



Parent/Student Handbook

2024-2025

Elementary Class

1370 Beech St.
East Lansing, MI 48823

(517)336-0422

www.steppingstoneseastlansing.org

MISSION STATEMENT:

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

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.

Before Care

Students that arrive before 8:20 will be in before care. Before care begins at 7:40 and will be in the all purpose room/Upper EI room. At 8:20, they will join the class outside.

Dismissal

We end the day with an afternoon meeting and saying “Good Afternoon” at 3:30pm. Please plan on picking up your child at 3:30. **Please wait in the hallway for your child to exit the classroom. 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 by volunteering. We will need support in doing laundry, purchasing pet supplies, and purchasing fresh flowers. Please participate in our fall and spring clean up days. Watch the newsletters for other ways to volunteer.

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.

Elementary students are expected to be present and in the classroom by 8:35 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.

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 a while 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, and enjoy outdoor play

8:30- Work period- Independent work time, selective and collective lessons, snack break, conferences with the teacher

11:20-Clean up and care of the environment

11:30- Class meeting

11:45- Recess

12:15- Lunch

1:00- Afternoon work period- enrichments, selective and collective lessons, silent reading, read aloud.

3:20- Clean up and say good afternoon

3:30- pick up.

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.

Work Plans

Children will have work plans that list the assignments they need to complete based on lessons they have been given. The first and second year students will have a version of this where they record daily activities and can see their assigned work. The third year students will have a journal where they will be asked to record the work they have completed each day. These work plans act as a tool to help the children meet their work responsibilities and ensure they are working within all areas of the curriculum. It also puts the responsibility on the children that they are completing daily and weekly assignments. The lead guide will check in with the children weekly to see how this is going. The work plans will be sent home every Friday.

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

Third year and fourth year students will be getting typing and basic computer skills lessons once a week from Ms. Mandi. They will be using Chrome books for this practice.

Enrichments

PE- We will participate in 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 Wednesdays. 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. 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 Thursday afternoon. He will join us for 45 min. of nature study.

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
	Art- lower-1:30-2:15pm upper-2:15-3:00	Music Lower- 1:30-2:15 Upper-2:20-3:05	Nature with Jim McGrath- 1:35-2:20	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, plus the morning outdoor play time. 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 and bodies.
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 safely.
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.
12. Keep stumps away from other recess equipment areas.
13. Limit of 3 children on the bison rock at a time.

Community Service

The elementary classroom likes to provide a variety of volunteer opportunities throughout the year. This is a great way for the children to give back to their community! There may be times where we will need parent volunteers for these events.

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 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 out 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 <https://ssmeastlansing.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 Elementary Classroom check out our newsletter which is sent to you via email every Friday.

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.
- We have limited opportunities to view emails during the school day as we are with the students. Please allow 36-48 hours for us to reply. If you are in need of my immediate response, please continue to call or email the school office.
- We will also be communicating with you using the new Procure application. You will be able to look at our weekly newsletter which gives important dates and reminders as well as links to volunteer opportunities. We may on occasion use the messaging feature on this app to send quick messages about the day and/or any incident reports. You may also use the messages app to send Mandi and myself quick notes throughout the day as needed.

- 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 two times a year, three for new families. We will meet with new families before school starts. All families have conferences 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 checking 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

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 practical life work where the Elementary students will be slicing up the fruits and vegetables using a variety of kitchen tools, as well as preparing plates, napkins, cups and juice to be delivered to the other classrooms. This is an opportunity to practice knife skills, working with others, and preparing food for others to eat.

Special Events

First Friday

Who? All parents and family members of Lower 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 Lower 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 Lower 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? The children choose a country of the world to study. In Lower Elementary the children choose a country from either North America, South America, or Africa. They will be researching many aspects of this country and putting their findings together on a poster board. The children will present these boards to families during the International Fair event.

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. 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 the East Lansing Ice Cube 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 previously 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.

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.

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.

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 2024-2025

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

Names

Date