

“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.”

- Dr. Maria Montessori



Palencia
MONTESSORI ACADEMY

PARENT HANDBOOK, 2015 - 2016

PALENCIA MONTESSORI ACADEMY, INC.

292 PASEO REYES DRIVE

SAINT AUGUSTINE, FL 32095

www.palenciamontessori.com

PROPRIETARY AND CONFIDENTIAL TO PALENCIA MONTESSORI ACADEMY, INC.

Last Updated: November 2014.

WELCOME

We thank you for entrusting your child to the caring, dedicated staff of Palencia Montessori Academy. We look forward to working with your child, and to partnering with you on this most important of endeavors.

Our Mission is simple: To inspire the children of Palencia and surrounding communities to become passionate life-long learners in a challenging and nurturing Montessori environment.

We understand early childhood education. We have been in the business for over 30 years, and we have been dedicated to educating children: academically, emotionally, physically, and socially. Our reputation in the Saint Augustine area is unparalleled. We are excited to offer a Montessori educational experience in addition to our traditional educational model. It is different, it is challenging - and it is not for everyone. But then, neither is the traditional educational model. Both have their advantages, both have their supporters.

We know your child will receive a superior educational experience unlike any other offered in St Johns County. That is our Vision: to develop in each child the desire to learn, to focus, to create, to lead, to respect others, to value community and to excel.

Welcome.

Babette & Curt Weaver

INTRODUCTION

This manual is intended to provide you with information about the School, our activities, and our policies. It sets expectations of what you should expect from us, and what we expect from you.

Good relationships are built on good communication. We will communicate with you at both the school and teacher level. We need you to communicate with us about any concerns you may have. We can only improve through feedback from our customers.

I. General Information

A. About Palencia Montessori Academy, Inc.

Palencia Montessori Academy was incorporated in 2012 for the purpose of providing the Palencia community and surrounding areas with a high-quality Montessori method early childhood education program.

We currently lease our facility at 292 Paseo Reyes Drive and will be purchasing the facility we will move into for the 2015-16 school year.

Our school is licensed by the Florida Department of Children & Families (DCF), and we are subject to all the Florida Statutes and DCF rules relevant to child care. (See section III for more details.)

It is the policy of Palencia Montessori Academy, Inc., to admit students without regard to race, culture, color, creed, national and ethnic origin, sex, religion, or disability.

B. Teacher/Parent Communication

Great communication between your child's Montessori Directress/Lead Teacher and parents is critical for the success of Palencia Montessori Academy. You are strongly encouraged to bring your questions to your child's teacher and/or your school administrators.

Because of the demands of the Prepared Environment, we ask that your conversations with the teacher take place after or before class, or by appointment. During arrival and dismissal, their time is needed to say hello and goodbye to the children. If your teacher is not able to speak with you at length at that time, they will set an appointment with you. Or you can call the school or send an e-mail requesting a conference with a suggested time.

We intend to hold Parent/Teacher conferences at least twice each school year.

We need you to be involved. That involvement will take many forms, including Parent/Teacher conference participation; sharing your talents or skills with the class; helping to prepare specific Montessori materials; and observing class time.

If you have a question about school policy or you do not believe that you are experiencing the level of communication you expect, and you do not feel your issues

are being addressed satisfactorily, please bring it to the attention of the owners and/or our administrative Director as soon as possible.

C. Visitation

The demands of the Montessori Prepared Environment are very high. Above all, adults need to accept that our spaces are created to be “The Children’s House” and when we enter we are intruding in *their* world. Even the teachers accept this, and try to always kneel or sit, and keep their desk and chair small to blend into the environment. When you have a visitation time, we will provide you with an “observation chair”. We ask you to use that for quiet observation, and not to disturb the children or distract them from their work.

D. School Hours

During the school year, our school is open at 7:45 am for early drop-off, and will close at 5:30 pm.

PrePrimary Montessori: 8:30 am until 12:00 pm

Children arriving prior to 8:20 who attend only the Morning Montessori PrePrimary session will be subject to an early drop-off fee.

Toddler Class: 8:30 am to 11:30 am

For those children remaining in our extended day program, there will be lunch, nap time, activities and fun for the remainder of the day.

Please avoid drop-off after 8:30 am for either class. After 8:45 am you will need to call the school and make an appointment in order to drop-off your child. After 10:00 am drop-off is not permitted.

Our school year program operates on the same calendar as St Johns County Public Schools. When the St Johns County Public Schools are closed, we are also closed. Children requiring care on those days when we are closed and Village Academy *North* is open may attend there. A separate fee will apply payable to Village Academy *North*. For your information, Village Academy *North* is closed only 10 weekdays per year: New Years’ Day; Martin Luther King Day; President’s Day; Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day, the day after Thanksgiving; Christmas Eve, and Christmas Day. If the holiday falls on a weekend, *North* will be closed either the Friday before or the Monday after.

You have enrolled your child for a specific dismissal time:

Toddler Class 11:30 am, or no-later than 5:30 pm

PrePrimary Class 12:00 pm, 1:45 pm or no-later-than 5:30 pm

Each child shall be picked up at their appointed time, or a late fee may be assessed as follows: \$2.00 per minute for the first 10 minutes and \$3 per minute after that time.

E. Forms and Records

The State of Florida requires us to have and maintain numerous records concerning your child. We must have a current physical (less than 2 years old) and a current immunization record on the state-approved immunization record form. By law, your child may not attend if those are not current. We must know if your child suffers from any allergies, especially if an EPI-Pen is maintained at the school. Prescription drugs may not be administered without the Doctor's order, and we cannot modify the prescribed dosage. If your child is to have insect repellent or sun screen applied, we must have signed permission forms for each.

F. Late Arrivals

Maintaining the Prepared Environment means minimizing disruptions to the class. Children arriving late will disrupt the concentration and focus that is so important to the Montessori Method. We understand that sometimes tardiness is unavoidable. If prior arrangements have not been made, we reserve the right to refuse admittance after 10:00 am.

If tardiness becomes chronic we will provide a written warning and request a consultation. If the practice continues, your child will be subject to disenrollment.

II. Tuition and Fees

A. Application and Enrollment.

All applicants for Palencia Montessori Academy pay a non-refundable application fee of \$125. For families with more than one child, there is a \$200 maximum application fee.

PrePrimary: We may request that your child is assessed with one of our Montessori Directresses/Lead Teachers. After this assessment is complete you may be offered an invitation to enroll.

The enrollment process for both our PrePrimary and Toddler Class, includes completion of the necessary forms and the payment of a \$400 non-refundable tuition deposit once your child has been accepted.

A \$200 annual materials fee is due by July 20.

A \$50 charge will be assessed for checks returned to us by the bank for non-sufficient funds.

B. Annual Tuition

After paying the \$400 non-refundable tuition deposit, you have the option of paying one annual payment, quarterly payments, or monthly payments. The Annual payment is due by August 1. The Quarterly payments are due: August 1, 2015; October 15, 2015; January 1, 2016; March 15, 2016. The Monthly Payments are due on the 1st of each month beginning August 1, 2015.

Payments are considered late after the due date. A late fee of \$25 will be charged for payments that are 2-7 days late. A late fee of \$75 will be charged for payments that are more than 7 days late. If payment is not received by the 10th calendar day after it is due, your child may be dis-enrolled until your account is brought up to date. We offer an automatic payment method for your convenience.

Palencia Montessori Academy will review prices annually, and reserves the right to adjust those prices for each academic year, or at other times during the year due to unforeseen economic conditions or extraordinary expenses. We will provide at least two weeks notice of any changes.

We ask the same of you. We request a two week notification of any tuition changes (such as moving from full-day to morning only). If you need your child to leave Palencia Montessori Academy for any reason, we request a 30 day notification. Refunds of quarterly or annual tuition payments will be pro-rated against the 30-day notification.

III. Florida State Laws and Rules

As noted early, our school is licensed by the Florida Department of Children and Families (DCF). There is an extensive list of rules with which we must conform, and it is important that you be familiar with some of these as they directly impact you.

A. Child Pick-Up Authorization

Florida law requires that no child leave our premises with anyone who is not named on the child's registration form or in writing. A parent/legal guardian may give separate written permission at any time for an individual at least 18 years of age to pick up the child. (A fax or text copy of your permission and signature is acceptable.) Verbal authorization is never permitted. That's the law. That means there are no circumstances under which you can call us, even in a personal emergency, and provide verbal authorization to release your child to someone not on your designated pick-up list.

You may also remove anyone from your pickup list at any time. The only exception is that you may not remove a child's parent without providing us with the appropriate court order.

B. Health and Shot Record

The Department of Children and Families requires us to have a current immunization record and physical for your child. New enrollees may be in the school a maximum of 30 calendar days without a current immunization record and physical; they cannot attend on the 31st day. New rules no longer allow a previously enrolled child to be in the school with an expired shot record even if there is a scheduled appointment with the child's physician. We will try to give you adequate notice and reminders, but you must have your child's updated shot record to us before the existing records expire, so please make note of these in your calendars at home.

C. Medication

We only give medicine that is a prescription and is required during school hours, or emergency medicine like an Epi-pen. Medication needed two times or less per day should be administered at home. All medication must be labeled and in its original container and placed in a Medicine Bag with a completed medication usage form. We cannot exceed the dosage written on the bottle or box without doctor's written approval. Always give medicine directly to the staff, since you will have to sign an authorization form. We also are required to treat sunscreen, insect repellent, and similar commercial products as medicine, and we need a signed parental permission form for each.

D. Abuse

By Florida law, staff is required to document and report any signs of abuse and neglect to the Florida Abuse Hotline without Palencia Montessori Academy's knowledge or approval. Sometimes mistakes are made, but the staff will always err on the side of protecting the child.

E. Smoking

Smoking is not permitted on the school grounds or parking lot. We are subject to being written up by DCF if anyone violates this prohibition.

F. Fire and Disaster Drills

DCF requires us to hold Fire and/or Disaster Drills monthly. We try to prepare the children for the experience so they are comfortable with it, but holding these drills is state law. At least one each year must be witnessed by our DCF inspector. We are also required to have a Disaster Plan. That can be made available to you for review upon request.

IV. Palencia Montessori Policies

A. Discipline

We are required by DCF to have a discipline policy. At Palencia Montessori Academy, it is our policy to treat our children with love and respect. To accomplish this goal we employ positive, respectful reinforcement techniques such as verbal and tactile praise as appropriate to the developmental age of the child. At no time are negative reinforcement techniques requiring the use of physical punishment, or the withholding of food or toileting, acceptable.

B. Behavior

One of the essential characteristics of a Montessori environment is the presence of multiple age groups. Obviously there are maturity differences, but there are common behavioral expectations. Respect for the individual is critical. Aggression is unacceptable in any form, including hitting, throwing objects, or verbal threats intimidation and cruelty. We work as partners with parents on behavioral issues. However, there are rare times when dangerous aggressive behavior can lead to suspension or dismissal from our program.

C . Dress Code

Palencia Montessori Academy has a dress code. Shorts, trousers, or skirts are acceptable in neutral uniform colors such as tan, navy blue, or white and should be accompanied by a school polo styled shirt. Please purchase solid polo shirts without an existing logo of any kind. Shirts are acceptable in navy blue, sky blue, white, yellow, tan, or light pink. We will have these shirts embroidered on specified days.

In addition, at least one complete change of clothes (does not need to be a school shirt) should be maintained at the school. Please label all clothes brought to school, especially jackets.

D. Potty Training

Our toddler teachers work with the children on potty-training as they are ready. Children enrolled in the PrePrimary program should be potty-trained. We understand that young children do have accidents and also that we may need to help the younger children when using the bathroom. We will work together with you on this important milestone.

E. Biting Policy

Biting is a behavior that is both age and sage appropriate for children under the age of 3 years. Even in high quality settings, where all preventative strategies are used, biting may still occur. If a biting incident is to occur, our staff will work very hard to ensure that the incident is handled in a way that respects both families involved.

We handle biting incidents as follows: The child who is bitten is attended to immediately. The child is taken to a quiet area and the bite is examined and the child comforted. The bite is cleaned and ice is applied to prevent swelling. If the skin is broken and depending upon the severity of the bite, the child's parents may be contacted to let them decide if they wish to seek medical consultation. After the child that is bitten is taken care of, we focus on the biter. We will remove the child from the area of play to another area and communicate that biting hurts and we need to be gentle. Explaining and demonstrating what gentle and acceptable behavior means. If the incident happens repeatedly with the biter, attention given to the child will vary to avoid establishing a predictable and routine pattern, which may become positive reinforcement for the biter.

The parent (s) of the bitten child will be verbally informed of the incident and the incident will be documented. With respect to confidentiality we do not share the name of the biter with the parent(s) of the child who was bitten.

The lead teacher in the child's classroom will consult with the parent (s) of a habitual biter to develop strategies that can be used in the classroom setting and in the home, so that we are working together. The director will continue communicating on the status of the biting via e-mails, phone calls and/or meetings.

After all steps have been taken to address the biting behavior, if the behavior continues and it is deemed in the best interest of the child and other children attending Palencia Montessori Academy, then the child will be removed from the program.

If a child in our PrePrimary class is to bite another person, their parents will be contacted. If the scenario is to occur again, the parent will be asked to pick up their child on the day of the incident. A child could be expelled if this type of behavior persists.

E. Personal Items

Children should not bring personal electronics or toys from home. Palencia Montessori Academy will not be responsible for such items.

F. Medical Emergency

In the event of emergency while your child is in attendance, you grant Palencia Montessori Academy permission to administer care as it sees fit for the child's best interest, in accordance with the information you provided on the enrollment form. In the event of illness or accident while the child is in attendance, medical expenses are the responsibility of the parent.

G. Nutrition

Breakfast is a very important meal and we ask that your child get some form of protein during breakfast as they expend a lot of energy mentally and physically during school. Complex carbohydrates (fruit - not Pop Tarts) are also important. We encourage you to provide a selection from eggs, whole grains, hot cereals like oatmeal, and low-fat yogurt (but avoid high fructose corn syrup).

If your child is enrolled in our 1:45 PM or Extended Day program, you need to provide lunch. We have hours of hard work and play yet to go in the day, and your child needs energy! Protein, fresh vegetables, fresh fruits, whole grains, and legumes are highly recommended. Please do not send processed or packaged foods such as Lunchables. These are chemical laden and a poor substitute for fresh foods.

PLEASE DO NOT SEND ANYTHING WITH NUTS. We often have known peanut allergies in our student population so we have decided to be a nut-free school.

If your child doesn't eat their lunch, we will return it to you so that you may talk to your child about what he or she did not like.

H. Religion

Palencia Montessori Academy has no affiliation with any religious orientation or organizations.

I. Illness and Contagious Symptoms

We know it is an inconvenience to be called out of your work-day to come pick up your child due to an illness, and while we do sympathize, we also believe that it is important that we work together to minimize the spread of germs. Children function more effectively in the classroom when they are healthy. You may be called to pick up your child if he/she develops any of the symptoms listed below:

- a. Severe coughing
- b. Difficult or rapid breathing
- c. Stiff neck (especially if the child cannot lift their head up and down)
- d. Vomiting and/or Diarrhea (2 or more abnormally loose stools within 24 hours)*
- e. Temperature of 100° F or higher when in conjunction with other signs of illness*
- f. Temperature of 101° F or higher in the absence of symptoms*
- g. Eyes that are irritated and discharging*
- h. Exposed, open skin lesions
- i. Green discharge from the nose that lasts more than 2 days*
- j. Unusually dark urine and/or gray or white stool
- k. Yellowish skin or eyes
- l. Any other unusual signs or symptoms of illness

* These items require your child to be symptom-free for 24 hours before returning to school unless approved by a doctor with a doctor's note.

* If your doctor determines that your child has a contagious disease, such as chicken pox, whooping cough, measles, etc., please notify us immediately so that we can inform the other parents.

If your child is found to have head lice or nits, they may be asked to leave school and may not return until you have treated their hair and pulled the nits. Your child will be checked by our staff, before returning to class. If live lice or numerous nits are found after initial treatment, we cannot accept your child to return to the classroom. Please check your child's head nightly and pull any nits you see, so that they may not hatch again.

Note that these policies for illness and symptoms are a combination of the State of Florida DCF requirements that we must follow and our own guidelines.

V. Code of Ethics

Palencia Montessori Academy is committed to the Code of Ethics of the American Montessori Society:

In pledging to accept the Code of Ethics, heads of schools and program directors agree that the educators in their institutions will strive to conduct themselves professionally and personally in ways that reflect their respect for one other and for the children they serve; and that they will do whatever is within their talents and capacity to protect the right of each child to have the freedom and opportunity to develop his or her full potential.

Principle I - Commitment to the Student

In fulfillment of the obligation to the children, the educator—

1. Shall encourage independent action in the pursuit of learning;
2. Shall protect the opportunity to provide for participation in educational programs without regard to race, sex, color, creed, or national origin;
3. Shall protect the health and safety of students;
4. Shall honor professional commitments and maintain obligations and contracts while never soliciting nor involving students or their parents in schemes for commercial gain;
5. Shall keep in confidence information that has been secured in the course of professional service, unless disclosure serves professional purposes or is required by law.

Principle II - Commitment to the Public

The Montessori educator shares in the responsibility for developing policy relating to the extension of educational opportunity for all and for interpreting educational programs and policies to the public.

In fulfilling these goals, the educator—

1. Shall support the American Montessori Society and not misrepresent its policies in public discussion. Whenever speaking or writing about policies, the educator should take the precaution of distinguishing private views from the official position of the Society.
2. Shall not interfere with nor exploit the rights and responsibilities of colleagues within the teaching profession.

Principle III - Commitment to the Profession

The Montessori educator makes efforts to raise professional standards and conditions to attract persons worthy of trust to careers in Montessori education.

In fulfilling these goals, the educator—

1. Shall extend just and equitable treatment to all members of the Montessori education profession;
2. Shall represent his or her own professional qualification with clarity and true intent;

3. Shall apply for, accept, offer, recommend, and assign professional positions and responsibilities on the basis of professional preparation and legal qualifications;
4. Shall use honest and effective methods of administering duties, use of time, and conducting business.

Adopted 1969, AMS Board of Directors. Expanded 1975. Updated 2008 and 2010.

VI. ROLE of the TEACHER

The American Montessori Society also has an excellent description of the role of the teacher in a Montessori classroom. It is quoted in its entirety below, and can be found at.

[American Montessori Society: Montessori Teachers](#)

Mentor, Model, Guide

Montessori education addresses the whole child: his physical, social, emotional, and cognitive growth. As well as helping each child become an independent learner, the teacher helps turn his attention outward, fostering community, collaboration, and respect for the dignity of others.

Teachers educated in the Montessori Method bring distinctive skills to the task. Their quiet orchestrations lead to magical moments as young children exclaim “I learned it myself!”—and older students think it.

Called a “directress” by Montessori Method founder Dr. Maria Montessori (back in the day when teachers were mostly women!), and sometimes known as a “guide,” the Montessori teacher plays many roles as she directs, or guides, her students.

Skilled Observer: Through careful observation, the Montessori teacher comes to know each student’s interests, learning style, and temperament. He understands the student’s developmental needs, and is receptive to her “sensitive periods,” when she is most ready to learn a new concept or skill.

With this information the teacher chooses materials and lessons that will capture the student’s attention and entice her to learn. When he observes that the student has mastered a concept or skill, he introduces new lessons that become increasingly complex and abstract.

Creative Facilitator: The teacher serves as a resource as students go about their work. She offers encouragement, shares their triumphs, and steers them to greater understanding. She helps them advance through the curriculum as they master new skills, so they are continually challenged and eager to learn. As students progress, the teacher modifies the classroom environment, adjusting the learning materials to meet the students' changing needs.

Character Builder: A Montessori class is a close-knit community, fertile ground for nurturing the qualities that help children and youth become citizens of the world and stewards of the planet. By his own behavior and attitudes, the teacher models values such as empathy, compassion, and acceptance of individual differences. He encourages the students to be courteous and kind. And he brings students together in collaborative activities to foster teamwork, responsibility, self-discipline, and respect.©

****Thank you for taking the time to read our Handbook.
There will be a place for you to sign on the
Authorization Form that you have received and read
our Handbook. Welcome to our wonderful School.**