

# Highland Montessori

Family Handbook 2016-2017



*“Never help a child with a task at  
which he feels he can succeed.”*

Maria Montessori

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Welcome to the Highland Montessori School family! The school staff welcomes and invites you to become a part of our small school community. There is a spirit of excitement and enthusiasm shared by our school community as we begin our school year together. This handbook is provided as a ready reference of information that will help you become an active part of your child's education at Highland Montessori School. Please take time to review the handbook with your child so that you become familiar with the many resources available to help your child succeed. Our staff is proud to welcome you and to have the opportunity to work with your child this year

## Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori Method of education, developed by Dr. Maria Montessori, is a child-centered educational approach based on scientific observations of children from birth to adulthood. Dr. Montessori's Method has been time tested, with over 100 years of success in diverse cultures throughout the world. It is a view of the child as one who is naturally eager for knowledge and capable of initializing learning in a supportive, thoughtfully prepared learning environment. It is an approach that values the human spirit and the development of the whole child – physical, social, emotional, cognitive.

## Goals and Objectives

Montessori students learn through sensory activities, working with materials that develop their cognitive powers through direct experience: seeing, hearing, tasting, smelling, touching and movement. Our goal is to provide an environment that is best suited to your child's development and well-being – a loving, stimulating and aesthetic environment where the children can "go about the business of creating themselves". We feel that by using the Montessori philosophy of education we are giving children the opportunity to use materials according to the needs and ***individual rates of learning***. All that we expect of the children is that he/she comes to school and be him/herself as a participant in our school community. We ask that parents review the operating procedures in this handbook and in supplemental emails or newsletters we may send to you. Together we can nurture and educate the whole child.

## Our Environment

Teachers take much care in arranging the classroom with opportunities for working independently, working with a partner or working in a small group. Our classrooms are orderly and well-cared for by staff and children. Each classroom is well supplied with Montessori materials which are displayed for immediate use by members of the classroom community. Environments where there is much independent work require an underlying structure set up with the teacher's vision of what works for his/her particular group of children. The physical organization of the classroom is essential for facilitating children's freedom to choose work and to move about, as they choose behavior that is appropriate for work in their classroom. Each child comes to school with a good understanding of what is proper behavior and each child makes a decision and choice of how to behave. We encourage behavior that shows respect for other people in the classroom as well as respect for all materials. We hope to help each child realize a

positive self image as a human being with the growing potential for becoming a contributing member of our school and world society. Montessori did not agree that rewards and punishment are always the answers to positive behavior. Our modeling of appropriate behavior, asking children to reflect on the impact of their decisions on others, and redirecting the child as he experiences decision-making situations will lead to pride in one's accomplishments without always receiving a tangible reward. Work on independence and concentration begins in the primary grades with four and five year olds. It is essential that our children have this opportunity to practice working independently and making choices. In addition, if we offer worthy learning opportunities and set up environments that target each child's developmental interests and meet his needs (both at home and school), we will expect to see more focused work and positive behavior choices.

### **New Students**

The first six weeks of the school year will be an important time for your child to adapt to the Montessori philosophy of learning. During these first six weeks, our teachers will be helping your child learn how to work as a respectful member of our school community, develop the art of concentration, work independently, become familiar with classroom and school procedures, and learn to help others. This will take time and school-wide focus. Please do not hesitate to communicate with your child's teachers at this time, we will always be available to address questions and concerns.

### **Highland Montessori Daily Schedule**

7:30am	School Opens
8:30am	General Arrival
8:45-9:00am	Montessori Circle & 3-Part Lesson
9:00-10:30am	Montessori Curriculum
10:30-10:45am	2 <sup>nd</sup> Circle and Snack
10:45-12:00pm	Outside Play/Exploration
12:00pm	Lunch
12:30-1:00pm	Outdoor Play & Exploration
1:00-3:00pm	Nap/Quiet Time
3:00pm - 3:30pm	Movement Circle & Snack
3:30pm	1 <sup>st</sup> Dismissal
3:30-5:30pm	Montessori Curriculum
5:30pm	2 <sup>nd</sup> Dismissal

The above schedule is subject to change due to pre-planned special guests, or activities. Please see the front gate for any notices regarding a major schedule change for the day.

The child at Highland comes to know the world through their senses, therefore the schedule includes long, uninterrupted times in the morning and afternoon for the child to fully engage in dozens of colorful, exciting materials and activities that are of the interest of the child.

### **Days and Hours of Operation**

Highland Montessori operates year-round (Sept-August), five days per week, from 7:30am to 5:30pm. We loosely follow the Burlingame School District Calendar. For specific dates, times and minimum days please see the Highland Montessori Calendar.

### **Ages of Children Eligible for Care**

Highland Montessori is a licensed preschool program for ambulatory children ages 2 ½ -5 years. Children must be at or near 100% toilet independent before attending, and be developmentally ready for school. Children are eligible to attend Kindergarten at age 5 (by Sept 4) in the state of California.

### **Developmental Readiness**

It is our goal to maximize your child's chances of having a fun and successful experience at school! We hope this brief guide will help you determine if your child is ready to begin at Highland Montessori. Our program is designed for children between the ages of 3 and 5 years of age. All children are different, and some are developmentally ready to begin before 3, whereas others will be more successful if they wait until they are a little older. The following are examples of behaviors we see in children who are ready to begin our school. Here at Highland Montessori, we encourage you to thoughtfully consider if your child:

- Children should be comfortable using the toilet and be able to clean up and wash hands on their own. However, we understand that most children have the occasional accident and we handle these in a relaxed and low-key manner.
- Your child should be able to sit at circle time and listen to stories and engage in activities.
- The child is able to take out an activity, complete it, and put it away. Children who are too young for this type of classroom are easily distracted by other activities within sight. They will take out many activities, work on them for only a very short amount of time, move on to something else without putting the previous activities away, and refuse the assistance of a teacher.
- The children should be able to follow simple directions such as; lining up, putting on their coat, washing their hands. These things do not need to be done perfectly, but we will be looking for willingness to follow instructions.

**Children thrive with a consistent and reliable routine.** It is very important and in the best interest of your child's well being that you abide by a consistent schedule. Please arrive at school on time for drop off and pick up times. If you are running late or encounter an emergency that prevents you from arriving on time, please notify the school so we may assure your child of your impending arrival. **We do circle promptly at 8:45am – late arrivals will miss out on important group learning opportunities.**

### **Arrivals**

Arrival times are 7:30am and 8:30. Arrivals before 8:30am are asked to sign-in at the front door to ensure the teachers are able to supervise students. 8:30am arrivals may sign-in at the gate. Please ring the gate bell only once, as to be mindful of our neighbors. Children must be signed in and out each day using the clipboard attached to the front gate. Parent/guardian name and time is required.

**\*As a courtesy to our neighbors, we ask that you please park in the loading zone that is in front of the school**

### **Departures**

Dismissal times are 3:30pm and anytime between 4:30pm and 5:30pm. The time between 3:00-3:30pm is our nap wake up, movement circle, and snack time. If parents need to pick up a child before 3:30pm please notify staff in advance, otherwise families will need to wait until 3:30pm. At dismissal time, children are often confused as to who is in control ó the teacher or the parent ó this sometimes results in disruptive behavior. If this problem arises, we ask that you please get to your car and we will bring the child to you. Under NO circumstance will a child be allowed to leave the school alone. A child must be under the direct supervision of a parent/guardian/teacher in and around school premises. Children may not run to cars or through neighbor yards, but instead stay within arm's distance of the parent/guardian.

**There will be an overtime charge for children not picked up at their regular scheduled dismissal time of \$10 for every 5 minutes, payable directly to the teacher staying with the child at the time of pick up. All fees are per child.**

### **Tuition**

There is an annual \$100 non-refundable registration fee when you enroll your child for the school year (September-August). Tuition is payable in advance of a student's first day of school, and then due on the 1<sup>st</sup> day of the month thereafter. There is a \$30 late charge for any payment made after the 5<sup>th</sup> day of the month. Non-payment after 10 days will result in termination of contract and denial of service. Please see your tuition contract for additional information. No credit on tuition is given for scheduled holidays, minimum days, illness or vacations.

Families who voluntarily withdraw their child from Highland Montessori are required to give 30 days written notice. The last month's tuition will be refunded as long as the 30-day notice has been received but there is no partial month's refund of tuition. Exceptions to this policy will be considered for family emergencies, case by case. Proper documentation must be provided.

## Termination

On very rare occasions a problem may arise between our students and/or their parents and our school policies. When this occurs we will first ask for a parent conference to try and resolve issue. If the problem persists, a second conference will be scheduled and further plans will be put in place to resolve the issue. If after these efforts there is still no resolution of the matter, Highland Montessori reserves the right to terminate the enrollment of the student.

## Behavior/Discipline

Highland Staff believe in redirecting the child by suggesting an activity that is related to his/her own purposes or interests whenever possible. The effectiveness of a suggestion or a direction may depend largely on its timing. We strive to give the child the opportunities and support s/he needs to make appropriate choices, in order that s/he may have the maximum chance to grow in independence, but direction when the child needs it. In the event that a child uses inappropriate behavior, a teacher will redirect the child from the situation for their safety and the safety of their classmates. The staff redirects behavior by methods that do not lead to loss of self-respect such as shaming a child or labeling the child "naughty", "selfish" or "bad". If a child repeatedly does not respond to a staff person's redirection, or if aggressive behavior such as biting, kicking or hitting is persistent, the parent will be called to remove the child from the school for the remainder of the day.

## Testing/Evaluation

Occasionally Highland Staff will recommend that a child should be evaluated for speech or developmental concerns. We do not make these recommendations without serious observations and evaluations ourselves. We will ask for conference with families as needed to address such issues, in addition to our regular conferences. We ask that any evaluations we request be scheduled within thirty days of school notification of the concern. Lack of action is cause for termination.

## Health & Safety

Your child's health and safety are of major importance to all. Upon enrollment, you must submit a health form for your child signed by a physician. We also require that the child have all standard immunizations and a tuberculin clearance. Your child may be sent home if s/he appears to have any symptoms of illness during the day. (In the interest of the health of students and staff, the school reserves the right to determine if your child is well enough to remain at school.) **Children with fevers or infectious conditions must be fever free for a full 24 hours before returning to school.** Please do not give your child a pain/fever reducer such as ibuprofen or cold medicine for the purpose of lowering the fever, and then send them to school, as they will almost certainly become feverish again after an hour or so. In the event a child needs to go home a parent/guardian will be contacted. In the case of an accidental injury we will make an immediate attempt to contact a parent/guardian. If we cannot reach you, we will contact the child's physician. If necessary, we will also call 911 for immediate assistance. The teachers will assume responsibility for any decisions related to your child while at the school. You will be

expected to assume responsibility for any resultant expense. It is to your child's benefit that you keep the school up to date on phone numbers and other pertinent information.

### **Nutrition, Birthdays, Snacks**

We serve a midmorning snack at 10:30 am. With prior permission, parents are welcome to send other snacks to be shared with their child's class. We do celebrate birthdays during the year, with a special treat and the birthday song at afternoon snack. We ask that you do not send full-sized cupcakes, candy, juice or ice cream. Cookies, mini cupcakes or muffins, and popsicles/frozen fruit bars are great choices for birthday treats. Check with staff regarding possible allergies before sending in a special treat. Please distribute birthday invitations via email, or directly to children's homes, and not at school.

### **School Lunch**

Please be sure, when buying lunch boxes or containers, that your child can easily open them, to prevent frustration. Staff recommends that parents send their child with a well-balanced lunch containing at least one protein, fruits and/or vegetables, milk or water. To prevent waste, sandwiches should be cut in half or bite-sized pieces. Please cut fruit and vegetables into small strips or bite size pieces. Please no juice or flavored milk, soda, cookies, pudding cups, candy, gummies, etc. We will remove these items from your child's lunch and send them home at the end of the day. Children must bring their own utensils and water bottles.

### **A Healthy Lunch Might Include:**

**Protein:** Cubed/chopped meats (including hotdogs) and cheese, tofu, nut/seed butters, eggs, yogurt (please no tubes) cottage cheese, beans/legumes.

**Fruits/Vegetables:** sliced/chopped fruit/veg, dried fruits, fruit cups, edamame.

**Carbohydrates** pasta, rice, tortillas, whole grain bread and crackers, pretzels, granola bars

### **Dressing for School**

Please be aware of your child's comfort, warmth, and ease of dress should they need to change themselves. Suggestions for clothes appropriate for preschool include sweat suits, jeans, shorts, skorts, t-shirts and pullover sweaters, sandals and sneakers. Please no sandals or flip-flops, cowboy boots, party shoes, or any shoes your child cannot run in safely. Pants/shorts should have elastic waists. Coveralls, belts, suspenders, etc. are difficult for children to remove, and are not recommended. Children at school explore paint and clay, work in the garden and with sensory materials that may get their clothing dirty. While we make every effort to keep the children clean and covered while using these items, special occasion and "dress up" clothes should not be worn to school. We cannot be held responsible for damage to clothing inappropriate for preschool.

### **Extra Clothes**

Please send one additional complete change of clothing, and a swimsuit in warm weather, and place in a **1-gallon Ziploc bag or small clear box** marked with your child's name. We cannot be responsible for clothing without names.

### **Personal Belongings**

Please make sure your child's belongings, including coats, sweaters, books, lunchbox/containers, and naptime things are all clearly marked with your child's name.

**Please DO NOT send your child to school with toys from home or even bring them to the gate.**

### **Show and Tell**

We have Show and Tell every Friday. Your child may bring objects found in nature or from a special event in the child's life, books, or something pertaining to our theme of the month. Absolutely NO guns, war toys or destructive toys are allowed at school.

### **Family Gatherings**

During the year we will be having numerous family gatherings such as potluck picnics and dinners, Back To School Night, open houses, etc. During these school-sponsored events, we ask that parents take responsibility for their children's behavior and safety and must abide by all school rules. This will avoid any confusion for the children.

### **Field Trips, Special Guests, Transportation**

In the best interest of our children's safety, we do not engage in any offsite field trips, beyond an occasional walk around the neighborhood, without full parent participation. Highland does not arrange for transporting any children to or from school. Please make appropriate arrangements for your child's transportation. Occasionally, Highland does invite special guests to visit the school. Advance notice of a minimum of one week will be provided to parents when we will be having a special guest or presentation. Parents are encouraged to participate in activities whenever possible. If you would like to come in to do a special project or presentation, please check with a staff member for scheduling.

### **Notices**

While we send out frequent email notices and reminders as needed, the front gate at Highland Montessori is our notice board. PLEASE READ ALL NOTICES CAREFULLY. These include important and helpful information related to our school or your child. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact the school or talk to a teacher.

### **Conferences and Meetings**

When you enroll your child, we assume the responsibility of giving you assistance with your child's needs in relations to their adjustment, and growth and development. We conduct 20-minute family conferences in the fall and spring so that you can have regular updates one-on-one with a teacher regarding your child's academic and social/emotional progress at school. If you have any questions or concerns or would like to speak to a teacher privately, please call or email the school, and we will schedule additional conference time. Please note private discussions at the gate in front of your child or other parents/students are not appropriate. We urge you not to discuss problems, behavior or concerns in front of your child, as they can pick up negative comments and concerns, and sometimes magnify or misinterpret the real issue. The staff will send an email or a note home if your child is having problems at school.



## Disaster Plan

Please review our school's disaster plan carefully. You should keep this information with you at your place of work or post at home in a prominent location in case of an emergency during the year that may affect your child.

In case of a minor incident/accident: Parent/Guardian will be notified

In case of a serious incident/accident: Staff will immediately call 911 for emergency services. Staff will make every effort to contact parents/guardian immediately. If we cannot reach you or anyone on your child's emergency contact list, Highland Montessori will refer to the signed "Consent For Medical Treatment" document in order to take necessary action. In the event a child must be transported to a hospital, staff will accompany the child via ambulance to:

Mills-Peninsula Medical Center  
1501 Trousdale Drive  
Burlingame, CA 94010  
650-696-5400

### Earthquake Plan

In the event of an earthquake, children will be kept at the school. Please call for your child as soon as it is possible. In the event of a minor earthquake, children will be directed away from windows to the safety of door headers or tables. Should the school sustain no damage, school will resume as usual.

In the event of a **major** earthquake, children will be evacuated once staff determine shaking has ceased. If the children are unable to remain at the school, they will be relocated to a safe location nearby. The new location and any pertinent contact information will be posted on the school's gate.

Children will be moved to our backyard for headcount and physical assessment. Parents are expected to make every effort to pick up their child immediately following the quake. Staff will remain onsite for one hour after the incident, then make efforts to relocate children to a safe place.

### Fire Plan

Staff will notify EMS via 911 and evacuate children from the school grounds. A head count will be conducted based on the morning sign-in sheet. **PLEASE SIGN IN EVERY DAY.** Children will need to be picked up immediately from the designated location.

Parents will be notified the same day of the status of school and alternate drop off locations for future school days.

**Our emergency meeting location is:**

**St. Catherine's School  
1300 Bayswater, Burlingame, CA 94010  
650-344-7176**

\*The land line will be left open to maintain contact with EMS. Please refrain from calling the school's phone and possibly tying up service.

\*\* Please do not block roads/highways if these areas are need for emergency vehicles. We will remain in shelter with your child until a parent/guardian/emergency contact may safely reach us.

\*\*\*For additional information on disasters or how you can help, contact the local chapter of the American Red Cross at 650-259-1750

### VOLUNTEERS NEEDED:

Parent volunteers are an essential piece of our emergency plan. Please notify staff if you are able to assist with:

- Phone Tree Coordination (contacting parents)
- Emergency Evacuation (walking or car)
- Alternate School/Evacuation Location

## **Additional Info:**

Websites We Love:

<http://www.infomontessori.com/>

<http://redtri.com/san-francisco-kids/>

<https://www.pinterest.com/highlandmont/>

[www.livingmontessorinow.com](http://www.livingmontessorinow.com)

[www.mariamontessori.com](http://www.mariamontessori.com)

Child Development Books We love:

- Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work; CM Sanding
- Children, The Challenge; Rudolph Dreikens
- The Hurried Child; David Elkind
- How to Talk So Kids Will Learn; Adele Faber & Elaine Mazelich
- Punished By Rewards; Alfie Kohn
- NurtureShock: Po Bronson

### **Books by Maria Montessori**

1. Discovery of the Child
2. The Secret of Childhood
3. The Absorbent Mind
4. Education for a New World
5. Education and Peace

Dr. Maria Montessori (1870-1952) is the founder of the Montessori Method of education. Her first classroom, "Casa di Bambini" or Children's House began in 1907. The Montessori Method of education stresses the importance of respecting children- help me to help myself. Montessori education celebrated its 100<sup>th</sup> year in 2007.

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## **Handbook Receipt Form**

This confirms that we, \_\_\_\_\_ parent/guardian(s) of \_\_\_\_\_ have received and read the Highland Montessori Parent Handbook, and agree to its terms.

Signature\_\_\_\_\_

Date\_\_\_\_\_