



Student Handbook

School Year 2018-2019

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MIDWEST CHRISTIAN MONTESSORI ACADEMY

Mission Statement

To empower children:

- *to grow in their understanding of the Christian faith*
- *to strive for academic excellence through the Montessori Method*
- *to reach out and serve the community as Christ has called us to do*

*Your word is like the lamp that shows me the way.
It is like a light that guides me.*

Psalms 119:105

Midwest Christian Montessori Academy (MCMA) is a school that encompasses Pre-Primary, Kindergarten, Lower Elementary (1st – 3rd) and Upper Elementary (4th – 6th.) Our goal is to provide a Christian environment coupled with the Montessori Method of learning, which will allow for the spiritual, educational and developmental growth of our students. At Midwest Christian Montessori Academy our faith is interwoven into all that we do.

The Montessori philosophy of education is based on individual hands-on learning experiences. We provide a carefully planned environment, which allows the child to learn and develop at their own pace. Like Maria Montessori, we believe the child's mind is like a sponge, which can absorb information from their environment, making them capable of learning math, language, science, etc. just as easily as they learned their own native language. The Montessori teacher is carefully trained to observe the needs and interests of each child so that she can guide them toward materials that will best serve those needs and interests. Midwest Christian Montessori Academy has certified Montessori Teachers, Interns and Para-professionals.

We help the children learn and grow; we observe their interests and their abilities and direct them toward positive work. Most of all, we provide a warm, loving Christian atmosphere where they feel secure and independent. We prepare a learning environment where they are free to explore and discover new friendships, new materials and new concepts. In so doing, they lay the foundation for future relationships and learning. In the Montessori prepared environment each child has the opportunity to naturally develop their God-given gifts.

At Midwest Christian Montessori Academy we believe in the importance of gently nourishing the seeds of faith planted in these children's hearts by their parents and other loving family members from the time of their birth. Therefore, both aspects of our environment blend easily together, as the "sensitive periods" of the children in the Montessori environment are also the "sensitive periods" of the children in their Christian faith. As Christian teachers, we strive to give the children a firm foundation in the Bible, familiarizing them with God's word through scripture, stories, songs and drama. The Elementary classes build on biblical principles, applying scripture passages with application to their lives. We do not teach any particular doctrine but rather basic Christian principles.

Your children are very important to us. We would like to work together with you as parents to help your children achieve their full potential. In keeping with the purpose and spirit of the Montessori approach to educating children, we want to help your children develop positive attitudes toward themselves and their activities.

The teacher's observations and guidance, coupled with the natural curiosity of the child and the attraction of the materials in the environment will help your child as they weave their way through the Montessori curriculum. Our goal will be to help your child discover ideas and concepts of their own with the help of Montessori materials.

Midwest Christian Montessori Academy is a not-for-profit, board-run school employing Montessori certified and non-certified staff with extensive experience. We are affiliated with the American Montessori Society, registered as a private school with the Illinois State Board of Education and comply with state and local standards of health and fire safety.

Midwest Christian Montessori Academy admits students of any race, color, and national or ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at our school and does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, and national or ethnic origin in administration of our educational policies, scholarship and loan programs, and athletic and other school-administered programs.

Please refer to our school's website for links to further information on the Montessori Method.

www.mcmacademy.org office@mcmacademy.org

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SCHOOL POLICY INFORMATION

Arrival 8:30am – 8:40am

Classes begin promptly at 8:45am. A staff member will be on duty to greet children at the door from 8:30am to 8:40am. Please be punctual; late arrivals disturb our class and are strongly discouraged.

The goal, in order to foster independence, is for each student to walk to their class on their own. Parents are encouraged to say goodbye to their children at the outside doors or on the sidewalk. ***Parents of new students who feel the need to walk their child to class in the first day or two of school, may do so, providing the hall is vacated by 8:45am. Please see our “Tips for Transition” for ideas on helping your child adjust to his/her new school.***

Students arriving for before-school care enter the school through the east doors that are located at the end of our wing, near the playground. Please walk your child to the door. If arriving after 8:40am, please park your car in the lot and escort your child to the door. To ensure your child’s safety, ALL students arriving after 8:40am must be accompanied into the building by an adult and checked in with staff.

Tardiness

Students arriving after 8:45 will be marked tardy in their school file and a **parent or guardian will need to sign the tardy list.** Your child may then enter their classroom quietly.

After three (3) late arrivals a conference with parents may be requested. Repeated tardiness not only adversely affects your child’s day, but also causes them to miss early morning presentations, ‘specials’, and it also disturbs the class. Repeated tardiness may affect performance and preparedness for the next school level.

Dismissal

Preschool	12:00pm
Kindergarten and Elementary	3:30pm

After class dismissal, students will be released to their parents or authorized adult. Please wait outside to greet them. Students staying for extended childcare after 3:30pm must be signed out with staff on duty.

Early Dismissal

Please notify your child’s teacher and the school office upon arrival in the morning if your child must leave class early for medical appointments or other unavoidable circumstances. Repeated early dismissals are disruptive to your child’s classroom routine, so it is suggested that when possible, appointments be scheduled after school.

Absences

Please contact the school if your child will be absent. In cases of communicable diseases, please notify the office immediately. Please note: tuition will not be adjusted for general absences. In the event of a long-term illness, a tuition adjustment may be made at the discretion of MCMA's Board of Directors.

Vacation

Removing students from class during the regular school schedule for vacation is strongly discouraged. The Montessori Method requires "hands-on" work and class participation. It can be very difficult for a child to complete the necessary work to prepare for the next grade level if they take vacations while classes are in session. Please see the school website for scheduled closings and the best days to schedule your family time events. We appreciate your cooperation in helping your child achieve success in school.

Illnesses

In the interest of the health and well-being of all of our students, CHILDREN CANNOT BE ALLOWED IN SCHOOL WITH ANY COMMUNICABLE ILLNESS OR DISEASE. ***A child should be free of fever for 24 hours without the aid of pain relievers before returning to school.*** After an absence of five (5) consecutive days due to illness, a doctor's release is required for continued attendance.

If a student becomes ill during the course of the school day, a parent will be contacted first. If a parent is not able to pick up your child immediately, a local emergency pick-up person will be called from the list in your child's file. Please remember to update your emergency contact information whenever it changes.

Dispensing of Medicine

Medicines, either prescription or over-the-counter, must be delivered to the teacher or the office by a parent or guardian, along with a **signed release form**. All prescription medicines must be **labeled by the pharmacy** with your child's name and dosage instructions. Over-the-counter medicines must be in the manufacturer's labeled container. Medicines will be stored by the teachers, with the exception of inhalers, which may be stored in the student's backpack, with parental permission and release.

Weather Related Closings

Our school closings will be listed on the website: www.emergencyclosings.com. This website will forward the closing information to Chicago television stations. Families may register to receive email notifications from the website.

In the event that unexpected, severe weather arrives or power outages occur after your child is at school, we will notify you to come retrieve your child. **EVERY CHILD MUST HAVE AN EMERGENCY PICK-UP PERSON ON FILE AUTHORIZED TO RETRIEVE THEM IN THE EVENT THAT YOU CANNOT ARRIVE PROMPTLY. Please update the office with current phone numbers and e-mail addresses.** When MCMA closes due to weather or related issues, we will be completely closed, with no classes or childcare.

Release of Children

Children will be released only to those listed as “authorized pick-up persons” in student files. Anyone who might pick up your child should be listed in his file. If your child should **NOT** be released to a particular person, such as a non-custodial parent, **THIS MUST BE STATED IN THE STUDENT’S FILE, ALONG WITH A COPY OF CUSTODIAL PAPERS.**

Withdrawal

We require a ten month commitment. Students should not be withdrawn before the end of the school year in May. If grave circumstances require that a child must be withdrawn, we require one month’s written notice. **TUITION IS NON-REFUNDABLE. TUITION DEPOSITS MAY ONLY BE USED AS CREDIT TOWARD MAY TUITION.** Parents are responsible for full payment of any unpaid tuition.

Assessment and Evaluation

At MCMA all teachers are trained in the fundamentals of child development. However, there are some situations when we may, in consultation with the parent, refer students for a professional evaluation. We will be happy to direct parents/guardians to the appropriate resources for services.

Six-Week Probation for New Students

As much as we believe that Montessori is the best educational method and is able to meet the needs of most children, there are occasions or circumstances where we may be concerned about the suitability of our program for an individual child. In those cases, after consulting with parents, teachers and key staff, we may decide that MCMA is not able to successfully meet the needs of a particular student and we may ask the parents to withdraw their child. A refund of current tuition and fees may be issued at that time, providing the decision is made by MCMA during the six-week probation period.

Discretionary Dismissal Policy

The Montessori Method has a long successful history of educating children of various backgrounds and abilities. As a private school, however, MCMA reserves the right to make a decision to not include a child in our program. In the rare instance that we find a child is not thriving in our environment, or is disrupting other students’ education, we will take the following steps:

- We will notify parents in writing of our concerns
- We will set up a meeting with parents to determine an Individual Student Plan
- We will schedule a follow-up meeting to assess student’s progress
- We will make a decision at that time regarding the student’s continuance in our program
- If it is determined by MCMA that your child would be better served in another school environment, then your deposit will be refunded.

School Records

It is vital that we keep our records up to date at all times. Any changes in a student's address, phone number, emergency information, medical, or other pertinent information such as food allergies, should be presented promptly to the school office in writing. Records will be released only upon written consent from the parents.

Release of Personal Information

Personal information will only be released with a parent's written consent. Please consult the school directory for student contact information. The directory may be helpful for planning play dates, parties and car-pooling.

Health Requirements

According to state regulations, the following physical, dental and eye exams are required for the listed grade levels:

<u>(New) Preschool</u>	<u>Kindergarten</u>	<u>2nd Level</u>	<u>6th Level</u>	<u>New Students</u>
Physical	Physical	Dental	Physical	Physical
	Dental		Dental	<i>(within 12 months)</i>
	Eye			Dental/Eye
				<i>(previous copies)</i>

Health Insurance

It is recommended that families secure their own private health insurance coverage for students enrolled at MCMA.

Student Safety

In keeping with the State of Illinois' guidelines for the safety of children and staff in our school, MCMA follow daily procedures and has an emergency plan in place. MCMA complies with local and state fire department regulations, inspections and required periodic safety drills.

Snack

Personal daily snacks may be brought by the students each day, if desired. Snacks should be ready-to-eat finger foods, stored in sealable containers. Please make sure your child's snack is marked with their name. We provide bottled water, and would prefer no liquid refreshments be included in your child's snack. Children who stay for after-school care may bring an extra snack.

Lunch

"Ready to eat" lunches for our students are to be provided by their parents each day. We encourage a balanced lunch. Candy and soda pop are not allowed. We encourage children to take leftovers home so that parents can better gauge what their children will or will not eat, as well as how much.

We encourage our students to be responsible for remembering to bring their lunches to school. In the event a lunch is forgotten, we will allow a child to call a parent to bring it to school by the scheduled lunch break.

Preschool Extended Care

Preschool students who are staying for extended care will take a rest. We supply cots, a small pillow and a blanket. **Bedding will be sent home weekly to be laundered. Please remember to return these promptly.** Your child may bring **ONE** favorite stuffed animal, though it will be available only at naptime and must be small enough to fit in their cubby box or backpack.

MCMA offers before and after school childcare as a DCFS License Exempt facility.

General Information

Friday Morning Worship

Every Friday morning the students and staff meet at 9:15 in our Community Room for Praise and Worship. Students are allowed, *but not required* to bring in small amounts of money as an offering, which will later be donated to our chosen charities. Family members are welcome to attend.

Appointments

If you have a particular question not pertinent to the given day, please give a note to your child's teacher or leave a message with the office staff. Teachers will be happy to sit down and talk or perhaps answer your question over the telephone. Please be assured that concerns will be addressed as soon as possible, but not during class time, as that must be devoted to the children.

Parent Meetings/Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences are scheduled in the fall. Progress reports are sent home in the fall and final reports in May.

Discipline

We strive to help the children develop an inner discipline. We prefer that they learn and understand right from wrong and develop a desire in their hearts to choose to do what is right, regardless of what others want them to do. We have very simple ground rules. We expect all children to show respect for their teachers, fellow classmates, the materials and the environment. If basic rules are broken, teachers strive to find the reason for the difficulty and help the child understand why it was wrong and what other options there might have been. In some cases, the child might be asked to take a "timeout" until they feel able to return and act properly. Parents will be notified of continuous disciplinary problems. If a child is involved in a physical altercation, parents will be notified and the child may be suspended for a period of time appropriate to their age and the action. These incidents are extremely rare in our school, but parents should be aware that we are serious about providing a safe learning environment.

Anti-Bullying Policy

MCMA believes that all students have the right to a safe and healthy school environment. As stated our Discipline Policy, we have an obligation to promote mutual respect, tolerance and acceptance. We will not tolerate behavior that infringes on the safety of any student. Intimidation, harassment or bullying of others through words or actions are not allowed. MCMA staff is trained to immediately take steps to intervene when any act of bullying is witnessed or reported. Staff and administration will investigate all incidents and discuss the policy with students in an age-appropriate manner to assure them that bullying will not be tolerated. Any student who engages in bullying may be subject to disciplinary action, up to, and including expulsion. Students are expected to immediately report incidents of bullying to a staff member, teacher or director. In an effort to prevent bullying, all students are encouraged to resolve conflicts at the "Peace Table." Students may rely on staff to intervene if a dispute cannot be resolved peacefully.

Personal Belongings

We do not allow the bringing of personal toys, as they are a distraction in the classroom. They may get lost or broken and our school cannot assume responsibility for them. During the school year, children may occasionally bring "treasures" to share with the class such as a special book, photo, keepsake, etc. These items do not include toys.

Cell phones and **electronic devices** are not to be used in school. If a student brings a cell phone or other electronic device to school, it must remain in the backpack and be turned off during school hours. If discovered in a student's possession during school hours, the item will be held in the office and released to the parent at the end of the day. Necessary phone calls from students to parents during the school day may be made in the school office.

Visitation

Parents are allowed to visit in classrooms; however, we ask that arrangements be made in advance with your child's teacher in order to visit at the most appropriate time. This enables us to limit the number of visitors on any given day, and if necessary we may suggest a better time. When you visit, please do so quietly and with a purpose; such as to see how your child interacts with other children, how they use their time, what kind of materials they are interested in, etc. Unless requested by the teacher, we do not recommend helping your child or others with their work. Children are generally proud to show their parents what they can accomplish on their own. There are "Moms' and Dads' Nights" scheduled later in the school year when students may share their work with their parents.

Volunteers

We always appreciate help offered by parents. Please ask your child's teacher for what may be needed in their classroom. Whether you donate an hour to listen to children read or a day to do repair work and paint, we are very grateful. This is your child's school. We are all here to do God's work and to provide a good environment and pleasant learning experiences for your children. Volunteers need to sign in and out and wear a visitor's badge, which are available in the office. Our insurance requires that we keep a copy of all volunteers' drivers' licenses in our files.

Student Attire

Please keep in mind that we are a Christian school and we encourage children to dress modestly. The indoor temperature may be very unpredictable, so we suggest that your children dress in layers which may be removed when the classroom is too warm.

Preschool and Kindergarten Attire

- Children should be encouraged to pick out their own clothing and dress themselves.
- Comfortable clothing, which allows freedom of movement, and non-marking, rubber-soled indoor shoes are suggested.
- Children are encouraged to be as independent as possible. Clothing should be easy to get on and off. Elastic waistbands are ideal unless your child is proficient with zippers, snaps, buttons, and buckles.
- Good clothing that cannot get dirty or spotted by paint, etc., should NOT be worn. We want the children to be free to explore activities without the fear of ruining their clothing.
- Please note that our policy does not allow clothing, backpacks, lunchboxes, etc. which depict characters and/or words that may be offensive to others.

Elementary Attire

- Comfortable clothing, which allows freedom of movement, and non-marking rubber-soled indoor shoes are encouraged.
- Short skirts are inappropriate since some work is done on the floor.
- Clothing with pictures depicting violence or anything that may be offensive to others is not allowed.
- Elementary students will require gym shoes for P.E. class. If desired, a separate pair of gym shoes may be stored here at the school.

Winter Attire

We go outside all winter for recess, providing it is not extremely cold. All children should have hats, mittens, scarves, boots and snow pants. During snowy weather, students without boots and snow pants will be restricted to playing on the blacktop. Non-marking, rubber-soled indoor shoes or slippers are needed for when they take their boots off or if their shoes get muddy or wet. Please – NO BIG, FURRY SLIPPERS OR SLIPPER SOCKS. Please make sure everything is labeled with your child's name, as the school cannot be responsible for lost clothing.

Recess

Our staff level does not allow for supervision of students remaining inside due to illness. If your child is not well enough to go outside for a short recess, they should probably not be in attendance that day. Please stress with your child the wearing of appropriate weather-related clothing.

Birthdays

We enjoy celebrating children's birthdays, but "parties" (birthday décor, balloons, candles, goodie bags, etc.) are not appropriate in school. We encourage you to send pictures showing your child from birth to present so he can present a history of his/her life and the class can experience with your child the passage of time.

The children appreciate treats. Some favorites are popsicles, ice cream, fruit, cheese, cookies, muffins, and popcorn. **Please check with the school office regarding food allergy issues. In particular, nuts/related items are not allowed.** Sometimes, children donate gifts to the classroom on their birthdays...a small plant, book, wooden puzzle, etc., are a few of the items that would bless our classrooms. You may check with your child's teacher for helpful suggestions. A gift may be brought wrapped so that your child may unwrap it and present it to the class in honor of their birthday. The birthday children really love to share this experience with their friends.

Please do not send party invitations to school. The school directory may be used for mailing purposes.

Financial Information

Tuition

It is imperative that tuition be paid on time to allow the school sufficient operating funds. Tuition will not be adjusted for absences, family vacations, school holidays or closings. In the event of a long-term illness, tuition may be adjusted at the discretion of the MCMA Board of Directors.

Non-sufficient Funds / Returned Checks

Accounts with checks returned to MCMA for non-sufficient funds or any other reason will be charged a \$30.00 fee. Those accounts must be settled with the Business Office within ten (10) business days of notification. The account will be flagged with the date of the returned check. If two (2) checks are returned within a twelve (12) month period, future payments must be in the form of cash, credit card, certified cashier's check or money order. This will be in effect for one year from the date of the last flagged non-sufficient funds/returned check.

Late Fees

All tuition payments must be made in a timely manner. Monthly payments are due on the first of each month. Payment plans may be discussed with the Business Office.

- Any payment ten (10) days in arrears will be assessed a late charge of \$5.00 on any amount up to \$100.00 and 5% of any amount over \$100.00
- Any payment thirty (30) days in arrears may result in your child being excluded from classes until your account is current.

Frequent late payments will require a meeting with the Business Office and may result in removal of your child from Midwest.

Childcare Overtime Charges

- Unscheduled overtime will be charged at \$10.00 per hour, billed to the nearest half hour.
- Unscheduled childcare includes students not picked up by 15 minutes after dismissal.
- Unused contracted hours will not be credited.
- Statements with accrued childcare will be issued monthly.

MCMA CLOSSES PROMPTLY AT 6:00PM . LATE PICK-UPS WILL BE CHARGED TO YOUR ACCOUNT AT \$10.00 PER EACH 15 MINUTE PERIOD.

PARENT/TEACHER ORGANIZATION

Our Parent/Teacher Organization (PTO) contributes a great deal to our children's learning experience. The PTO assists with field trips and supports our special events such as the Christmas program, fund-raisers, special guest performances, presentations, and our school picnic. We encourage you to get involved in our fund-raising programs and activities which help to support your children and their school.

Volunteers are needed in many areas for school events. We appreciate your help! Please check **MCMA News** e-mails and the website for scheduled events and updates. Please contact the office if emails are not being received or to update our records with address changes. A weekly paper copy of announcements is posted on the school bulletin board.

Fees

Each family is required to pay \$25.00 in PTO fees once a year, which helps to subsidize field trips, activities and special events. The field trip/activity fee charged to families also contributes, but does not cover the entire activity expenses incurred.

Field Trips/Activities

Fees for trips and events are due at registration. A permission card must be on file in the school office and fees paid for your child to participate. We travel by walking, chartered bus, or parent vehicles. Trips and in-school presentations are announced on the website calendar and in the weekly "MCMA News" email.

Children should wear a school T-shirt or sweatshirt on outside school field trips. School spirit wear may be ordered during registration at the beginning of the year.

Parent volunteers are usually welcome to accompany us on field trips, though in some situations this may not be possible. Our insurance requires that we keep a copy of all volunteers' drivers' licenses in our files. Siblings are invited to in-house events only.