section 4: Health and Safety

Emergency information forms must be completed and on file with the school prior to your child's first day of attending school.

Illness Policy

To maintain a safe and healthy school environment for all of our students, please respect our Illness policy, which requires temporary exclusion from school when your child has the following conditions:

- Fever of 100 degrees or higher (non-medicated)
- Upper respiratory tract infection
- Vomiting
- Diarrhea
- Strep throat
- Conjunctivitis
- Ringworm/pinworm
- Impetigo
- Chicken Pox

Your child may return to school after he/she is symptom free for at least 24 hours with a written note from a parent or doctor. Since Willow Oak Montessori Children's House does not have an infirmary, home is the best place for a sick child. Thus, if your child is sent home from school due to one of the above health matters, he/she may not return to school the next day.

If your child becomes sick at school, we will contact you, or your emergency contact if you cannot be reached, to pick up your child immediately. Your child will be separated from other children. If your child is diagnosed with a contagious or communicable disease, please notify the school immediately so that we can inform other parents that their child has been exposed (your child's information will be kept confidential). We are required to notify the Chatham County Public Health Department of any communicable disease.

Head Lice Policy

The School will take prompt action to eliminate the threat of head lice. Head lice do not represent a disease or infection, and can therefore be readily treated. Since lice are transmittable, any student School staff suspect of having head lice will be sent home promptly for treatment. The student may not return to the School until treatment has been received and a School staff has determined that no head lice or live nits are present. The School will provide assistive information to parents about head lice, as needed. Any

member of the School community who knows of a manifestation of head lice should report this to a responsible staff member.

Immunizations

All children should have a completed immunization record, or valid exemption, on file in the school office prior to the first day of school. While Willow Oak Montessori Children's House does not require specific vaccinations for children attending the school, we do require that each family provide a written vaccination record so we can be sure to communicate effectively with families of unvaccinated children should they be exposed to a contagious illness at school. We do anticipate *requiring* children to be vaccinated, or have a valid exemption for the 2018-2019 school year when we plan to move to our new, unified, shared campus with Willow Oak Montessori Charter School.

Chronic Health Conditions

If your child has a chronic health condition, such as diabetes or asthma, that affects your child's school day, you must inform the Assistant Head of School prior to the first day of school. We must have information regarding the nature and severity of the health problem, symptoms to be aware of, treatment your child is receiving from a health care professional, and any emergency procedures. The Assistant Head of School and classroom teachers, in consultation with you and the child's professional health care provider, will complete an Individualized Health Care Plan (IHCP). The School will ensure that the faculty and staff receive appropriate training regarding the interventions specified in the IHCP and/or AAP.

Allergy Policy

Willow Oak Montessori strives to create an environment that is safe and comfortable for all of our students and that supports them in reaching their full potential. Like other members of the general population, some of our students suffer from environmental and food allergies. Unfortunately, the reactions of some students to certain allergens can be serious or even life threatening. While the School cannot guarantee that a student will not be exposed to an allergen, Willow Oak Montessori has adopted the following allergy plan to reduce the risk of exposure that could result in serious or life threatening reactions.

This plan is directed primarily at allergies that can have serious harmful consequences, rather than those to which reactions involve more mild discomfort.

The key to the efficacy of the plan, and the starting point for Willow Oak Montessori staff, is awareness of a student's allergies, the potential reactions, and the course of treatment. In this regard, Willow Oak Montessori must rely upon parents/guardians to provide information regarding their children's allergies to school officials, including classroom teachers. Procedures to be followed for known allergies are as follows:

- Parents should identify all known allergies on the student's emergency information form.
- In the event that the student's likely reaction to the allergen is known to be serious or life threatening, parents should so indicate and should contact the student's classroom teacher directly to discuss the scope of the allergy, the symptoms, and the proper course of treatment. Parents also should provide teachers with information regarding foods or other items that their child must avoid because of the allergy. The Assistant Head of School and classroom teachers, in consultation with

you and the child's professional health care provider, will complete an Allergy Action Plan (AAP). The School will ensure that the faculty and staff receive appropriate training regarding the interventions specified in the AAP.

- Classroom teachers will review all emergency information forms to familiarize themselves with the allergies of students in their classroom environment. They also will review information provided by parents regarding their children's allergies.
- In the event of an allergy that would likely result in a serious or life threatening reaction, the parents and teachers, together with appropriate Willow Oak Montessori staff, will develop a specific written plan for the student within the classroom environment. This may include procedures for minimizing the risk of exposure, communication with other parents and students in the child's class about the allergy, and potential limitations or restrictions on classroom snacks and activities related to the allergy. In developing the child's specific plan, parents of children with allergies should understand the School's need to balance safety concerns regarding the student with the interests and dietary needs of other students. In the event the parents and Willow Oak Montessori are unable to agree, the decision of Willow Oak Montessori staff shall be final.

Emergency Procedures and Medication Policy

Willow Oak Montessori strives to minimize accidents by conducting facility inspections on a regular basis and performing maintenance as needed. Should an accident occur despite these precautions, we request your understanding and cooperation with the following emergency procedures.

1. **Staff Medical Care:** In the event of an emergency medical situation, School personnel who have been trained in CPR and first aid may administer emergency medical attention.
2. **Professional Medical Care:** Written parental permission to call the family physician or refer the child for medical care in case of an accident or emergency shall be on file with the school on completed Emergency Information forms. When a child needs immediate professional care, paramedics will be called. All emergency contacts must be on file when the school year begins.
3. **Treatment of Minor Injuries:** Many children react unexpectedly even to simple medical compounds such as hydrogen peroxide or calamine lotion. Therefore, we will not apply medication to a wound beyond soap, water, and bandage, if necessary. An ice pack may be applied to minor bumps or swelling.

Your child's safety is important to us. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep your emergency contact information up to date at all times.

Please make every effort to see that your child receives necessary medications before or after school hours. We will generally not administer medication during school hours unless specific written instructions are provided by a doctor and we have discussed those instructions with the parents. Please contact the Assistant Head of School to discuss any specific medication requirements.

Hygiene/Toileting/Miscellaneous

We encourage regular hand washing and support children in learning to take care of their bodily needs (for example; blowing and wiping their own nose, "catching" sneezes in their elbow.)

All students must be completely toilet trained prior to the start of school. Young children also learn that “going to the bathroom” is a private activity, where they need to remember to shut the door and if someone is in the bathroom, they must wait their turn. We understand that a toileting accident may happen on occasion. We will encourage your child to clean themselves up as well as they are able and have them change into clean clothing. Staff may NOT assist your child in wiping their bottom after a bowel movement. If a child is having frequent toileting accidents at school, Staff will discuss the issue with parents and a decision will be made about the child’s school readiness.

Willow Oak Montessori staff will NOT apply sunscreen, bug spray or any other over-the-counter substance to your child at school. Please be sure to apply all such substances at home before school hours.

Inclement Weather Policy

Safety of our children and Willow Oak Montessori staff is a top priority. In the event of inclement weather or another condition that causes travel to or from school to be potentially hazardous, we will be closed.

Parents should also use their judgment to determine whether transporting their children to and from school is safe. Parents are always welcome to pick their children up early regardless of the administrative decisions made if they deem the environmental conditions unsafe.

When informed of potentially hazardous weather conditions, all attempts will be made to make a decision in a timely manner (by 6:00 AM for all day closings, if possible) to reduce confusion, to reduce family scheduling conflicts, and to keep people safe. This communication will be sent to parents via e-mail.

We believe that time spent playing and exploring outdoors is an important part of each child's development. As such, students will go outside most days that school is in session. While the Lead Teachers have discretion regarding whether to go outside or not, parents can generally expect that students will not go outside if the wind chill temperature falls below 20°F. If the wind chill temperature is between 20 and 32°F, time outside will generally be limited to 20 minutes.

Safety Drills

We will have monthly fire drills as required. We will also practice tornado and lockdown drills annually.

Section 5: Policies and Procedures

Attendance

To receive the greatest benefit from our Montessori program, your child’s regular attendance is extremely important. Willow Oak Montessori requests that families call the school number at Hamlet Chapel Road as soon as possible to notify the School that their child will be absent.

At the beginning of each year, we have a staggered start. All returning students begin on the first day of school. Newly enrolled students will have their “first day of school” staggered over the rest of the first week of school. We have found that this helps students and the classroom as a whole adjust to the new year!

Each day begins with a classroom circle. This circle helps set the tone for the day and gives each child a sense of belonging, and the structure and consistency that every child needs. Arriving on time (no later

than 8:15) will give your child the opportunity to feel a full member of his/her classroom community, and to avoid that awkward feeling of walking into a situation "late."

Hours of Operation/Drop-off and Pick-up

The school day is 8:00am-12:00pm. Drop-off is between 8:00 and 8:15, and pick-up is from 11:45 to 12:00noon.

Please be prompt when dropping off and picking up your child. When students arrive late, they may miss the introduction of new materials and/or interrupt these lessons for others. When you are late picking up your child, your child may worry and the teachers have a great deal to do to prepare the Montessori classroom for the next day. Please respect their planning and preparation needs with your timely arrival.

Our first priority during drop-off and pick-up is the safety of all of the children. Drop-off and pick-up procedures are similar. The drive in front of 886 Hamlet Chapel Road is a half moon. Traffic goes in one direction EAST to WEST. All cars enter the driveway just EAST of the building and pull to the top of the gravel driveway. We ask parents to pull all the way to the top of the drive to help prevent cars from backing up on Hamlet Chapel Road (in both directions).

A staff member will be outside to meet your child in the morning and to bring your child to your car at the end of the day. Please remain in your car and wait for a teacher to come to you. We know that drop-off and pick-up times will be busy and will require all of us to work together. Please be aware that everyone will have the same stresses during this time. Being polite and thoughtful with one another will go a long way toward making this a more comfortable and efficient process. We understand that young children may not yet be able to buckle and unbuckle themselves. If you need an extra minute to get your child situated, please pull out of the line and park in the grassy area between the driveway and Hamlet Chapel Road.

If you have an urgent message or information for your child's teacher at the time of drop-off, please write it in a short note so the teacher can read it after all of the children are safely taken care of. At the end of the day, please do not engage staff members in lengthy conversations in the pick-up line. Thank you for your support and cooperation.

Children are released only to their parents or to persons authorized to pick up the child on the Emergency Information form on file at the school. In addition, parents may temporarily authorize another person to pick up the child by submitting such authorization in writing to a staff member in advance. Proper identification is required at all times for all authorized persons picking up students.

In the event of a changing family situation in which one parent has custody of a child, Willow Oak Montessori Children's House will continue to release the child to either parent unless and until the school has received a copy of the legal court order indicating custody arrangements.

If at any time, in the best judgment of a staff member, a parent or caregiver who is picking up a child is acting in an unsafe or irresponsible manner, the staff member will not release the child until a spouse or other significant caregiver can be called.

Late Morning Arrival

We appreciate that very occasionally you may arrive after 8:15am. If you arrive after 8:15am, please park your car and escort your child to their class. Please help us maintain our outdoor safety by opening and immediately closing/latching all gates you pass through.

Your child's class may be on the playground or in the classroom. If your child's class is on the playground, walk your child and their belongings directly to the playground. If your child's class is in the building, please walk your child directly to their classroom door and say a quick goodbye at the door. Please be respectful and avoid "cutting through" another classroom as it disrupts the students' work flow.

Late Pick-up

We appreciate that very occasionally you may arrive late to pick up your child. The first three times that you are late, we will remind you that you have arrived after 12noon and that the pick up window is between 11:45am to 12noon. After the third late pick-up, you will be charged \$1 for every minute you are late picking up your child. The Staff will communicate any late pick up charges with the Business Manager. Accumulating more than six late pick-ups will result in our requesting a formal meeting to discuss our expectations and your responsibilities as a Willow Oak Montessori parent.

Clothing

Students will be engaged in activities like painting, washing, and daily outdoor play that require appropriate clothing. Encouraging your child to dress in layers is best on days when temperatures fluctuate. You can help your child build their confidence and independence by providing shoes and clothing that are "easy on/easy off". Be sure to label every piece of clothing, including shoes, with your child's name. Each child is required to have a complete change of clothing, including underwear and socks, at school at all times. Please pack the clothing in a zip-lock style bag, label it with your child's name, and bring it to school on the first day.

Children should have a pair of indoor shoes to wear in the classroom. Please avoid shoes with characters on them, as this can be a distraction. Something simple like crocs, ballet slippers or TOMS work best. Children should also have a pair of rain/mud boots to keep in the classroom in the event of muddy outside play time.

Toys

Children may NOT bring toys to school. Books or other educational materials that are consistent with the curriculum are welcome. Please consult your Lead Teacher if you are unsure about a specific item and be sure the child's name is marked on any books or materials brought to class.

Learning Differences

The Montessori educational philosophy was developed for "at-risk" children. Willow Oak Montessori does not discriminate in its admissions process based on academic development and we strive to serve students from all academic levels. Our goal is a positive educational experience for every child regardless of developmental level or previous diagnosis. Once we decide during the admissions process that we believe that we are able to meet the needs of your child, we will do all we can to make Willow Oak Montessori a wonderful experience for him/her. If at any time, however, our staff believes that your

child is not benefiting from our Montessori environment, we will schedule special conferences with you to develop an action plan. If that plan does not result in positive progress for your child, we will work with you to identify alternative placements that may better meet your child's needs.

Playground/Garden Guidelines

Children have opportunities to stretch their bodies, imaginations and practice their grace and courtesy during daily outdoor time (weather permitting). Our playground/garden area is large and fenced-in. We have structures to climb on, slide down and wiggle through. There is a sandbox and a separate dirt digging area, each with tools for digging. In addition, we have swings, monkey bars, trapeze/rings, scooter bikes, trikes, hula hoops, tires to roll, hopscotch balls to bounce on and balls to kick or toss.

The garden has stepping stone paths throughout it to allow young gardeners the opportunity to touch, sniff and pick the herbs, flowers, veggies and weeds!

To ensure the safety and comfort of all children on the playground, the following guidelines are in place:

- Show care and respect for all the plants, animals (typically insects), play items and other people on the playground.
- Keep your shoes on.
- Keep all tools and balls off of the play structures.
- Digging is allowed in the sandbox and in a designated dirt digging area of the garden.
- Swing while sitting on your bottom or laying on your belly in a straight "back & forth" motion.
- One person at a time at the top of the slide platform, slide down on your bottom, feet first.
- Do not climb to the "tippy top" of the climbing mountain.
- We encourage cooperative, creative, and inclusive play.

Discipline

Willow Oak Montessori believes that discipline is as much an inner process for children as it is an external one. As such, we strive to help our students develop the capacity to manage their personal emotions through self-assessment, self-control, and self-discipline. Ultimately, we hope that they will grow to understand that they are responsible for their choices and actions – to themselves and to the other members of their school community.

Our school serves the educational/developmental needs of children three through six years of age. As such, our approach to discipline must be tailored to individual situations. As a general rule, the Lead Teacher is responsible for helping each child understand how his/her behavior is consistent with the expectations of his/her classroom. The Lead Teacher may need to involve the child's parents, the Assistant Head of School, and/or the Head of School if individual situations warrant further conversation regarding the child's behavior.

Our ultimate goal is a community of mutual respect where each student feels safe to develop his/her potential. The following general guidelines are provided to assist in conversations about discipline.

- Physical or mental abuse of any person will not be tolerated.
- Students and staff members are expected to speak to one another respectfully at all times.
- Students and staff members should take proper care of School materials, equipment, and property.
- Real and toy weapons are not permitted at our School.

- Sexual harassment of students or staff members is strictly prohibited and should be reported immediately to the Head of School and/or the Board President. Sexual harassment is defined to include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that is in any way intimidating or offensive.
- Harassment based on race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation, including demeaning or derogatory remarks or physical action, will not be tolerated and should be reported immediately to the Head of School and/or the Board President. This applies to comments or behaviors directed at students, employees of the School, or any other persons having business with the School.

A simple verbal conversation will often be enough to help a child understand how his/her behavior is not consistent with our community's expectations and possible alternatives to that behavior. If the initial verbal conversation does not change the behavior, Lead Teachers may ask a student to find a quiet spot in the classroom or in the outside environment to take a short break from the class and the behavior in question. If the problem behavior persists, the Lead Teacher will notify the Assistant Head of School, who will call a conference with the parents to discuss the situation.

The School reserves the right to vary from this procedure, including taking action up to and including suspension or immediate dismissal when, in the judgment of the Head of School and/or Assistant Head of School, such action is necessary to protect or serve the interests of the School and its students.

Food Pantry

Each classroom will have a pantry stocked with healthy food options for providing nutritious snacks to the children during the school day. Approximately two to three weeks per year, each family will be assigned to restock the food pantry with items requested by the teachers. The week before your family needs to restock the food pantry, the teachers will provide you with written information regarding snacks needed and allergies that exist in the classroom. Some items may be purchased early, like Cheerios, fresh items are best purchased close to the delivery date, ie. the Sunday before the Monday delivery. Please plan accordingly and remember to bring the food in when it is requested so we may continue to provide healthy snacks for your children. Children typically enjoy doing this task with you and like being able to choose their favorite fruit to share with classmates during the week.

Field Trips (In-House and Off-Site)

Willow Oak Montessori strives to expand students' knowledge of the world by bringing special programs and resources into the School. In addition, students may take field trips into the community for first-hand experience related to the curriculum. In-House and off-site events are planned in conjunction with the curriculum and are designed to enrich classroom studies.

For any off-site educational field trips during the year, we will ask for help with the organizing of dates and travel. Parent volunteers will provide transportation (with completion of all necessary paperwork-background check, copy of driver's license and auto insurance) and each child will have to use a seat belt, booster seat, or car seat, as required. You will be given information about any off-site trips with plenty of notice about specifics.

Off-Site Field trips are generally a great deal of fun for both students and chaperones. However, chaperones must keep in mind that field trips involve significant responsibility for them. In order for these trips to achieve their intended purpose, and to protect the health and safety of our children, volunteer chaperones are expected to abide by the following guidelines:

1. Please be punctual. Chaperones need to be at school at least 15 minutes before we are scheduled to leave.
2. Please keep emergency information forms given to you by the classroom teacher with you at all times during the trip.
3. Unless instructed otherwise by the classroom teacher, you should remain with your assigned group of students at all times.
4. If a child needs to use the restroom, the chaperone should escort the entire group to the restrooms. At no time should a child go to the restroom by him/herself. If you have children of the opposite sex in your group, please ask a chaperone of the same sex as the child(ren) to escort the group to the bathroom and remain outside the door of the bathroom until all children are accounted for.
5. Children are expected to walk at all times. Children who run ahead of the group or lag behind should be redirected immediately. If a second comment is necessary, that child should be taken by the hand or required to remain right next to the chaperone for the rest of the trip. If this is not effective, please bring the child to the teacher.
6. If the field trip includes one or more meals, please encourage good manners with your group. Children should remain seated while they eat. All trash must be disposed of properly.
7. Please do not buy food or gifts for your child or children in your group unless specifically directed to do so by the teacher. Please also be careful to hold all children, including your own, to the same standards, and to treat them equally during the trip. We will not visit gift shops on our outings.
8. When driving, please use as direct a route to the field trip site as possible. No stops should be made unless they are a part of our outing. Maps will be provided whenever possible. Please check the route ahead of time in case you get separated from the group. Please obey all traffic rules.
9. Upon returning to school, please supervise the children until the teacher arrives. Make sure all belongings are out of your vehicle and return the emergency information forms to the teacher. Please have the children walk calmly and quietly back into the school.
10. Except to the extent provided for in advance, or as otherwise directed by the classroom teacher, volunteer chaperones are expected to pay for their own meals and incidentals. Smoking or drinking alcoholic beverages during the trip are prohibited.
11. If you have any questions about what a child may or may not do, please ask the classroom teacher who is on the trip. Volunteer chaperones should defer to the judgment of the classroom teacher(s) and should take care not to challenge the teacher(s) or question pre-planned arrangements in front of the children.
12. No medication of any kind, including ointments and over the counter medications, should be administered by a chaperone to a student, other than to the chaperone's own child, without express written permission from the child's parent or guardian.

Visitor Procedures

The school welcomes and encourages parents and other visitors to Willow Oak Montessori to observe our classrooms and to participate in the functioning of our school community. However, to maintain a safe campus for our students and staff, we ask that all such visits be scheduled in advance with the Lead Teachers.

Holidays

Holidays are presented as cultural events as part of cultural studies. Each Lead Teacher celebrates holidays in his/her own unique way. Children gain an appreciation of the world by exploring the customs, food, music, climate, language, and animals of other countries. The goal of cultural studies is to help children gain a tolerance for and an understanding of others and a compassion for all the people in the world. Parents are welcome to share their cultural knowledge in classroom presentations arranged in advance with the Lead Teacher.

Birthdays

In our Montessori Primary classrooms, birthdays are celebrated from an educational perspective using a ceremony called a Walk Around the Sun. This tradition prepares the child for understanding cycles of time, months of the year, and seasons. More importantly, the ceremony gives the child an appreciation of

his/her place in history and an appreciation for the gift of life. Parents typically bring in a few photos that can be passed around and share brief stories about your child at different ages; "when you were one year old...", "when you were two years old..." and so on. Parents are welcome in the classroom for the ceremony. We prefer birthday snacks that are in line with our regular snack items while we celebrate the life of your child. Please do not send in sugary cake, cupcakes, or candy on your child's birthday. The birthday child also serves the birthday snack to their classmates.

Section 6: Parent Participation

The Critical Role of Parents in Our Community

Students flourish when parents are invested in their educational process. Parents are essential resources and critical components of any educational community. Willow Oak Montessori depends upon having involved parents who provide support, volunteer their time, and create home environments for their children that are consistent with the mission of the school to educate the whole child.

Making the Adjustment to School

New children in the classroom face more than we adults often realize. They are coming into a building unfamiliar to them, they are meeting new children and, if they have never attended school before, they are leaving their parents behind for the first time. All of these new experiences can cause anxiety for children. There are several ways we can ease their entrance into school.

The new child is usually looking for clues from the teacher that will tell him/her that this will be a pleasant place to spend time. Some children are shy and have a difficult time connecting with new adults. They may not wish to say much or anything at first. If they are allowed to take time to size up the situation before they begin verbalizing, they will feel much more relaxed than if they are pressured by their parents or teachers to speak. As a parent you may feel embarrassed if your child is shy and does not greet the teacher verbally. Please be assured that your child is not being rude. He/she is simply "sizing things up" and taking it all in, which may make it difficult for him/her to carry on conversations with people. Parents can help by being positive, but matter-of-fact. Effusive accolades about "school" can make a child suspicious. It is better that it be a wonderful new experience, to be embraced, but without too much "hype." Avoid comments like, "I'll miss you" or "My, you are growing up too fast!"

Meeting the other children can be both stimulating and frightening for the new child. Children are respected for their individual personalities, and this includes their ability to integrate during the first few days or weeks. The teacher will endeavor to meet each child's needs individually, as in all respects of the classroom.

Separation anxiety is sometimes a problem for the new child. The children will want to make a connection between the home and school, and one way we help them to do this is to have them bring a photograph of their family to school. The children often appreciate this connection, and it often breaks the ice for them. On the first day, we recommend that the "good-bye" be brief and definite. This makes it easier for the child to move into the school activities. If the child is upset, one of the teachers will comfort the child after the parent's departure. Soon after the separation occurs, the child is encouraged to engage in mental or physical activity.

Classroom Observation

One of the fundamental differences between traditional education and Montessori education is paperwork, or the lack thereof. Montessori philosophy emphasizes "learning through doing" or "process, not product." Most Montessori materials involve manipulative "hands-on" lessons. Most young children do not embrace abstract thinking until the ages of six and seven.

Parents are encouraged to observe the children at work in their classroom in the Fall when they are scheduled. A great deal can be learned by patient and quiet observation. Please contact your child's teacher ahead of time to set up an appointment to observe in the classroom. Plan to stay for at least 30 minutes, and enter and exit only one time.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and environment. For this reason, we ask parents, grandparents and all visitors to avoid observation during the first 6 to 8 weeks of school.

Points to look for when you observe:

- Observe how the children interact with each other and with the teachers.
- Observe how the teachers respond to the children and interact with each other.
- Are the children engaged in the work? Does the classroom have a busy "hum" of activity?
- If possible, observe children working alone, with a friend, and in group lessons. What do you notice about the way a teacher delivers a lesson? Do the children show concentration?
- Focus on the materials. What concepts and skills does each isolate?
- Follow one child. How does the child approach the work? What does he/she do when the task is finished?
- Do the children seem happy? Do they work with enthusiasm? Cooperation? Do they seem comfortable interacting with the teachers?
- How is discipline handled?
- Is the environment attractive? Are the children able to access work independently? How do children use the various areas of the classroom?
- What makes the environment conducive to learning?
- Is this a typical day? (Please ask.)
- If you are observing more than one class, what differences/similarities do you notice?

While you are in the classroom, please sit quietly in your chair. The children will be naturally curious about you, but they are used to having visitors. If they persist in chatting with you, politely ask if they have any work to do. Encourage students to keep working so you can continue to observe.

Conferences/Conference Reports

Teachers prepare two formal conference reports each year and we encourage parents to attend two parent/teacher conferences a year. Once in the Fall and again in the Spring. If additional conferences are needed, please contact your child's Lead Teacher. Teachers and parents are able to have the most open dialogue if the child being discussed is not present. Childcare ideas at school will be shared.

Family Communication

Our teachers are specially trained professionals who are responsive to your child's development. You are a critical source of information that helps us help your child, and it is this "team approach" that makes a Montessori education such a rich experience for you and your child.

As part of this team, teachers will openly share concerns regarding your child's development and success in the classroom with you as soon as concerns might arise. This is a give and take endeavor, however, and we need you to share your concerns, questions, and comments with us. Please share any events or life changes that may have an impact on your child. Let us know if you feel that your child is dealing with an unusual stress or will need extra support from the teacher or school for any reason.

To be in touch with your child's teacher, please use his/her email address rather than a phone call during the school day. If you have a question or concern, please be in touch with the teacher while the issue is still a small one. There are no "dumb" questions, and if you have a worry or concern, we want to talk with you about it before it gets so big that you are really upset. The best first place to start when you need information about the classroom is with the teacher.

School Communication

We want you to be informed about what is happening at school. There are a variety of ways we will stay in touch.

Each classroom will send out occasional emails to let you know what has been happening in the classroom and what is planned going forward. As new topics, new materials, and new projects are added, you will know. Monthly school-wide newsletters will share information regarding Willow Oak events, dates, and important information. The school also maintains a Facebook page, which we encourage you to join and follow.

The school will host Parent Partnership events throughout the year to share what is special about Montessori education, show you some "works," and give you time for questions and answers.

Willow Oak Montessori has books available for parents to borrow to learn more about Montessori education. In addition, every family will receive a copy of Tomorrow's Child magazine "Montessori 101: Information Every Montessori Parent Should Know & A Guided Tour of the Montessori Classroom" at the start of the their child's first school year with us.

If you have any questions about the Montessori philosophy and its implementation at Willow Oak Montessori, please do not hesitate to ask your child's Lead Teacher.

Parent Association and Volunteering

Our Parent Association, and Parent Ambassadors perform a valuable service to the School. The Board supports these organizations and expects and encourages cooperation from the whole School community, including students and employees.

The Parent Association works with the Staff to coordinate activities that occur during the school day and after school hours. Through various optional fundraising opportunities the Parent Association organizes

Teacher Appreciation week, Holiday/End of Year gift giving for classrooms, staff and the wider community.

The School's viability depends on an effective volunteer program. Parents of students attending the School are expected to commit 10 hours of volunteer work per year for the School. Parent volunteer help is especially needed to support the weekly jobs of laundry/dishes/recycling/food pantry/flowers, to support field trips, special classroom events, and special School activities. Volunteers who work one-on-one with students must have a clean criminal background check on file with the School. If you are unable to volunteer the full 10 hours, we request a donation of \$10 per hour in lieu of your time.

Applying Montessori Principles at Home

Observe the child.

- Close encounters raise the child's self-esteem.
- Be non-judgmental so as to see the hidden purposes of the child's behavior.

Give the child the individual liberty he/she needs to perfect him/herself.

- The child is in the process of perfecting him/herself, so learning takes time.
- Mistakes are to be expected. They are an opportunity for learning. By allowing children to correct their own mistakes, we give the message "I know you are a capable person." This increases their confidence, independence, and curiosity.
- The child needs to be "encouraged" to complete a task when he/she makes mistakes.
- The child must see his/her work as objectively praised. Comment on a child's work rather than praise it. An open-ended question like, "This is very interesting. Can you tell me about it?" is a very helpful way to get descriptions of their activities rather than asking questions that require yes or no answers.

Prepare the environment for the child's intellectual needs.

- The child needs independent activity in every room.
- The child needs to be shown how to use the environment.
- The child wants to be with the adults but independent.
- The child is influenced by the words of adults in his/her environment.
- The child follows the adult out of love.

Here are some tips for aiding your child's development at home:

Aiding Language Development

Spoken Language:

- Speak with clarity and precision.
- Use the real words.
- Speak to and around the child often.

Writing Skills:

- Puzzles with knobs.
- Provide plenty of writing tools – colored markers, pencils, paper, etc.

Reading:

- Read to your child at least 10 minutes every day.
- Provide books dealing with facts that are geared to the age of the child.

- Allow the child to read to you once the child is reading phonetically.
- Encourage your child to 'read' familiar stories to you (tell his/her own version with the aid of pictures, turning pages, etc.).
- Follow up a story with open-ended questions. ("Why did the boy do that?"; "What do you think would have happened if . . .?")

Language Extensions:

- Geography: Expose the child to multicultural books and geography nomenclature.
- Music Appreciation: Expose the child to music of all types and periods.
- Art Appreciation: Expose the child to art of all types and periods.
- Science: Nature walks are good opportunities for botany and biological nomenclature games. Observe the sky at all times of the day. Take field trips to the zoo and farm.

Aiding Mathematical Development

Counting Activities:

- sorting laundry
- setting the table
- caring for pets at home
- picking up the child's toys

Cooking Activities:

- measuring experiences
- temperature settings

Telling time

Introducing money concepts

Aiding Motor Development

Large Motor:

- pouring activities
- throwing and catching skills
- jumping, hopping and skipping activities
- tumbling activities for balance and coordination
- creative dance experiences

Small Motor: "The hand is the instrument of the intelligence."

- puzzles with knobs
- sewing activities
- clay work
- cutting activities

Montessori Resources:

More resources can be found on our school's website about the Montessori Philosophy.
<http://childrenshouse.willowoakmontessori.org/about-montessori>