



Parent/Student Handbook

Revised
August 2019

Elementary Class

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MISSION STATEMENT:

Our school community creates and maintains a learning environment that nurtures the development of the whole child.

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Preparing for the School Year

School Calendar

The school calendar has holidays, special events, and school breaks indicated. You will receive a copy of the school calendar from the office. You can also view our calendar on the school website. We will make every effort to alert you to any changes in this calendar.

School Supplies

A supply fee has been added to your start of year statement. No further funds are required of you. A very small personal supply list was sent home with your welcome letter.

Drop Off

Each morning, Stepping Stones staff will be outside the building ready to welcome your child to school starting at 8:20am. Please utilize this service if at all possible. Your child begins their time of independence as they leave your car and enter the building with confidence. Please enter the parking lot via the north entrance on Lexington St, circle around following the cones and exit via the south Lexington St. entrance. Please remain in your cars during this process. Doing so will help expedite the process and encourage independence. If you do not want to participate in this system, you may park in the central lines of parking spaces. If you arrive before 8:20am, you may drop your child off and they can sign themselves into before care independently.

Before Care

Students that enter the classroom before 8:20 am will be included in Before Care. This time will start at 7:30am. Before Care students can bring in a breakfast or morning snack in addition to their lunch for the day. We want to avoid students eating their lunch food in the mornings. This is a quiet time when students can choose work, socialize, read and have a peaceful start to their days. Before care will be in the All Purpose Room across the hall from elementary. However, students are welcome to work quietly in our space any time after 8:00am.

Dismissal

We end the day with an afternoon meeting and saying “Good Afternoon” at 3:30pm. If your child is not a part of After Care, please plan on picking them up at 3:30. Students who have not been picked up by 3:40 will be signed into After Care and families will be responsible for paying drop-in After Care rates. If you choose to enjoy the outdoor areas of our school after the school day, please follow all posted school rules regarding this space.

Students will only be released to their parents, guardians or adults authorized for pick-up. Stepping Stones Montessori School requires either written notice or a phone call if an adult other than the parent/guardian is to pick up a student.

After Care

This program runs from 3:30 – 6:00pm. Elementary students will join the primary aftercare program.

Volunteer Opportunities

You can support our classroom and school in many ways. We need volunteers to help us prepare, serve, and clean up after Special Lunch. We will also need support in doing laundry and helping drive/chaperone when we take field trips. You can use these opportunities to fulfill your volunteer hours for the school.

Attendance

Punctuality

Consistent attendance and prompt arrival are essential to a successful school experience for your child. Excessive tardiness can have a detrimental effect on your student's educational experience and future work ethic. Although excessive tardiness is when a student is late in excess of 30 minutes, the habitual tardiness of 5 to 10 minutes is equally detrimental. It is disruptive to the class as the other students stop their work to wonder why their peer was late. When your student is tardy, it prevents him or her from benefiting from one of the most important parts of a school day when the class meets together greets one another, shares important information, and prepares for the day ahead.

Elementary students are expected to be present at our Morning Meeting at 8:45 a.m.

Please allow sufficient time for your student to arrive at school and not feel rushed. These feelings set the tone for the day. Your student will sign him/herself into the classroom on the clipboard inside the classroom.

Please assist your student to learn the valuable lesson of personal responsibility by setting the example for punctuality. It is a most valuable life skill. We depend on your family's full support in this area.

Absences/Vacations

For the elementary child to self-develop and self-educate, they must be present at school. Stepping Stones Montessori is committed to delivering a high quality, authentic Montessori education by a combined effort between the school, parents, and the individual child. Regular attendance is essential for students to succeed in school. A student who is excessively absent will miss out on community building and social opportunities that cannot be recreated.

At the elementary level, students work collaboratively. They form different work groups and pairings that change for various projects. We give lessons and presentations to students in groups. If they are absent, they will miss the lesson and could be at a disadvantage when participating and contributing with their group.

If your student will not be at school, please call or email to notify the office the morning of the day they are out. Every absence requires a communication stating the reason for the absence.

One of the nice things about Stepping Stones is that we do understand that every once in awhile we all love to take a little vacation. While we are understanding and supportive, it is still important that you inform us of the trip and keep your student's absences from school to a minimum.

With this in mind, we expect that, as much as possible, trips will be planned to occur within the scheduled holiday dates, and professional development days as listed on our school calendar. If you should schedule a trip or a day-off other than during these posted breaks, please submit a written or verbal notification to the Front Office prior to the date off. Also, note that your student's tuition is not reduced because of absences or vacations and that missed days at school can impact your student's education.

Picking up Early/Returning to School

If your child needs to leave early from school, please notify the Office of the time they will be leaving and an estimated return time. This will help us to schedule things to include your child, if possible. When you arrive at school to pick up your child, please come down to our classroom. When returning to school, please check back in with the Office.

Life in the Classroom

Our Basic Daily Schedule

8:20-8:30- Arrival- Students greet classmates, plan work for the day, record a quote, and begin work.

8:45- Class meeting

9:00- Work period- Independent work time, selective and collective lessons, snack break, conferences with the teacher

11:20- Clean up and jobs

11:40- Recess

12:15- Lunch

12:45- Afternoon work period- enrichments, selective and collective lessons, silent reading, read aloud.

3:20- Clean up and say good afternoon

Use of Lockers

Each student will have access to a wooden locker to store personal items. These spaces should be kept neat and tidy without unnecessary clutter. There is a space for shoes/boots under the bench or in the locker. Students should get in the habit of bringing a backpack or shoulder bag to and from school each day. It doesn't need to be very large. Student's bag, coat, and snow pants can hang from the hooks on the lockers.

Learning Journal

Children will have a calendar for long term planning and goal setting throughout the year. Children will also be recording their daily activities and lessons in their learning journal. This is a special tool and all will receive lessons on the many ways to use them.

Living Together Peacefully

The social environment is very important in our classroom. Part of our grace and courtesy work is learning how to solve problems and get along with others. We have procedures to aid students in conflict resolution and encourage positive, clear, productive communication. We also have a peace council biweekly to discuss issues that affect the whole class and work together to create solutions.

Academics

Curriculum

Our Curriculum includes studies in Math, Geometry, Language, History, Geography, Science, and the arts. You will see these areas in the organization of the materials in our classroom. The curriculum is integrated in as many ways as possible. Students are encouraged to see the connections between the areas of study and we work together to find ways to connect what they are learning to what they are passionate about.

Technology

3rd-6th year Students have access to computers and an ipad as a part of their daily work. Some of the skills and topics we work with are word processing, naming and saving files, creating a slideshow, Excel, using the internet safely, keyboarding, research skills, and website credibility. Students will have individual Google Drive accounts for word processing, document storage, and peer revision.

Enrichments

PE- We will participate in Wednesday and Friday group games and cooperative challenges. These experiences teach the students: good sportsmanship, communication, cooperation, teamwork, perseverance, following rules, and self-control as well as working on gross motor movement. Other studies in physical education will happen throughout the year in different ways: yoga, mindfulness/meditation, dance, nutrition, mileage club and sports.

Music- Our music instruction will be on Wednesday 1-1:30 for 1st-3rd and 1:45-2:30 for 4th-6th. Ms. Dianne Syal will be returning as our music teacher.

Art- Ms. Wendy leads our art education program. She will join us every Tuesday afternoon for one hour. Students also use their art skills in much of their work: illustrating their writing, creating visual components for projects, creating maps and diagrams etc.

Science- Jim McGrath will be joining us every other Thursday afternoon. He will join us for 1 hour of nature study.

| Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday |
|--------|------------|---|--|---|
| | Art- 2-3pm | Music 1:00-1:30 1:45-2:30 PE- Group games, cooperative challenges- 2:30-3:30 | Science with McGrath- 2-3 (every other week) | PE- Group games, cooperative challenges- 2:30-3:30 |

Lunch and Snack

Students have the choice to take a short snack break in the morning work period. Some days we will have a snack prepared by students for all to sample. We will be eating lunch in the classroom. Students will prepare the space for lunch and will be responsible for cleaning up their area before being dismissed from lunch. Lunch is a time for the children to practice conversation skills and etiquette as well as build relationships.

Health and Safety

In our class we will have Band-Aids, Vaseline, lotion, tweezers, and a thermometer for students health needs. I will have a copy of student emergency cards and these will come with us on all field trips. Please see the Health and Safety Section of the school handbook for more information on medication, accidents and health forms.

Recess and outside time

We believe free play outdoors is very important to the growth of children in many ways. Children have 30 min. of recess each day to enjoy their friends and the outdoors. Students and families also have access to our property after school. We ask that students and families follow the following guidelines at all times on Stepping Stone's property.

All Students Must:

1. Stay on school grounds and remain within eyesight of the adult responsible for them.
Supervising adults must be in the areas in which their students are playing, not in parked cars or in the school building.
2. Play in a way that respects people's personal space.
3. Keep hands, feet and bodies to themselves.
4. Respect nature by observing it and letting it be.
5. Use outdoor materials (balls, shovels, etc.) for their intended purpose and return them to where they are stored.
6. Use Swings for swinging back and forth: sitting, belly, and spider style (2 people, gently and not too high)
7. Give swing pushes from behind.
8. Keep a safe distance from the swings when not on them (off the wood chips and green bars)
9. Use sticks for building only.
10. Use forts as communal areas that belong to everyone and respect the work of others by sharing building materials, and letting forts stand.
11. Stay within the area of the cones on the blacktop.

Community Service

Upper Elementary students take on more responsibility in the care of the school environment by collecting the school's recycling each day. Students have the opportunity to read to and mentor younger children. We also have an ongoing relationship with Crossaires, an elder community. Who knows what other volunteer opportunities might present themselves.

Going Out

Maria Montessori believed that the child's need for knowledge would naturally lead them into the community as a part of their learning environment. We encourage this "going out" into the community to satisfy a thirst for knowledge. Students have the ability to plan a going out in small groups to do interviews, get materials, find resources, tour a facility, etc. We will also have whole class field trips to support our studies. For class field trips you will have a blanket permission form to sign. You will be notified of upcoming field trips, any cost or special preparation, and if drivers are needed. You will not have to return a signed form each time, however. For small group going outs a permission form will need to be filled out and signed.

Communication

General

The environment of Stepping Stones Montessori School is made more complete due to communication between our families and the school. The office staff and teaching staff use email for disseminating information. Please be sure you keep us posted of any email, home address and phone number changes. Never hesitate to call the school with any concerns, or just to give us any changes we should have in your student's paperwork. You will receive informational paperwork and your child's returned work, and other classroom-related information in their take home folders. Students are responsible for filling these as well as taking them home each week.

The school website is a great place to find more information. Please visit www.stepsstoneseastlansing.org for the school calendar and more. Stepping Stones also has an active Facebook page. You can find it by searching for Stepping Stones Montessori School in East Lansing.

For weekly information about the Upper Elementary specifically, you can look forward to receiving the Upper Elementary Newsletter in your inbox each week.

Parent/Teacher Communication

Communication between our teaching staff and you, the parent, is of the utmost importance to us. We do ask that in order for you to have your questions answered and your message heard, that you support us in the following ways:

- You may call and leave a message for me with the office. I will return your call when possible. If your message is urgent or time sensitive it will be relayed immediately.

- Notes sent to school requiring a response will receive a written or verbal response within the school day. Please ask your student to deliver it directly to me or the Front Office.
- I have limited opportunities to view emails during the school day as I am with the students. Please allow 36-48 hours for me to reply. If you are in need of my immediate response, please continue to call or email the school office.
- Please understand that we are supervising children all throughout the day and cannot carry on full conversations at arrival, dismissal or during class time. If you just have a quick question, I will be available at dismissal for a short chat. Longer conversations can be meaningfully held with a scheduled meeting. If you wish to make an appointment with me, please email.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Conferences and Progress Reports

We ask parents to attend parent/teacher conferences three times a year. These will be held before school starts, in the fall, and in the spring. These meetings provide a great way to check in with your student's progress and daily habits, as well as ask any questions. These meetings are a short check-in. If there are concerns a meeting should be scheduled outside of these conference times. A parent or teacher may request additional conferences as needed. The best way to arrange a meeting is by e-mail.

Progress Reports will be sent home twice a year. The first will come home in January and will report on the first semester's work. The second will come home after the end of the year and will report on the second semester's work. The focus for these reports is to update you on your child's progress in academic, social, and emotional behaviors as well as give insight into the skills and concepts they have been working on in class. Progress is measured in many areas of growth, such as work habits, interests, social skills within the group, and progress in each area of learning.

Classroom Observation

Observation is a hallmark of the Montessori philosophy. To truly appreciate "how" your child is learning, in addition to "what" your child is learning, you must observe. The education of your student is a true partnership between you and the school.

You are welcome to observe our classroom community. Mornings are best to observe the work cycle (between 9 am-11 am). **These observations do need to be scheduled ahead of time.**

The following guidelines are designed to help optimize your observation visit as well as to allow the children and teachers to continue their normal flow of activity. You will receive a more accurate impression of the classroom environment if it is not altered by your presence.

- Please turn your cell phone to vibrate and do not take photographs.
- Please remain seated in the chair provided for you. If there is a good time for you to walk around the classroom, the teacher will invite you to do so.

- Some students may try to engage you in conversation. Simply tell them in a quiet voice that you are here to watch them work. Also, please refrain from asking the students questions.
- Unless the teacher initiates conversation with you, please do not ask her/him questions at this time. The Head of School will be happy to answer your questions after your class observation or you may arrange a time for you to talk with the teachers later.
- Observation time should not exceed 1 hour. To experience the flow of the classroom, a longer observation period works well.

Fundraisers

Bagel Sale

Who? Everyone in the Stepping Stones community.

What? One Friday morning a month, the 3rd-6th year students host a Bagel Sale. Between 7:30am and 9:00am, you will be able to come to school and purchase a bagel, cream cheese, coffee, tea, juice or hot chocolate. The Lower and Upper Elementary classrooms will be open for you to enjoy these items with your children and other families. Bagel Sale jobs for 3rd-6th years will be decided each month on the Monday prior to Bagel Sale and lead by the 6th years.

Why? Bagel Sale is a Practical Life work for the older students. They plan, prepare and execute the sale and learn to work in pairs as well as one large group. They utilize their math skills when accepting payment and giving change and social skills when interacting with their customers. The Lower Elementary helps with clean-up and everyone gets to enjoy seeing other members of the community. Funds raised go to classroom and school improvements.

Pizza lunch

Who? All Stepping Stones students who have been previously signed up to participate.

What? One Friday a month, our whole school gets to enjoy a lunch of pizza, fresh fruit and veggies, juice and one cookie. To participate, parents must return the sign-up forms and payment to the office. On these days, students do not need to bring a regular lunch from home.

Why? Pizza Lunch is a large Practical Life work for the Upper Elementary students and the 6th year students in particular. They figure out how much pizza needs to be ordered and the appropriate quantity of fruit and vegetables that need to be purchased. They prepare and deliver all of the food to each classroom. Furthermore, the money raised by the Pizza Lunches goes to support the 6th Year Trip.

Special Events

First Friday

Who? All parents and family members of Lower and Upper Elementary students.

What? On the first Friday of each month during school, we open our classroom from 8:30 – 9:15 to allow parents to work with their children. This is a great time to see what your child is currently engaged with and how some of the Montessori materials are used. This is not a time for children to show all the work in their box, but rather a time for children and parents to engage in a work together. It is important that the child's autonomy is respected during this time as they choose the work to show and engage in. At 9:15, we will thank everyone for coming and invite the children to join the Morning Meeting.

Why? We like First Fridays because they help connect families and parents to their student's learning and give students a chance to show how they are using the work to grow their brains. It also helps parents get a better understanding of what their child is doing throughout the school day.

Birthday Celebrations

Who? All Elementary Students and their parents.

What? On, or near, a student's birthday (or half-birthday in the case of summer birthdays), we love to celebrate. Montessori provides a special way to celebrate which includes the birthday walk (showing how many times a child has gone around the sun), a poem, song and the showing of a timeline of the child's life. Parents are invited to join us for this celebration as are siblings. You will receive a note a few weeks or so before your child's birthday to set a day and time for the celebration. We will go through the various steps of the celebration and parents will be invited to share a few stories about their child. If your child would like to bring a healthy snack of fruits, vegetables, fruit juice popsicles, etc. to share with their classmates at lunch, please drop it off with him/her in the morning.

Why? Birthday celebrations are unique and help the student feel special and celebrated as well as look back on their growth and development so far in their life.

Special Lunch

Who? All Elementary students and parent volunteers

What? One day each month, the Lower and Upper Elementary communities gather for a communal lunch that is cooked and hosted by a group of children and a few parent volunteers. This takes place at 11:45 am, which is different than our normal 12:15 lunch time. We sit together and practice passing dishes and having a group table conversation. It also gives us a chance to try new foods. If students do not wish to eat the food that will be

offered during a Special Lunch, they are welcome to bring their own lunch from home. You will be notified of the intended menu in the weekly Upper Elementary Newsletter. We do our best to accommodate special food needs at these meals so that all feel included. There will be a sign-up list for parents willing to help host these meals.

Why? Special Lunch is beneficial for many reasons. This is a time for us to use our practical life and social skills. The students who are cooking that day get kitchen experience in a small group setting, children who are on clean-up crew get experience with that and the rest of us get to practice our social conversation skills. It also exposes us to new foods that we may not otherwise try.

Presentation Night

Who? All Elementary students and their families.

What? Each year students from both Elementary classrooms present a Montessori material or a Montessori work to small groups of parents. Each student will work individually and will be set up around the rooms. Parents float between children, receiving their presentations and asking questions. This is held on two nights with half of the children each night.

Why? Presentation Night gives students a chance to practice their public speaking skills and reinforces their knowledge of the material they are teaching. It is a confidence builder and a time to work on getting over the nervousness that can come with speaking in front of others. This is also a parent education night which gives you the opportunity to learn about how some of the Montessori materials are used.

International Fair

Who? All Elder and Elementary students and families.

What? Each year our large International Fair event is held at Edgewood Church. It begins with a song and parade of children with the flag of their nation. Then children present posters they have created. In Upper Elementary, students each study one aspect of a country. In this way the students go deeper in their studies. We make this country a part of our entire year of study and incorporate it into other areas of study. After the posters, we will gather in the social hall for a parade and community potluck. Families are invited to bring a dish from the country that their child studied.

Why? International Fair is both a social event and important academic practice for each student. It is a time to practice public speaking and ease in talking to unknown adults. It also fosters pride in work and creates a sense of community.

Musical Performances

Who? All Toddler, Primary, Elder, and Elementary students and families.

What? The students prepare for their Winter and Spring musical performances all year long. They are held at Edgewood Church and refreshments follow. Each year is unique and students enjoy the chance to perform.

Why? These performances give students a goal to work towards in their music class and provide a venue for students to feel pride in the fruits of their hard work. This also gives students a chance to learn and practice performance etiquette.

Valentine's Day

Who? All Elementary students.

What? Students may bring in homemade valentines for their classmates on this day. Students will exchange valentines and enjoy root beer floats in the afternoon.

Why? Students enjoy holidays like this and enjoy celebrating with their friends. This way of celebrating brings out the most beneficial and positive aspects of this holiday. We try to avoid sugary foods and the commercialism that can come with holidays.

Ice Skating

Who? All Elementary students and parent volunteers.

What? In February we take a trip to MUNN ice rink for a morning of skating. We also provide a yummy snack and hot cocoa. This is usually the same date as our valentine celebration.

Why? This is a time of fun, community building, and physical education. Students help each other feel comfortable and gain their balance as they glide around the ice. Many gain confidence as they overcome their fears and conquer a new skill with friends.

Science Fair

Who? All Elder and Elementary students and families.

What? Each year we hold a Science Fair in the spring. Science Fair is a time for students to share their research, experiments, or demonstrations with the school community. They spend several weeks planning and carrying out their research and project creation in class. They present their posters to families and practice their speaking skills. This is held on two nights, with some students from each level presenting each night.

Why? Science Fair helps students verbalize the process they went through in their experiment and their findings. As it is near the end of the year, it serves as a way to build on the public speaking skills they began to develop during Presentation Night and International Fair.

Mileage Club

Who? All Elder and Elementary Students.

What? Each year students participate in the mileage club program run by Sparrow Hospital. 3 times a week students run, jog, or walk laps in the school parking lot. Students get marks on cards for each lap. They can earn plastic feet on a chain for every 5 miles and a water bottle for reaching 20 miles.

Why? Students get a chance to practice goal setting and practice healthy habits. This is also a time for students to encourage each other and enjoy the outdoors together.

Camp Miniwanca

Who? All Elementary students and parent volunteers.

What? Each spring, all Elementary students are invited to attend camp at Camp Miniwanca. This is the first week of May. It is a great time for kids to have a fun bonding experience away from school and home. Lower Elementary students attend from Wednesday – Friday and Upper Elementary students attend from Monday – Friday. More information about this great experience will be given to you closer to the time.

Why? Camp helps kids get out of their comfort zones in a safe and fun way. It's a great way for them to get to know their classmates and have a great time. Camp is well loved and always highly anticipated.

Achievement testing

Who? Third years with a request of parents and all 4th-6th year students.

What? Students will participate in a formative computerized testing session in the fall and spring. Students will take an assessment for math, reading, and language. The testing window will be a set time with students able to work on the tests at their own pace. The computer assessment will give higher or lower level questions depending on how students answer giving a more accurate indication of what they have mastered.

Why? Each year more schools are transitioning to computerized adaptive testing like this one. This allows the children to practice the skills of test taking, gain exposure to the kinds of questions and wording they will find on other tests in the future, and have an opportunity to show their learning and understanding in this way. Because this test can be taken in many testing sessions and the questions adapt to the test taker, results are less affected by fatigue and students have fewer negative feelings. This just becomes another work in their day.

Passages Ceremony

Who? All Elder and Elementary students and families.

What? The Passages Ceremony is an event that honors and celebrates the children who will be changing classrooms next year or did sometime during the current school year. Elder students, third-year students and sixth-year students will pass over a bridge, symbolizing their transition to their new environments. Third and sixth-year students make speeches and the sixth-year students' time at Stepping Stones is especially recognized. This will take place at Edgewood Church.

Why? This event occurs to help bring the school year to a positive close. For the students who will be transitioning, it gives a sense of closure to their previous experience at Stepping Stones

and helps to mentally prepare them for the next step. All families are invited to attend to show our support of these students.

Field Day

Who? All Elementary students and parent volunteers.

What? On one of the last days of school, all elementary students spend the whole day at Patriarche Park. The day is filled with free play, a communal picnic lunch and organized games. Upper Elementary students have the opportunity to bike to the park as a class.

Why? Field Day is a fun tradition. It helps us to get away from our school building, use our bodies and practice good sportsmanship with one another.



Elementary Parent/Student Handbook 2019-2020

I have read, understand, and will abide by the information in this handbook.

Names

Date