



Bergamo Schools

Parent Handbook

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Welcome to the Bergamo Montessori School!

Our work as teachers and staff is enormous yet rewarding as we assist children in unfolding their talents as individuals and help to prepare them for life as well adjusted adults. As Maria Montessori stated, “Our care of the children is not governed by the desire to make children learn things, but to by the endeavor always to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence.” As your partner in your child’s education we are honored to guide, motivate and continue to ignite a passion for learning and discovery.

You will find in this handbook a variety of information including the history of the school and specific information regarding the Montessori philosophy and method of teaching and learning. There are also specific school policies and procedures outlined in this manual. As you read over these materials, please know that all decisions were made with your child in mind. Our hope is to assist children in knowing how to approach any given situation with confidence and common sense. In this way, the Bergamo Montessori School can support children with boundaries and limits, empowering them with their words and giving them choices, as they are ready.

We look forward to a year of opportunity and promise!

Warmest Regards,

Pam Lynn
Head of School

This Parent Handbook is not intended to create a contract. While Bergamo Montessori School strives to keep all students and parents fully apprised regarding policy and procedure changes, the school reserves the right to modify the policies and practices outlined in this handbook at any time, based on the needs of the school and at the sole discretion of the administration. Accordingly, there may be occasions in which school policy changes prior to the distribution of written notice to the school community.

Non Discriminatory Statement

Bergamo Montessori School admits students of any race, color, religion, gender and national or ethnic origin. It does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, gender, national or ethnic origin in the administration of its employment or admissions programs or policies.

Mission Statement

Our mission is to help our students become enthusiastic, creative learners capable of functioning independently, as well as cooperatively, in both educational and social situations.

To accomplish this, we will implement a quality Montessori program, as well as before and after school programs that are consistent with that philosophy.

The result will be a carefully planned, loving, respectful, child centered environment which supports each child's right to develop at his or her own pace.

Educational Philosophy

Our approach to educating children is based on the work of Dr. Maria Montessori. We are guided by the standards set forth by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI), a governing body created by Dr Montessori in 1929, to preserve her work and legacy. Bergamo Montessori is one of only 200 schools in the United States to be AMI accredited.

In accordance with the teachings of Dr. Maria Montessori, our children are grouped in multi-age classrooms:

- **Assistants to Infancy (Toddler):** Ages 18-36 months
- **Primary:** Ages 3 to 6 years (with exceptions for children as young as 2 ½ to as old as 7)
- **Lower Elementary:** Ages 6 to 9 years
- **Upper Elementary:** Ages 9 to 12 years
- **Adolescent (Middle School):** Ages 12-14 years

The Montessori Method: Education for Life

Montessori education is driven by an ambitious aim: To aid the child's development into a complete adult human being, comfortable with himself, with his society and with humanity as a whole.

Whereas the traditional approach to education, which prevails today, remains focused on the transmission of prescribed blocks of knowledge, the Montessori approach is focused on giving support to the natural development of the human being. This is done with the understanding that the fully developed human being is then better disposed to learning the things that he needs to become an integrated and contributing member of society.

Today, as it was a century ago, education is rightly seen as a means to tackle poverty, inequality, anti-social behavior and other ills of society. Prior to birth, it is of course the embryo that guides its own development. The fundamental problem with traditional education is a lack of faith in the child to continue to guide his own development—and to guide the educators in supporting this task. Montessori education begins with the understanding that the role of the adult is to help the unfolding of the child's inborn developmental powers. The child, from the earliest moments of life, possesses great constructive energies that guide the formation of his mind and the coordination of his body. The Montessori approach was developed without preconceived ideas as to how best to aid the child in his journey to adulthood. Instead, key Montessori ideas emerged from the observation of children in diverse cultures and in many countries:

1. There are four key developmental planes in the journey to adulthood: 0-6 years old, 6-12 years, 12-18 years and 18-24 years. Each of these planes has its own goals: in the first, the development of the self as an individual being; in the second, the development of the social being; in the third, the birth of the adult and finding one's sense of self; in the fourth, consolidating the mature personality and becoming a specialized explorer. The complete development of the adult human being requires that the specific needs of each of these periods be satisfied.
2. Within each of these planes the child or adolescent has specific *sensitivities* or *windows of opportunity* to acquire a particular human trait, for example a sensitivity that guides the child to the acquisition of language in the first plane (0-6 years), or that guides the child to the development of a moral 'compass' in the second plane (6-12 years).
3. In addition to these age-specific sensitivities, human beings have a number of behavioral tendencies that give each child the ability to adapt to his or her place and time. These human traits—for example, to explore, order, manipulate, imagine, repeat, work and communicate—have been crucial to human evolution and are active within the child.

The following sections explain how Montessori education responds to this understanding of child development

A prepared environment

Montessori education seeks to provide children with environments ideally suited to each stage of development; this allows them to respond to the inner call of specific *sensitivities* and gives them the freedom to act in accordance with their innate human tendencies. Thus, if education is viewed as a method to fulfill the optimum potential of the child in every facet of his emerging personality, this *prepared environment* provides a secure and permanent foundation on which to base education.

The prepared environment is different for each developmental plane but guided by the same principles. The prepared environment and the role of the teacher in the classroom distinguish Montessori from other educational approaches. For example, independent activity constitutes about 80% of the work in a Montessori classroom while teacher-directed activity accounts for the remaining 20%. The reverse percentages are generally true for traditional education. The special environments enable children to perform various tasks which induce thinking about relationships.

The logical, sequential nature of the environment provides orderly structures which guide discovery: Theorems are discovered, not presented; spelling rules are derived through recognition of patterns, not merely memorized. Every aspect of the curriculum involves creative invention and careful, thoughtful analysis. In viewing learning outcomes at each Montessori level, it must be emphasized that why and how students arrive at what they know is just as important as what they know.

The clearest examples of the Montessori prepared environment are those prepared for 3-to 6-year-olds. At this formative age the child is consolidating the formation of the self as an individual being that began at birth. The environment is set up as a bridge between the home and the wider world. Montessori called this place a Casa dei Bambini or Children's House.

Montessori materials

The first materials the child encounters in the Montessori Children's House are the *Practical Life* activities. These are everyday activities, familiar to the child from his home, such as pouring, scrubbing a table, polishing or buttoning. While helping the child gain independence by acquiring a particular skill, the main purpose of these activities is to help the child develop his ability to concentrate and to coordinate his movements.

The other areas of the curriculum for the children of this age are Sensorial, Mathematics and Language. The Sensorial materials respond to the way the child learns at this age—through the

senses rather than the intellect. There are materials for the refinement of each sense, with each activity isolating one particular quality, such as color, size, loudness, taste or weight. For example, the material known as the Pink Tower is made up of ten pink cubes of varying sizes. The 3-year-old constructs a tower with the largest cube on the bottom and the smallest on top. This material isolates the concept of size. The cubes are all the same color and texture; the only difference is their size and of course weight. Other materials isolate different concepts: color tablets for color, geometry materials for form, and so on.

As the child's exploration continues, the materials interrelate and build upon each other. Later, in the primary years, new aspects of some of the materials unfold. When studying measurements, for instance, the child may return to the pink tower and discover that its cubes progress incrementally from one cubic centimeter to one cubic decimeter. At the pre-school age, when the child is bombarded by sensory information, these materials help the child order and make sense of his world and heighten his perception of it as well as his sense of wonder.

The ability to count or calculate, to write or read, are by-products of the child's time in this prepared environment, not the goal. Through working with the different Sensorial materials the child has refined his discrimination of size to the point where he wants to know how much bigger one object is than another. The math materials flow naturally from here. When a child reaches this point, he needs to be introduced to the concept of numbers to sustain his interest.

The same applies with language. The subtle preparation the child has been given in this environment—a rich diet of songs, stories and poems, or the control over the movement of the hand through polishing—allows 4- and 5-year-olds to effortlessly start to write and read.

Montessori education has been using an effective system of synthetic phonics for 100 years. At the center of this system is a set of *sandpaper letters*, individual boards with the primary symbol for each of the 26 letters as well as many of the diagraph sounds (e.g. 'sh' or 'oa') in the English language. Three-year-old children see and feel these symbols and pronounce the corresponding sound, absorbing the combination of sound and symbol through three different senses simultaneously.

Finally, language and sensorial extensions bring to the child his world and the animals, plants and people within it. Like everything offered to the child at this age, the materials are sensory-based and are introduced in an orderly way: first the world, then the plants and animals in it; first animals, then mammals, birds, amphibians, reptiles and fish; first the concrete—a real plant—then the more abstract pictures or reading that may describe it.

Materials that aid independence

The materials themselves invite activity. There are bright arrays of solid geometric forms, knobbed puzzle maps, colored beads, and various specialized rods and blocks. All the materials in a Montessori environment are designed for maximum independence in the child: Everything, including a dustpan and brush, is child sized; activities are laid out in an orderly way on easily

accessible open shelves; and the design of the materials makes it easy for the child to identify, and gradually correct, any error. This last point all but eliminates the need for correction by a teacher, a feature that has become a mainstay of traditional education. Instead of an external force judging him, the child relies on the impersonal judgment that comes from his senses. The guide in the material may be mechanical (all the pieces fit together only one way), it may be visual (the eye checking groups of objects sorted by touch), or there may be an answer sheet. Either way, by coming to rely on his own self-appraisal, the child develops a 'friendly feeling' towards error, setting him on a path to self-improvement.

Mixed-age groupings

In the family, in the workplace and in society as a whole, we are in constant interaction with people who are older or younger. Children in traditional schools are the only members of society segregated by age. A mixed-age environment is an important feature of Montessori education. Since the children need different environments at different stages in their development, classes are mixed within age groups, for example, 0-3 years, 3-6 years, 6-12 years, or 12-15 years. The young child in each group is surrounded by role models a little more developed than himself. Similarly, the older child finds himself in a position of responsibility, and, by showing younger children what he knows, affirms to himself, more surely than any test, the extent of his learning. Cooperation replaces competition as the driving force within these mini-societies. The auto-education facilitated by the prepared environment means that each child is learning and developing at his own pace.

Freedom and discipline

Just as important as the physical environment and its contents is the social functioning of the environment. The Montessori environment gives the children the tools they need, but they must also have the freedom to use them and to manifest their tendencies to repeat, to explore or to manipulate.

Each child is given freedom of choice. The child's interaction with the environment is most productive in terms of the individual's development when it is self-chosen and founded on individual interest. From the moment the children enter the classroom in the morning they are free to choose their activities for themselves. One will choose to start the day with a drink and a chat before washing up some cups. He may then choose to sit and do nothing, quietly watching his friends, before choosing to join a singing group. Another may arrive and immediately start to trace some of the sandpaper letters with his fingers and then write on a chalkboard. This is *auto education*— the child has the freedom to respond to the teacher within him and has access to materials in the environment that can satisfy each developmental need.

Each child is also given freedom of time. He is free to work with an activity for as long as he chooses, free to repeat it as many times as he needs, or simply take his time. A 4-year-old might spend 1 1/2 hours washing some 50 or more small cloths that have been used during the

morning. He is left undisturbed and finishes when the force that compelled him to concentrate for that time is satisfied. Long periods of concentration of this type are frequently observed in Montessori environments in children as young as 3 years old.

Paradoxically, it is this freedom that leads to discipline. The traditional approach to discipline holds that children are inherently disorderly and that their willfulness and impulses must be inhibited by an external discipline. The widespread assumption is that children need rewards (such as gold stars) or punishments (such as 'time out') in order to behave appropriately. In contemporary education the balance has shifted from punishment to rewards, but the problem remains the same. If the external motive is withdrawn, there is only a weak will or moral compass within the person to direct his intentions and actions. The desire to learn or cooperate within society is based more on the notion of 'I should' rather than 'I want to'.

Montessori education aids the development of the child's will. Through constant decision making (choices) the child's ability to listen to his interests and impulses is developed. But the environment also contains within it limits, both natural and social, that give the child constant practice in the inhibition of those impulses. For example, in the prepared environment there is only one of each set of materials—one easel for painting, for example. If a child has an impulse to paint and another child is already painting, there is a natural limit to that impulse. Similarly, an activity, freely chosen, is only complete when it has been returned to its place on the shelf, ready for the next person to use; the only limit to individual freedom being the needs of the group as a whole.

Montessori education has a special term for the process where characteristics including initiative, self-discipline, concentration, independence, a love of purposeful activity, and compassion become manifest in the child—*normalization*. This does not refer to a standardization or a process of being forced to conform, but describes a unique process in child development.

Maria Montessori used this term to indicate her belief that these characteristics are the normal characteristics of childhood. She believed that the characteristics that we normally associate with childhood—such as capriciousness, selfishness, laziness and the inability to concentrate—appear only when a child's natural development is being thwarted. When children are allowed freedom in an environment suited to their needs, they blossom. After a period of intense concentration, working with materials that fully engage their interest, children appear to be refreshed and contented. Through continued concentrated activity of their own choice, children grow in inner discipline and peace. *This normalization is the single most important result of Montessori education.*

Dr. Maria Montessori: Founder of the Montessori Movement



Maria Montessori was the first woman to practice medicine in Italy. A scholar of biology, psychiatry, anthropology, and medicine, she graduated from the Faculty of Medicine at the University of Rome in 1896. As a physician, Dr. Montessori was in touch with young children and became profoundly interested in their development. Through careful and exhaustive scrutiny, she realized that children construct their own personalities as they interact with their environment. She also observed the manner in which they learned as they spontaneously chose and worked with the auto didactic materials she provided.

She studied children of all races and cultures in many countries around the world, soon seeing the universality of the laws of human development. She continued her observations throughout her life, widening and deepening her understanding until her death in 1952. Also a devoted humanitarian, she was three-times nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her advocacy efforts toward a more peaceful humanity.

Maria Montessori was a scientist, and as a good scientist, she was earth-bound and highly spiritual in her pursuit of truth. Through her studies of educational methods, she declared two principles as the foundation of Montessori pedagogy: the universal characteristics of the human child, and the child as a unique, unrepeatable, respectable, and admirable individual to be unconditionally accepted as one of life's most marvelous expressions.

The Montessori method has since spread to nearly every country throughout the world. The movement reached the United States in 1963. Although it initially spread slowly throughout the U.S., the number of Montessori schools has doubled over the past ten years. Currently, there are 1,377 accredited Montessori schools nationwide educating over 85,000 students annually. The Montessori approach has also been implemented as a magnet program in nearly 250 public schools to date.

Highlights - The Life and Career of Maria Montessori

1896: Dr. Montessori graduates to great public acclaim from the University of Rome School of Medicine. She is the first woman in Italy to receive a medical degree. Maria also studied anthropology, biology and psychiatry. As an early feminist she represents Italy at the 1896 Women's Conference in Berlin where, among other things, she is a strong advocate for equal pay.

1896-1907: Dr. Montessori's work brings her into close contact with children. During this period, the Italian Minister of Education appoints her as the Director of the Scuola Ortofrenica. This institution was dedicated to the care and education of youngsters that were considered "cognitively challenged". Through the development of her Montessori method, many of these 8-year-old students are able to pass standards testing with above-average scores.'

1907: Dr. Montessori opens Casa dei Bambini or "Children's House," for children ages 3 to 6 years in one of the poorest neighborhoods in San Lorenzo, Italy.

1913: Dr. Montessori makes her first visit to the United States.; Montessori Educational Association is founded by Alexander Graham Bell and his wife, Mabel.

1915: Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco: Dr. Montessori receives international attention with her "glass house" schoolroom exhibit. During this visit, Dr. Montessori leads a teacher training course while in the states.

1922: Italian government asks Dr. Montessori to return to become a government inspector of schools.

1929: Dr. Montessori founds the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) in Amsterdam, Netherlands with her son, Mario, to insure preservation of her educational principles.

1939: Dr. Montessori and her son travel to India to give a series of teacher training courses. Both are detained in India during World War II.

1947: Dr. Montessori starts a training center in London and continues to spend time in India.

1949, 1950, 1951: Dr. Montessori is nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize.

1952: Dr. Montessori died in the Netherlands assured that her legacy would be continued through the work of the Association Montessori Internationale.

Recommended Reading

Montessori Education

The Montessori Method
Maria Montessori

The Absorbent Mind
Maria Montessori

From Childhood to Adolescence
Maria Montessori

Montessori – A Modern Approach
Paula Polk Lillard

Montessori Today
Paula Polk Lillard

Maria Montessori – A Biography
Rita Kramer

Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius
Angeline Lillard

Child Development & Parenting

Children: The Challenge
Rudolf Dreikurs and Vick Soltz

Positive Discipline
Jane Nelsen

The Magic Years
Selma H. Fraiberg

Endangered Minds
Jane M. Healy, Ph.D.

The Hurried Child
David Elkind

All Grown Up and No Place to Go
David Elkind

Siblings Without Rivalry
Adele Faber & Elaine Mazlish

Yard Sticks
Chip Wood

Touch Points
T. Berry Brazelton

A Mind at a Time
Mel Levine

School Specifics

School History

In 1975, Pam Lynn opened **Woodland Montessori School** for her daughter, Wendy. The school operated one Primary classroom in rented space at a church in Woodland. In 1978, the school moved to a new and permanent campus on Cottonwood Street. In 1983, the school built a second building on the existing campus to house a burgeoning elementary program. Today, the school operates four classrooms:

- Two **Primary** classrooms
- One **Lower Elementary** classroom
- One **Upper Elementary** classroom

In 1991, Pam opened **Montessori Country Day at Riverlake** in the Pocket area of Sacramento. The school operates one **Toddler** classroom and two **Primary** classrooms.

In 2004, Pam opened **Bergamo Montessori School**, located ½ mile from Montessori Country Day at Riverlake. Originally conceived as an elementary campus, the school has grown considerably to accommodate children of different ages. Today, the school occupies two separate building with programs for:

- One **Toddler** classrooms
- Two **Primary** classrooms
- Two **Lower Elementary** classrooms
- One **Upper Elementary** classroom

Quick Glance: Key Facts About Bergamo Montessori School

- 200 Students
- 21 Montessori Guides and Assistants
- 10 Administrators and Staff

School Administration

Pamela Lynn – Head of School



With over 3 decades of experience as a Montessori teacher and administrator, Pam's main job role is as an educational director. She works directly with Montessori teachers at all levels to ensure standards of quality, to observe children and staff, to provide constructive feedback and to problem solve issues with teachers, parents, children and the community at large. Pam also helps to educate parents about the Montessori method by writing for the school newsletter and blog and by leading parent education sessions.

Matt Hillis – Executive Director



A Montessori alumnus, Matt is responsible for the growth and development of the organization, marketing and communication strategy, staff recruitment and general business management.

Who Do I Talk to About.....

Admission to the school or transitions to next classroom/program?

Sylvia Flood, Admissions Director – Sylvia@BergamoSchools.com

Tuition questions

BMS, WMS – Meida Sumampauw, Executive Assistant – Meida@BergamoSchools.com

MCD – Lynda Yates, Office Manager – Lynda@BergamoSchools.com

Montessori questions, referrals to specialists

Pam Lynn, Head of School – Pam@BergamoSchools.com

Financial assistance, website questions or student accident insurance?

Matt Hillis, Executive Director – Matt@BergamoSchools.com

Receipts, update contact information, hot lunch or messages to staff?

BMS – Amber Mohabbat, Office Manager – Amber@BergamoSchools.com

MCD – Lynda Yates, Office Manager – Lynda@BergamoSchools.com

My child's classroom: progress, questions or concerns?

The classroom guide (teacher): first name@BergamoSchools.com

On site music lessons?

Brian LaTour (independent music instructor) – Brian@BergamoSchools.com

Programs at the School

Assistants to Infancy (AKA Toddler Classroom): 18 months – 3 years

Children can join the toddler community at 18 months of age, where their primary motor coordination, independence and language will be cultivated. Rather than a classroom, it is a nurturing environment where very young children experience their first structured contact with other children. The children engage in the practical activities of everyday life, such as folding, preparing a snack, washing or sweeping; explore a language area, including miniature objects, language nomenclature cards and books; and participate in painting, singing and other artistic experiences.

Primary (AKA Children's House) (3-6 years)

The Montessori pre-school classroom is a “living room” for children. Children choose their activities from among the self-correcting materials displayed on open shelves that allow the children to learn through their senses. The pre-school environment unifies the psycho-social, physical and academic functioning of the child. Its important task is to provide children with an early and general foundation that includes a positive attitude toward school, inner security and a sense of order, pride in the physical environment, abiding curiosity, a habit of concentration, habits of initiative and persistence, the ability to make decisions, self-discipline, and a sense of responsibility to other members of the class, school, and community. This foundation will enable them to acquire more specialized knowledge and skills throughout their school career. The activities in the Children's House are described in more detail in the section ‘Montessori materials’ above.

Elementary (6-12 years)

As in the Primary, the Montessori materials in the elementary classroom are a means to an end. They are intended to evoke the imagination, to aid abstraction, to generate a world-view about the human task and purpose. The child works within a philosophical system, asking questions about the origins of the universe, the nature of life, people and their differences, and so on. On a factual basis, interdisciplinary studies combine the basics of reading, writing and arithmetic with geological, biological and anthropological science in the study of natural history and world ecology. The program is made up of connective narratives that provide an inspiring overview of the universe and the place of humans within it. These narratives or “Great Lessons” span the history of the universe from the origin of the solar system, earth and life forms to the emergence of human cultures and the rise of civilizations. Aided by impressionistic charts, timelines and, in some cases, scientific experiments, the child's study of detail in reference to the ‘Great Lessons’ leads to awe and respect for the totality of knowledge.

Studies are integrated not only in terms of subject matter but in terms of moral learning as well, resulting in appreciation and respect for life, moral empathy and a fundamental belief in progress, the contribution of the individual, the universality of the human condition and the

meaning of true justice. There is an emphasis on research and in-depth study using primary and secondary sources (no textbooks or worksheets) as well as other materials. This involves the children's planning their own trips to 'go out' to make use of community resources beyond the four walls of the classroom.

The Montessori-trained adults leading the programs are "enlightened generalists", guides who are able to integrate the teaching of all subjects, not as isolated disciplines, but as part of a whole intellectual tradition.

School and Classroom Names

We named our school Bergamo (Bear-Gah-Moe) after Bergamo, Italy where one of the oldest Montessori training centers in the world operates. All of our classrooms, except for Toddler, are named colors using Italian nomenclature.

Toddler

Nido: (Italian for "Nest")

Primary Classrooms

Blu (Italian for "Blue") & Rosso (Italian for "Red")

Note that these are primary colors

Lower Elementary

Verde (Italian for "Green") & Viola (Italian for "Purple")

Note that these are secondary colors

Upper Elementary

Marrone (Italian for "Brown")

Note that this is a tertiary color

Accreditation

Our school is one of only 200 schools in the United States to receive accreditation from the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI). AMI Accreditation ensures that the school meets the standards put forth by AMI and offers credibility to a school's status within the educational community. Our school must apply annually for recognition. Every three years, an AMI consultant visits the school and completes evaluations of each teacher and of the school as a whole.

To be considered for an AMI Montessori Certificate of Recognition a school must have:

- An AMI trained teacher at the appropriate age level for each class.
- A consultation by an AMI trained consultant once every three years.
- A complete set of materials for each class from an AMI authorized manufacturer.
- A philosophical approach consistent with what is given in AMI training courses.
- Between 28-35 children in each primary class including a well-balanced division of ages to ensure social development.
- Morning sessions five days per week for all children, with an afternoon session for the older children in the primary and elementary classes.
- An uninterrupted three-hour work cycle each morning, an uninterrupted hour and a half work cycle each afternoon.

Daily & Yearly Schedule

Early Morning/Afterschool Care

Before and after school care (Extended Care) is available for classrooms at all levels. Hours and cost depend on the program. Extended Care may be available on a drop in, per day basis depending on a variety of factors. Please contact the office if you are interested in Extended Care on a drop in basis.

Holiday Care

(Elementary & Middle School only)

Childcare on some school holidays is available for an additional fee; please refer to the school calendar for details. Students must be signed up in advance to attend holiday care. Since this care is provided as a service to Bergamo Montessori families, care will be canceled if a particular day has a low attendance scheduled. In this case, parents will be notified well in advance that they will need to find alternative care for that day. If a family has signed up for

holiday care and does not attend or cancel two weeks in advance, the fee will still be assessed on the following month's invoice.

Teacher In Service Days

Throughout the school year there are days when classes are out of session and staff members are present on campus for professional activities. These days are used for a number of purposes, including workshops, faculty meetings, and preparation of the environment. Teacher in service days are marked on the school calendar. Each staff member may also be granted other professional days to attend meetings, seminars, and workshops, or to observe other schools.

A Montessori classroom is a highly enriched and complex environment that demands much time and effort from the faculty to prepare and maintain. Consequently, Montessori schools typically devote more days to preparation than other schools do.

Summer Program

Our Elementary and Middle School operates on a traditional school year calendar from late August to early June. Summer programs for our students are available and information is distributed in March.

The Toddler and Primary programs operate on a year round basis.

Professional Development

Although AMI Montessori teachers are well trained in child development and Montessori philosophy, the culture of our school promotes lifelong learning and self improvement. As such, all head teacher are given a professional development stipend each year to be used for classes, workshops or to attend a Montessori conference.

Parent Education Events

It is **essential** that all of our parents make a habit of attending parent education events offered by the school throughout the year. The purpose of these events is to strengthen the child-parent-teacher relationships by offering programs, speakers, and publications that focus on Montessori educational principles and practice, parenting skills, and child development issues.

Most of the parent education events offer child care for *current Bergamo Montessori students only*. Parents are asked to make reservations in advance and they will be accepted as long as space and staffing allow. The cost of child care is \$5.00 per child. Please pay the child care provider directly at the beginning of the evening.

Daily Schedule

7:00 AM

Morning Extended Care opens

8:00 AM

Primary & Lower Elementary children outside on the playground (weather permitting)

8:30 AM

Class begins for Primary, Elementary

9:00 AM

Class begins for Toddler

11:30 AM

Primary & Toddler children eat lunch

12:00 PM

Half day Primary students leave for the day

Elementary students eat lunch

3:00 PM

Primary class day ends. Children not enrolled in Extended Care leave for the day.

3:15 PM

Elementary class day ends. Children not enrolled in Extended Care leave for the day.

6:00 PM

Extended Care ends. The school is closed.

School Community

Family Directory

We publish a family directory that lists the children in each classroom. It includes the name of his or her parents or guardians, the home address and home phone number. The information will be published for all families, unless we are instructed not to do so. The directory is to be used for school or child related purposes only.

If you've had a change of address, email, or phone number, please call or email the office to let us know. It is vital that we have current contact information, especially phone numbers, to be able to reach you in an emergency.

Party Invitations

It can be upsetting for children if they are not invited to a party of a classmate. To prevent hurt feelings, please use the school directory to mail party invitations rather than distributing them at school.

Social Events

Social events are held throughout the year and are a great way to meet other families in our community. Most events are open to the entire school community, although some are for specific classrooms or programs. Please consult the school calendar for details.

Communication Between Parents and the School

Contacting Your Child's Teacher

We value frequent, timely, and open communication with you about your child. We will use many types of media to communicate with you (phone, email, newsletters, written notes, conferences etc.).

Please avoid:

- Making direct phone calls to the classroom during the school day;
- Dropping by the classroom to speak to the teacher during the school day;
- Holding extended conversations with the teacher in the carpool line;
- Sending oral messages to the teacher via the classroom assistant.

Proper Lines of Communication

These are the proper lines to follow in communicating with the school about your child's progress and at Bergamo Montessori School:

Parent to Teacher

If you have a comment, question or concern about your child the first person you should contact is your child's teacher.

Many times during a child's development there are hard issues to consider. Working directly with the teacher in a spirit of collaboration is the most effective way to resolve any issue – and to build a solid partnership between school and home for future work. Speaking to anyone else about the issue – be it the classroom assistant, other staff or other parents - may make you feel better, but will not help your child.

Parent or Teacher to Director

At times either you or the teacher may feel the need for a fresh perspective on the issues under discussion. If that is the case, either the teacher or the parent may arrange a meeting to include the parent, teacher, and director. In either event, it is expected that the parent and teacher have made a concerted effort to work on the issue before involving the director.

Whenever an outside specialist –such as a speech and language pathologist, educational diagnostician, psychologist, occupational therapist, or physical therapist – is working with your

child or conferring with you and the teacher, the school expects to receive copies of written reports and to attend conferences in order to broaden the support network.

Parent to Director

Parents are welcome to contact the director with matters pertaining to guided observation of classrooms, their child's transition to the next level in the school, information about referral to specialists, and special events. All matters pertaining to classroom issues must follow the guidelines described above.

Parent Conferences & Student Evaluation

In the fall and spring of each year, you will have an opportunity to discuss your child's progress at parent/teacher conferences. Throughout the year, if you have any questions or concerns about your child, please call the teacher directly. At the end of each school year, your child will receive a written report in the mail, which will reflect her/his social, emotional, physical, artistic, and academic work development during the course of the school year.

Weekly Email Update

Once a week, the school will email parents about upcoming school events, ordering deadlines, or special notices. The School Director will also use email to send notifications to parents about reportable illnesses, such as strep throat, in lieu of paper notes.

Parent Blog

The parent blog is a section of our website www.BergamoSchools.com. Each classroom has a blog with recent pictures, video, articles, and other pertinent information. Permission slips, hot lunch order forms, etc, and a password protected directory can also be found there.

Email

Email is a great way for parents, teachers and administrators to communicate brief, factual messages, such as "Jimmy has a doctor appointment next Friday" or "Can we schedule a time to talk about XYZ?" Please note that our preferred method of communication for most issues, comments or concerns is in person and that we do not send lengthy messages or attempt to resolve problems through digital communication.

Communicating With Your Child During School

To protect the concentration of your child (and the class) during school, please do not call the school and ask to speak with your child directly. We can relay a message to your child as needed, when he or she will not be interrupted.

Two Families

In situations where parents are separated or divorced, please advise the school of additional addresses for mailing purposes so that everyone is fully informed about school functions, parent-teacher conferences, etc.

In the event of a change in custody arrangements, Bergamo Montessori School requires a notarized document stating the terms of the custodial agreement to be placed on file.

Changes in Home Situation

Please be sure to communicate any changes in your home environment to your child's teacher, such as parent separation, divorce, visiting relatives, death of pets or any other situation that may affect your child. Timely information is essential for us to help children through difficult times.

Observations

Parents of enrolled children may make an appointment to observe at anytime. If your child is new to the school, please allow him/her at least 6 weeks to become settled in the environment before observing.

To ensure that your observation is in the best interest of your child, you, the class, and the staff we ask that you follow these guidelines and suggestions:

1. Remain seated in your chair. If your child wants to show you some work, invite her to bring it next to you, or if it is table work, move your chair next to a table.
2. Your child probably will want to talk with you. This is natural and generally is not a problem. It is important that the other children are not drawn into the conversation. To avoid this, answer briefly any questions the other children may have. If other children ask for help, direct them to the teacher.
3. Your child most likely will be different than usual when you are observing. Generally, the older the child, the less affected she seems to be by the presence of a parent.
4. We are attempting to help the children be independent thinkers and workers. Therefore, we do not always "notice" events or situations in the classroom. Often we purposely ignore a

situation in hopes that the children will come to a solution on their own. If the situation is not being resolved or continues to worsen, then we will intervene.

5. Children who know they are being observed often become self-conscious and will simply move their work or put it away altogether. Therefore, it is important to be an unobtrusive observer avoiding eye contact with the children as much as possible. This may seem unfriendly, but it is allowing the children to function as they do when there are no observers. Try to be a “fly on the wall” so that you can get an accurate vision of what really goes on when you are not present.

6. The children are concentrating and so are the adults. It takes a great deal of energy to keep the classroom running smoothly, and even more energy to remain calm in a period of disorder. The adults probably will not stop to talk while you are observing and are unable to answer questions while the class is in session. If you have any questions or topics for discussion, jot them down and discuss them with the teacher when the observation is over.

Student Policies

Student Conduct

Bergamo Montessori School aims:

- To balance the freedom and responsibility of the individual with the need for cooperation, order, restraint, and goodwill within the group
- To provide an environment where the young person will experience encouragement, affirmation, and community
- To ensure for each student physical and psychological safety
- To enable each student to develop a high standard of moral integrity, gained through growth in self-discipline
- To help students grow into mature, responsible adults
- To maintain a high standard for students behavior that reflects positively on self, family, school, and community
- To nurture each student with loving firmness, respect, and fairness.

Bergamo Montessori School expects each student:

- To treat others with dignity and respect
- To treat himself/herself with that same respect
- To respect both the work and the property of others, and to bring only necessary materials to school
- To have consistent attendance and punctual arrival

In the event that a student fails to respect the expectations above, the following notes describe the usual approach and procedures for working with the student. The school reserves the right to modify these procedures as it sees fit:

- In the event of **minor misbehavior**, the student and teacher work cooperatively to resolve the problem. At times, an individual's minor behavior may be discussed by the classroom community because of its impact on the life of the class.
- **Chronic misbehavior** is reported to parents by the teacher, with copies of reports sent to the director.
- **Major misbehavior**, especially that involving injurious behavior, is taken to the Director or Head of School. The Director/Head and the parents, along with the teachers, and students, as appropriate, meet to resolve the issue.

In the event of major or chronic misbehavior, a student may be excluded from school, suspended, or expelled.

The school expects full parental cooperation in all aspects of the student's life at Bergamo Montessori School. All rules apply before, during, and after school, and at all times on school outings.

Major Misbehavior

The school considers the following to be major misbehavior:

- Interference with the rights of others, (including physical abuse such as hitting, punching, kicking, or biting), verbal abuse (such as repeated teasing, taunts, threats, or intimidation), and bullying (whether by physical aggression, social alienation, or verbal aggression and intimidation)
- Damage to, abuse of, or stealing any school or personal property
- Possession, use, or sale of drugs in the current Federal Controlled Substances Act
- Possession, use, or sale of alcohol, tobacco substances, or inhalants
- Possession, use, or sale of weapons or explosives
- Use of obscene, profane, suggestive, or intimidating written or verbal language
- Repeated disruptive or uncooperative behavior
- Conduct committed off-campus and outside school hours that is illegal or reflects negatively on the school

The school is committed to working together with the student and the family on issues of conduct. At the same time, Bergamo Montessori School reserves the right to dismiss any student at any time if, in the school's sole judgment, the student's continued presence at the school is detrimental to himself, to others, or to the community as a whole.

Classroom Changes

The school works closely with parents to see that children are placed in an appropriate environment. Changes are made only if the staff feels that the student's developmental needs merit the change. Student class assignments are rarely changed for other reasons. Three-year groupings are at the heart of the Montessori method, and any change diminishes the benefit of being in the same environment for a 3-year developmental cycle.

Children with Special Needs

In the event that a student appears, in time, to be learning disabled or learning "differenced" or to have recurring emotional, medical, behavioral or disciplinary problems, the school will be in touch with the child's family to communicate concerns in a timely, sensitive, and thoughtful way that keeps the best interests of the child at the fore, and recommend strategies and possible evaluation. In such cases the staff, after careful observation, may conclude and discuss with the parents that referral to an outside professional is the appropriate course for the student. While the school works hard to respond to each child's academic, behavioral, and emotional needs, it may lack the staff and expertise to develop appropriate learning strategies for children with special or particular learning needs or disabilities. In such cases a change of school setting may be necessary to ensure the student's success and well being.

Nutrition

Snacks & Lunches

In the Toddler & Primary Classrooms, snack is provided for all and is available in the morning and afternoon. Children take turns and eat when they are hungry.

Children in the elementary programs may bring extra food in a lunch box to have a snack during the day and in afternoon Extended Care.

Children at all levels may bring a lunch from home. A hot lunch, prepared by a professional chef, is available for all children for an additional fee. Please see the front office for details.

What people eat is, on one hand, highly personal with roots in culture and even religion. The Bergamo Montessori School is very aware and respectful of this point in our diverse school community. On the other hand, diet is a major factor for children's sound growth and

development, as well as in how they function, attend, and learn on a daily basis. In addition, eating habits, healthful or otherwise, are established in childhood; therefore, learning about nutrition is an important part of the curriculum for any child.

The points we focus on in this part of the curriculum are objective and scientifically based.

- Certain diet elements are essential for good health, growth, and optimal function.
- Certain diet elements do not contribute to health and, in excess, can be harmful.
- Our country has a crisis of obesity that includes children
- We live in a society where many distortions of a normal healthful diet are considered “normal,” such as:
 - Fast food
 - Eating “on the run”
 - Large serving sizes
 - High-calorie foods with little or no nutritional value
 - Highly refined foods
 - Foods with high salt, sugar, and fat content

The principals we strive to promote are:

- Appropriately sized servings
- Additive-free foods (learning to read labels)
- Low-fat, low-salt, low-sugar, and low-cholesterol choices
- Avoidance of fried foods and trans-fats
- Lots of fresh fruits and vegetables
- Whole-grain foods over refined foods
- Whole fruits over juices
- The importance of fiber
- A requirement for protein, whether from meat, fish, bean, nuts, or dairy products

Food is not just the essential “fuel” for our bodies to function and develop; it also, universally, serves a social function. At Bergamo Montessori School we strive to promote this aspect of food by conducting snack and lunch time in a way that provides for the social element and the exercise of grace and courtesy:

- By setting aside a special place for a few children to eat snack when they wish;
- By teaching table manners:
 - Saying “please” and “thank you”
 - Chewing with the mouth closed

- Not speaking with food in the mouth
- Using silverware and napkins properly
- Waiting for others to finish
- Cleaning up and making the table ready for the next person

Children should be involved in the preparation of their own lunches until they are able to do it themselves. Involving them in shopping, reading labels, and planning meals is important in their ownership of what they eat. The more children know about what is good for them and why, as well as what is not good for them and why not, the more they will be able and willing to make positive choices on their own.

Important notes about snack and lunch:

- Items with excessive amounts of added sugar may be sent home at the discretion of the teacher.
- We will encourage the children to eat until they are full. All uneaten food will be wrapped and sent home so that you will know what your child ate at lunch.
- Candy and sodas are strictly forbidden at school.
- The children are learning about the environment and recycling. We encourage the use of reusable containers and the avoidance of excessive packaging.
- In order to promote individual responsibility and to maintain the integrity of the classroom lunch routine, please do not deliver your child's lunch during the school day.
- We do not have the ability to heat up lunches or to keep lunches cool in our refrigerators. Please use thermos jars to keep foods warm and use ice packs to keep foods cool.

Bergamo Montessori School is a nut free school. Raw nuts or nut butters of any kind are not allowed at school.

Dress Code

The Montessori classroom is a prepared environment. The materials, the furniture, the pictures and posters, the books and the music have all been selected to create a space which is conducive to concentration and purposeful work. Our intention is to always incorporate only the finest and most enduring manifestations of our culture. The clothing worn by the children becomes a part of the environment and can have an effect on the classroom community. Just as we would not hang posters on the wall of popular movies, TV, or video themes, we also ask that you reserve shoes or clothing with such depictions for use outside of the school. We prefer plain T-shirts, but those depicting ecology themes, nature, the environment, flora or fauna, the arts, sports, or travel are acceptable. We are confident that the child will not be deprived of fads and pop culture by the exclusion of these items from the classroom.

In the same vein, we ask that lunch boxes, backpacks and shoes also be free of popular movie, TV, or video themes and logos.

Please save the following for enjoying outside of school:

- Double laces, long shoelaces, or leather shoelaces which are hard to tie
- Cowboy boots, flip-flops, clogs, girls' slip-on dress shoes
- Buckles, belts, or suspenders that require assistance
- Bracelets, dangling jewelry, or headbands that don't stay on
- Super-hero, cartoon, or advertising T-shirts
- Costume-like clothing such as army camouflage and dance clothes
- Jumpsuits and overalls in the primary classroom
- Expensive clothes or jewelry
- Sports uniforms
- Shoes that light up or have wheels

Other notes:

- Comfortable clothing should be worn at all times.
- Often children want to wear slip-on shoes to school. These shoes can hinder a child's participation in running and climbing activities that are important for their fitness and play. It is recommended that the children wear tennis shoes whenever possible. All students must wear close toed shoes at all time (no flip-flops or sandals, please)
- Children should be dressed in clothing appropriate for the season. Fall and winter clothing should be layered to accommodate the daily temperature changes.
- Please label all clothing!

Items from Home

There are two reasons why a child may want to bring a possession from home to school. First, he may want to show it to the teacher or classmates. Second, he may be trying to establish a connection between home and school. We have established some guidelines to help children, parents, and staff in handling the children's personal belonging at school.

The children may bring something to school that has some geographical, historical, cultural or scientific significance. That is, the item will lend itself to a meaningful conversation with a small group of children. For example, a child might bring a basket made in Spain. This would allow the teacher to show the children where Spain is and talk about the construction of the basket. Some children enjoy bringing photographs of themselves on vacation or as babies. Again, these items would lend themselves to meaningful conversations among the children and between the teacher and children.

We ask that children bring one item at a time, and that they be allowed to leave it at school for a few days to allow time to discuss it fully. If the item is fragile, the teacher can store it in a safe place.

Toys may not be brought to school. Other children may want to play with your child's toy and this can lead to power struggles, hurt feelings and broken toys.

Attendance and Punctuality

Consistent attendance is important. The children who benefit most from the prepared environment are those who attend regularly. There are several reasons for this:

- A consistent routine provides security for the young child, and a sense of security enables the child to learn more readily.
- A child's experiences in the classroom and with the materials are cumulative; consistent attendance bolsters learning.
- Your own commitment to your child's presence in school affirms the importance of school and learning. If you often invite your child to stay out of school for different activities, you implicitly undercut the importance of school in his/her mind – which can affect his/her performance when he/she is present.
- Intermittent attendance, or periods of long absence can affect both of your child's adaptation to school and his/her learning.

Please make every effort to ensure your child's regular attendance. In this regard, we specifically request that you:

- Schedule family vacations and trips to coincide with school holidays.
- Schedule appointments with doctor, dentist, orthodontist, or other professionals outside of classroom hours.

Absences in excess of 12 days each year are considered problematic for all students. Teachers are expected to speak with parents about excessive absences or tardies directly by phone, note, or at parent conferences.

If a pattern of absences continues, the teacher will inform administration. It is possible that excessive absences will result in a student not being offered a contract for the following school year.

Tardies

School begins promptly at 8:30 AM for Primary, Elementary and Middle School students and starts at 9:00 AM for Toddlers. When younger children arrive late, it disrupts their sense of order: their sense of what is right and what is expected, of how things are supposed to be. For the older child, there is a sense of embarrassment and disorientation. In either case, arriving late gets the day off on the wrong foot. Late arrivals also disrupt the classroom community, the work of the other children, and the teacher. Out of respect for your own child, the classroom community, the other children, and the teachers, please help your child arrive at school on time.

We consider more than 5 tardies for the year to be problematic. Teachers are expected to speak with parents directly about late arrivals. If there is no improvement, teachers will inform administration. Parents will be contacted by the director to discuss how this may affect their child's enrollment at the school.

All children (except Toddlers) must arrive to school by 8:30 AM; children are not permitted to attend class for the day if they arrive after 9 AM, unless it has been previously arranged with the child's teacher.

Please call the office if your child will be absent for the day. After we complete attendance in the morning, we will call all families who have not arrived or called by 9 AM.

Authorized Pick Up

All students will only be released to an authorized adult (18 years of age or older), as listed on his or her emergency card. Children in the Toddler and Primary classroom must be signed in and out of school every day. When picking up children in the Elementary, please be sure to touch base with the adult on duty.

Please note that both parents are permitted to pick up a student from school at any time. If a court order prevents one parent from accessing the school or picking up the child, we must have a copy of the document in the child's file.

If another person will pick up your child from school (for a play date or other arrangement), and he or she is not an authorized pick up on your emergency card, please provide written documentation to the teacher or the office.

Parking

The busiest time of the day for parking is 8:15 to 8:30 in the morning. If the parking lot is full, you may park behind the school on Greenhaven Drive and enter through the back gate (contact the office for the gate code)

Car Line

The school operates a carline for Elementary dismissal at 3:15 PM. If you are in the car line:

- Please remain in your car and we will bring your child to you.
- Do not engage staff members in discussion at this time. If you need to talk to your child's teacher, ask him/her to call you.
- Stay in your car when you are waiting in line. If you need to get out, please park on the street.

Late Drop Off:

If your child arrives after 8:30 in the morning, please check in at the front office to sign your child in as late. The School Director will escort your child to class.

Early Pick Up

Please do not enter the classroom or attempt to pick up your child before dismissal, unless you have made previous arrangements with the teacher.

Visitors

All visitors to the school are required to check in at the office and will be given a visitor badge to wear while on campus.

Transitions and Classroom Placement

Continuity is the hallmark of the Montessori experience, as children stay in the same classroom for three years. This stability provides for both security and growth, as the child's role within the group changes over time from being one of the youngest in the class to one of the oldest.

Dr. Montessori observed that each child passes through planes of development, each lasting six years and each with distinct developmental characteristics and needs. She created learning environments to respond to each new plane of development. Some Montessori schools group children in six-year age groups, corresponding to the full age span of a plane of development. This is particularly common at the elementary level, where schools may have grades one through six together in a single classroom. Most Montessori schools, however, split each plane of development into two sub-groups, so that classes have a three year age range. Bergamo Montessori School follows this pattern.

Primary

For most children, entrance to the Primary class is their first school experience. Independent care of self is one sign of readiness for the Primary: this includes toileting and dressing. We also look to a child's sense of order, independence and the ability to follow direction. The sense of order can be seen in careful handling of classroom materials and in following daily routine. Independence is shown by the child's successful separation from the parents and in the ability to choose her own work in the classroom.

Primary Advanced Lessons

Midway through a child's time in Primary, a transition occurs which allows children to participate in "advanced lessons" in the afternoon in lieu of napping. This change takes place between 4 and 5 years of age. To be ready for advanced lessons, a child must be sufficiently mature to work comfortably during a full school day. He must be able and willing to complete a whole learning activity and to verbalize his needs and interests. In addition, the classroom teacher assesses a child's academic level in determining when he is ready to participate.

Many children benefit from spending an additional year in Primary to gain greater social-emotional maturity or to hone academic skills. The decision to remain an additional year in Primary is considered by a joint committee of Primary and Elementary teachers and in consultation with the parents.

Lower Elementary

The transition from Primary to Lower Elementary marks the end of the first plane of development and the onset of the second plane. In determining a child's readiness for moving up into Elementary, we first consider social and emotional maturity. We also look closely at the

child's academic skills; she also needs to have a strong sense of self direction and independence, and the ability to work with concentration - alone or in cooperation with a group.

Upper Elementary

The transition into Upper Elementary occurs when a child enters the second plane of development, at approximately nine years of age. Some children benefit from spending an additional year in the Lower Elementary. The decision to remain an additional year in Lower Elementary is considered by a joint committee of Elementary teachers and in consultation with the parents.

To make this transition successfully, the child must demonstrate increased independence as a student, in terms of both academic skills and personal responsibility. Academically, he needs to be ready for complex research and mathematical problem-solving skills. He needs a high degree of self-direction to be able to consistently choose challenging work. And he needs to be a respectful and cooperative member of the classroom community.

What is the Parent's Role During Transitions?

Observation

When your child is about to move into a different level, we recommend that you come and observe a classroom at the next level so that you will have a better understanding about the transition your child will be making.

Moving-Up Program

Also, you can best prepare your child for these transitions by attending Moving Up Nights, which are held in January. The Prospective Elementary Parent Night in January is particularly helpful for parents whose children will be in their last year of Primary.

Listen to Your Child

To help prepare your child for a transition, it is important to listen. She will probably express a mixture of excitement and anxiety. Change can be scary; listening to your child's feelings, and expressing your support, will make a difference.

Parents with concerns about whether their child is ready for the next level should contact the teacher. Decisions will be based on the needs of the individual child.

What Does the School Consider During Placement?

Multi-Age Grouping: Building Community

At each level, children are clustered in small learning communities for a three-year period. These small communities provide a number of advantages not found in traditional schools. Children work with others who are older and younger than themselves. The older students serve as role models and tutors for the younger students, and in the process they gain confidence in their own abilities and self-esteem regarding their skill level and expertise. The younger ones watch the older ones, and in the process gain a clear vision of what's expected of them, and have the benefit of working with and learning from their peers as well as the teacher. This small community is a direct preparation for life in the family and in the workplace. Communicating and working well with others are important life skills.

Balance of Needs and Learning Styles

Each small learning community develops its own personality. The placement of children in these communities as they move from one level to another is a very important task. Each community needs a blend of learning and personality styles so that it truly reflects larger communities. Grouping children by their intellectual abilities would defeat the greater goal of establishing a sense of community in the classroom.

The Placement Process

In traditional school settings, a child's placement in a classroom is often determined by the child's ability to get along with the teacher (and vice versa). Bergamo Montessori School is not a teacher-centered educational program: it is child-centered. When students are moving from one program into another, their assets and strengths are analyzed, and then students are placed in a learning community that needs their gifts. Placement is determined by matching the skills and needs of the individual with the skills and needs of the learning community. The teacher is one part of the learning community.

Three-Year Commitment

Because the composition of a learning community is selected very carefully, it is rare for children to be transferred from one community to another during this three-year period. We ask parents and children to make a three-year commitment to the learning community, and within that three-year period, to take the opportunity of getting to know other parents and children so that adults can also experience the benefit of a community network.

Parent Requests

The school does honor parent requests for children to be placed in particular classrooms. Administration and faculty work hard to make sure that each child is placed in an environment where his/her needs will be met. If you have particular concerns about your child's learning style during a time of transition, you are more than welcome to meet with the director to discuss those concerns.

Re-Enrollment Review

The school expects students to conform to the school's rules and expectations to retain their places. The school reserves the right to refuse admission to, or call for the immediate withdrawal of, a student whose presence is considered detrimental to the school's best interest. The school reserves re-enrollment for students who have shown good work, effort, and attitude. The school reserves re-enrollment for families willing to cooperate with the school.

Before issuing an enrollment contract to a student in the school, the teacher and administrators review the student's academic, attendance, and conduct records, and the family's spirit of cooperation with the school staff.

Student Records

Student records are kept in the main office and include written evaluations from the teacher, conference notes, and standardized test reports. All records remain the property of Bergamo Montessori School.

When your child applies for admission to another school, you will need to request both teacher recommendations and release of records to the new school. All requests for transfer of records and for teacher letters of recommendation must go through the office; do not give any of this paperwork directly to the child's teacher. Please inform the office at least one week prior to the date that recommendations and records are required, and we will do all the necessary paperwork involved with the transfer. We will forward the end-of-year evaluations, results from standardized tests, and letters of recommendation to the new school. Student records are sent directly to the receiving school.

In transferring to another school, timing must be considered. We expect parents to honor the terms of existing enrollment contracts.

Health Policies

Illness

State law mandates that we cannot care for children who are ill. An illness guideline is listed on the following page.

If your child needs to be sent home, we ask that you arrive within 30 minutes of being called by a staff member. Each parent must have a contingency plan set up for someone other than the parents to pick up and care for your ill child in the event the parents are unavailable.

It is imperative that you keep your emergency card current at all times so that, in the event we need to contact you or your designated representative, someone is available in case of an emergency at all times.

We can only keep our community healthy if we do not expose children to other children's illnesses. Please do not send your child to school with a fever that has been masked with aspirin or Tylenol.

Children who are sent home due to illness must be symptom free for 24 hours before returning to school, unless they have a note from a physician that he or she is not contagious (please note that the note may not come from a custodial parent if he/she is a physician). So, if a child is sent home ill on Tuesday, the earliest that he or she can return would be Thursday.

Is My Child Too Ill to Come to School?

We cannot admit your child to school if one or more of the following conditions exist:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in normal school activities, including outdoor play;
- The illness/injury requires more care than teachers can provide without compromising the health, safety, and supervision of the other children in the class;
- The child has one of the following, unless medical evaluation by a health-care professional indicates that child is well enough to attend school:
 - a. Oral temperature of 100.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness;
 - b. Rectal temperature of 101.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs and symptoms of illness;
 - c. Armpit temperature of 99.4 degrees or greater, accompanied by behavior changes or other signs or symptoms of illness; or
 - d. Symptoms and signs of possible severe illness, such as lethargy, abnormal breathing, uncontrolled diarrhea, two or more vomiting episodes in 24 hours, rash with fever, mouth sores with drooling, behavior changes, or other signs that the child may be severely ill;

- A health care professional has diagnosed the child with a communicable disease and the child does not have medical documentation to indicate that the child is no longer contagious.

Contagious Diseases

Parents should report to the school contagious diseases such as diagnosed chicken pox, strep throat, head lice, pink eye, etc. An email will then be sent home to alert other families in the class; no mention of the child's name will be made.

You will be contacted in the event your child exhibits any such symptoms at school.

Medications at School

If your child requires medication, please confer with your doctor and, if possible, obtain medication that can be administered twice daily, in the morning and in the evening at home. Medication prescribed to be taken three times daily should be taken in the morning, after school, and before bed.

If it is absolutely necessary that your child have medication administered during school hours, please fill out a *Permission to Administer Medication* from the school office. School staff will not administer medication, including aspirin or other pain relievers, without written authorization of a parent. Do not send medication to school in your child's lunch box.

Medications must be delivered to the school office in the original container, labeled with the child's name, a date, dosage directions for administration, the physician's name, and pharmacy name. The school will administer the medication only as stated on the label instructions, or as amended in writing by the child's physician.

Follow these guidelines to allow school staff to dispense over-the-counter medications:

- The child must fall within the correct age range written on the label instructions of over-the-counter medication, or else we must receive a doctor's written instructions stating the amount and dosage schedule.
- We cannot give medication "as needed" without prior detailed written instructions or verbal consent from a parent at the time of administration.
- Parents must give written notification when a child is to stop taking medication.
- Parent must provide dispenser for medication.

Classroom Policies

Field Trips

Going out on trips is encouraged for Elementary students. Although whole-group field trips are taken, outings in the Lower and Upper Elementary can be initiated by small groups of children under the guidance of the teacher. The purpose of this *going out* is to foster independence by making connections with the world beyond the school community to support ongoing classroom

Parents will be informed of trips at least one week in advance for short (one-day) field trips. For longer trips that include overnight stays, there will be at least one month's advance notice. Please return permission slips promptly to your child's teacher.

Occasionally Primary classes will have a field trip with their class. The guidelines as stated above are followed for informing parents, obtaining signed permission slips, and arranging transportation.

A valid driver's license, proof of insurance and a current copy of a DMV report must be submitted to the office before a parent transports any children on a field trip.

Homework

Generally speaking, *homework* refers to academic work. However, we like to broaden the term: all work that is done at home is *homework*. It falls into two basic categories, for adults and children alike. First is the work we do for ourselves, to improve ourselves, to pursue our own interests and dreams. This work could be an extension of work done on the job or at school, or it could be an unrelated activity or hobby that is meaningful to us individually. The line between *work* and *play* can become blurred here, just as work the children do at school is often *fun*.

Homework for the Elementary Child

When children leave Bergamo Montessori at the end of the school day, we hope they will have time to relax, and we expect they will do some "homework" as well. Our homework expectations for the Elementary children are as follows:

1. Activities appropriate to the family life and the home environment:
2. Continuation of both academic work and self-development:

- a. A love of reading is the single best indicator of and influence on academic success. Reading and being read to daily are thus very important for Elementary children; consider these activities as standing homework.
- b. At the Lower Elementary level children are expected to practice math facts in the evening.
- c. Projects of the child's own choosing, which whether related to topics being explored in class or to other interests.

Birthdays

Primary Classrooms

Birthday celebrations are an important part in the life of our classroom. We invite you to join us for a very special celebration when your child's special day arrives. This usually occurs at the end of our class day.

To help with this celebration, please let your child's teacher know in advance so she can properly be prepared. You should bring one picture of each year of your child's life 01-, 1-2, 3-4, 4-5, 5-6-so that we can make a time line for your child to share with his/her class, and one fresh flower for each year your child is celebrating. If you would like to bring a special treat for the children to eat, please make sure it has little to no sugar (please do not bring cupcakes, cookies, candy or any other high sugar items).

Often children become self absorbed on a birthday with all the attention that is focused on them. It is nice for them to share their special day with their classmates by giving a wrapped gift to the class, which they open and present at circle. If you would like to do this, please see your child's teachers for ideas. A book or trowel for our garden or a small vase for our flower arranging activity are a few suggestions. The opportunity to give to classmates, instead of just receiving, on birthday is a nice experience for the birthday child.

Elementary Classrooms

Celebrations can vary by classroom. Please contact your child's teacher for details.

Holiday Celebrations

The children in the school come from a variety of cultural and religious backgrounds. If we celebrated all the holidays for all the children, the school year would be one long party. Therefore, we let the children select which holidays to celebrate during the year, which reflect their interests and the diverse makeup of the classes. This selection occurs casually. The

teacher will announce to the class periodically that if they want to celebrate a holiday, they need to inform the teacher and plans can begin for the celebration.

To determine what will happen at a party, a class meeting is held and the children are invited to talk about the things they would like to have at the party. A list is made of all these suggestions, with the understanding that the teacher will make the final selection from the list. The extended day children often help with the decoration and sometimes the food preparation.

The history of the holiday is incorporated into the celebrations and preparations. This gives the children something to talk about in their excitement. The parties themselves are low key. They are simple and strive to give the children a calm, pleasant experience. The decorations will remain up as long as the children seem interested in them. Holiday poems, stories, and songs are a part of the group activity as long as the children request them. The children may celebrate only a few holidays each year, but over their three year stay at the school there will be a rich variety of celebrations which reflect the interest and diversity of the children in the class.

Driver Policy

Employees and parents are required to submit a valid driver's license, proof of insurance and a current copy of a DMV report to the office before using their vehicle for school business or school sponsored activities.

Employees and parents need to be aware that the school's insurance policies do not cover damage to personal vehicles when those vehicles are used on school business or school sponsored functions such as class trips or outings. Their personal automobile policy will be the only available coverage for damage to their vehicle, and will be the primary coverage for any liability claims. The school's policy will provide secondary coverage for liability claims only, and only after personal policy limits have been exhausted.

Standardized Testing

Beginning in the fourth year of Elementary, children participate in national standardized tests. However, we believe a child has multiple intelligences, not just those measured by achievement tests. Although we regard these tests as a reflection of how your child compares to other children in these areas, we don't believe these tests provide a complete assessment of his progress. The written year-end evaluation will contain far more valuable information about your child's current strengths and struggles.

Cell Phones/Electronics

Cell phones and personal electronics such as CD players, DVD players, I Pods or personal gaming devices are not permitted at school for student use before, during or after class.

Lost and Found

Jackets, shirts, pants, shoes, and lunch boxes that are left behind at school are deposited in the Lost and Found, currently located in the library of the school. Items labeled with names are returned to students. The unclaimed items are removed and donated to a charity throughout the year.

Smoking

The Bergamo Montessori School is a smoke-free environment; smoking is not permitted on campus.