

EXPLORE

MONTESSORI • ACADEMY

Parent Handbook

School Year 2025/26

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Contents

General Information	4
Discrimination Policy	4
History and Organization	4
Philosophy	5
Financial Information	5
Tuition	5
Sibling Discount	5
Tuition Deposits	5
Returned Check Policy	5
Materials Fee	5
Enrollment Cancellation	5
Schedule Change Request	5
Parent Participation – Classroom & Committees	6
Fundraising	6
General Policies and Procedures	7
Admission	7
Arrival and Departure	7
Aftercare Program	7

Unlocking each child's genius through kindness, community, and delight.

Authorized Pick Up	7
Releasing a Child	7
Visiting the Classroom	7
Playground and Playground Safety	7
Toys	8
Parent Conferences	8
Parent Education	8
Newsletters	8
Gifts	8
Behavior Guidance	9
Dismissal Policy	9
Medication and Safety	12
Prevention First and Foremost	12
Medication Policy	13
Illness	13
Emergencies	13
Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol	14
Special Toddler Information	14
Arrivals and Departures	14
School hours	14
Separation	15
Primary Caregivers	15
The Toddler Environment	16
Daily Schedule	16
Communication with Parents	16
Naps	17
Lunch and Snacks	17
Clothing	18
Potty Training	18
Special Primary Information	19
Arrival and Departure	19
School hours	19
Clothing	19
Lunches and Snacks	20
Curriculum	20
Birthdays	20
Show and Share	20
Parent Nights	20
Toys from Home	20
Naps	20

This handbook was prepared by the administration of our school. It is designed to be a convenient and centralized reference for the parents and legal guardians of all students at Explore Montessori & Academy. We welcome any suggestions you may have to improve or clarify the content of this booklet. Please send your suggestions in writing to Jessica via jessica@explore-montessori.com. We welcome and appreciate your assistance throughout the year, particularly in any area you feel gifted or otherwise.

We are honored that you have chosen Explore and look forward to a great year together! Please let me know if you have any questions or concerns, or if I can help in any way.

Jessica Dehn, Owner

General Information

Discrimination Policy

Explore Montessori & Academy does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, national or ethnic origin in hiring, promotion, or training of employees, nor in the admissions, rights, privileges, programs or activities of its students.

History and Organization

The school was originally developed as a privately-owned business in 2020.

Core Values

1. Kindness

Kindness is at the heart of everything we do at Explore Montessori & Academy. We cultivate an environment where children learn the importance of treating others with compassion, respect, and empathy. Whether it's sharing a toy, helping a friend, or supporting one another in learning, kindness is the foundation of every interaction. This value fosters trust and emotional well-being, helping children feel safe, supported, and confident to explore and grow in a nurturing environment.

2. Community

We believe that strong communities create the ideal conditions for learning and growth. At Explore Montessori & Academy, we foster a culture where children, teachers, and parents collaborate as partners in education. We encourage open communication, respect, and involvement, ensuring every voice is heard. Our sense of community extends beyond the classroom, with opportunities for families to engage in their child's learning journey and contribute to the development of the whole child. When children feel a strong sense of belonging, they become more engaged and motivated to contribute to the world around them.

3. Delight

We embrace the power of delight to inspire curiosity and joy in learning. At Explore Montessori & Academy, every lesson is an opportunity to spark excitement, wonder, and discovery. Whether through hands-on learning, creative play, or joyful exploration, we create a positive and dynamic atmosphere that encourages children to take risks, ask questions, and embrace new challenges with enthusiasm. Delight infuses every part of our program, making learning a fun, natural, and motivating experience for every child.

4. Nature

We believe that nature offers an endless source of inspiration and learning. At Explore Montessori & Academy, we create opportunities for children to connect with the natural world, whether through outdoor exploration, gardening, or environmental education. This connection helps children develop a sense of responsibility and appreciation for the planet, while also fostering creativity and problem-solving. Nature's rhythms and cycles provide invaluable learning opportunities that inspire curiosity and allow children to understand the world in a holistic way.

5. Art

Art is an essential tool for self-expression, creativity, and cognitive development. At Explore Montessori & Academy, we encourage children to explore their creative abilities through various forms of art, from painting and drawing to music and movement. Art promotes critical thinking, problem-solving, and emotional expression, while also enhancing fine motor skills and confidence. We view every child as an artist, capable of exploring the world through their unique creative lens, and we provide the resources and support for them to express themselves fully and authentically.

Philosophy and the Prepared Environment

The basic idea in the Montessori philosophy of education is that all children carry within themselves the person they will become. To develop physically, intellectually and spiritually to the fullest, children must have freedom to move, to explore and to discover— a freedom to be achieved through order and self-discipline. Dr.

Montessori often spoke of the importance of the “prepared environment” and here at Explore Montessori we have taken this to heart. We have created an environment for the developing child that includes everything from detailed architectural elements, natural surroundings, scientifically designed learning materials, along with love, respect, and warm smiles from the faculty and staff.

Independence and passion for learning are supported by beautiful, high-quality learning materials. The Montessori materials are specifically designed to teach basic reading, writing and math skills, as well as fundamental neurological organizational processes important for all types of learning. The joyful hum of the classroom during the day is proof that children are happy when engaging in purposeful work and play.

Indoors, we have three nurturing infant/toddler classrooms for 0-3 year-old children (Pre-Primary) and one preschool classrooms (Primary) for 3-6-year-old children with natural woodwork, large windows, indoor multi-purpose room, and welcoming cubby rooms.

Outside, we have two natural playgrounds, gardens, and the nearby trail system to allow for unlimited exploration opportunities and educational adventures.

Explore Montessori is continually improving our natural play environment. This natural playground will be designed to promote active and creative play in a beautiful, safe environment encouraging development of each student's emotional and physical health as well as appreciation for nature. Explore Montessori strives to offer the ultimate atmosphere for indoor and outdoor natural discovery.

Explore Montessori and Academy Parent Code of Conduct

The purpose of the policy is to:

1. Protect the safety and privacy of our students and staff.
2. Protect the school from legal risks.
3. Ensure that the reputation of the school, its staff, and clients are protected.
4. Safeguard all children's privacy.
5. Ensure that any users are able to clearly distinguish where information provided by social media is legitimately representative of the school.

To ensure positive relationships with parents and members of staff that benefits each child's learning, development and sense of security as well as to ensure mutual respect between staff and parents is maintained at all times,

Explore has adapted these policies and standards of conduct. Explore requires that parents of enrolled children behave in a manner consistent with decency, courtesy and respect at all times. One of our most important goals is to provide the most appropriate and secure environment for children that encourages growth, learning and development. Achieving this ideal environment is not only the responsibility of employees and staff at Explore but it is also the responsibility of each and every parent or adult who enters the school.

Swearing/Cursing: No parent or adult shall be permitted to curse or use any other inappropriate language when working or visiting in the classroom or playground. Such language will NOT be tolerated in the presence of the children or staff members.

Threats and Confrontation: Threats of any kind toward Explore staff, other parents or children will not be tolerated. While it is understood that all parents may not agree with the staff of Explore or the parents of other children, it is expected that all disagreements be handled in a calm and respectful manner. Confrontational interactions are not an appropriate means by which to communicate a point, and are strictly prohibited. Shouting, raising of voices or any unwanted physical contact with a member of staff is considered inappropriate behavior. PARENTS MUST BE RESPONSIBLE FOR AND IN CONTROL OF THEIR OWN BEHAVIOR AT ALL TIMES.

Social Media: Active clients should refrain from airing grievances about Explore on Social Media Sites. Social media includes personal blogs and other websites, including Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter, YouTube, Snapchat, Google Plus, and others. This applies whether clients are posting to their own sites or commenting on other sites.

If it is deemed that a parent is acting in an inappropriate manner to a staff member or parent the following steps will be taken:

- Step 1--A meeting with the parent and the Center Director will be held to find a resolution to the problem.
- Step 2--A meeting with the Center Director, Owner, and Parent will be held to find a resolution.
- Step 3--If no resolution has been found and the parent continues to act in a manner that is inappropriate to these guidelines the decision may be made to place the child on hold and make a formal request that the parent and child leave the learning center. If the incident in question is deemed to be egregious by the Director and Owner, the child care contract can be terminated immediately including forfeiture of any prepaid tuition and/or deposits without following the above outlined process.

With these policies in place we hope to provide your child and family with a comfortable and safe environment as we help set the stage for a life full of learning ahead. We can only truly provide this with the help of each parent and adult who walks into our classroom. Explore promises to continue to work in partnership with parents to make learning fun.

Financial Information

Tuition

Tuition is due the 25th of the previous month and will be considered late after the 1st of the month unless prior arrangements have been made. It is strongly preferred that you set up payments in Brightwheel. These payments will assess a % charge when using a credit card or a \$0.90 charge when using a bank account. If you prefer to pay by check please post dated checks (25th of each month) for the entirety of the contract. Since operating expenses are ongoing, credit cannot be given for absences, school holidays, or vacations.

No refunds for scheduled attendance are available for illness related absences including quarantines or center closures due to quarantine.

It is uncomfortable and costly for us to have to remind parents to pay their tuition on time, and so to avoid continual late payments, we charge a late fee of \$50 after the 1st of the month.

Sibling Discount

For families with more than one child attending Explore Montessori, the youngest child is billed at normal rates. Older siblings are billed at a 5% tuition discount. There is no sibling discount during the summer camp program however the student going year round will have the same discount as the rest of the year.

Tuition Deposits

A non-refundable deposit of 1 month's school-day tuition for all students is required for each child attending the school. This deposit is held by the school and will be applied towards the last month in the last year that your child attends the school. No refunds will be offered for discontinuation of attendance prior to the end of the contract.

Returned Check Policy

A \$30.00 charge will be applied to all returned checks. Person(s) are responsible for the amount the check was written for. If payments are not made in a sufficient amount of time determined by the Head of School and Explore Administration, disciplinary actions may take place such as turning the person(s) into a Collections Agency.

Annual Materials Fee

A yearly materials fee of \$400 per student is required. Annual Fees are used to pay for school supplies and new classroom materials. This fee is billed in the month of August prior to the school year beginning and due by September 1. This fee is non-refundable if a student is withdrawn at any point during the year.

Enrollment Cancellation

Enrollment commitment is for the entire academic year for all primary enrollments and a full calendar year for all other enrollments.. In the case of unforeseen circumstances, a minimum of 40-day written notice is required prior to the 21st of month prior to the month of withdrawal, or tuition will still be due. If notice is given less than 40 days from the first day of the month of withdrawal, parents are responsible for that month's tuition.

Schedule Change Request

If a parent wishes to increase or decrease the number of days his or her child(ren) attend school, the parent must make a schedule change request in writing. If the schedule change request is made prior to the 15th of the month, and the request is granted, the current month invoice will be adjusted.

If the schedule request is made on or after the 15th of the month, and the request is granted, the current month invoice will NOT be adjusted. The adjustment will be reflected on the following month's invoice.

Planned School Closures

School closes for Labor Day, Thanksgiving Day and the Friday following Thanksgiving, Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, New Years Eve, New Year's Day, Memorial Day, and Fourth of July. Up to 10 additional days will be determined annually and posted on the school calendar for teacher personal and professional development.

Parent Participation – Classroom & Committees

We try very hard to keep tuition as low as possible at Explore Montessori and to make the Montessori education available to a broad spectrum of family incomes. Therefore, we strongly encourage every parent to contribute time to the School in various classroom or committee activities.

We need help with classroom materials, general repairs, building maintenance, classroom special projects and other things as the teachers, Explore Administrators or Head of School may deem necessary. Your time donations are part of your commitment to the school and not in exchange for tuition payment. Please see the Head of School if you would like to volunteer in the classroom.

We welcome and encourage parents and grandparents to come to their child's class sometime during the year to share something special with the children. They would love to hear about your job, hobbies, places you have visited or a unique talent you may have. Please arrange a time with your child's teacher and come share your gift with the children!

General Policies and Procedures

Admission

Explore Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national or ethnic origin in hiring, promotion, or training of employees, nor in the admissions, rights, privileges, programs and activities of the students.

However, for licensing purposes, the following requirements must be met prior to admission:

1. Prospective students must be at least 6 weeks old.
2. All forms and contracts relating to admission must be completed and signed in full before the student begins class.
3. The application, registration, annual fee, deposit and 1st months tuition must be retained to save the student's place.
4. A \$50 application fee is due in order to place the student on the waiting list to be considered for enrollment.

Arrival and Departure

Drop off times are 8:30-9:00 am Monday- Friday.

This policy is implemented to minimize disruptions in students and staff schedules, ensuring a smooth and focused learning environment. It is the responsibility of parents/guardians to ensure their children arrive at

school within designated drop-off hours.

The full-day program ends at 3:30. An optional before and after school programs are available for a limited number of students.

If you would like your child to attend our before or after school program, please sign up in advance so that we may plan our staffing. If a child remains after 5:30 for any Explore after school programs parents will be called. If we are unable to get a hold of the parents for 30 minutes we will call the authorities to determine the best next steps. We greatly appreciate your punctuality, good communication, and cooperation.

All drivers must slow down to 5 mph in the school parking lot. To ensure everyone's safety, parents are asked to keep your children close to you in the parking lots. Please do not leave your car idling while you are dropping off your child.

After School Program

The after school program begins at 3:30 p.m. and ends at 5:30 p.m.

Late Pick-up Fees

The late fee schedule is as follows:

- For the 1st half hour past pick-up time. The fee for the **first** time late is \$1.00 per minute.
- After the 1st half hour or the second time late is \$3.00 per minute and any time after that in a 30 calendar day period, the rate will be \$3.00 per minute.
- If late five times in any 12 months the family faces removal from the center.
- The check out clock in Brightwheel at Explore is the time used to determine the late payment. Late fees are charged on a monthly basis.
- After 30 minutes, if we have not heard from you or we have not been able to reach you or your emergency contacts, we will inform the police.
- A note of this will be kept in your child's file.

Authorized Pick Up

We need written authorization to release a child to anyone other than a parent. Forms are available at the sign-in desk if you would like to add a new person to your authorized list. We will check the Photo ID of anyone we do not recognize.

Releasing a Child

Explore Montessori has a duty to protect the health, welfare, or safety of a child and the department of HHS may revoke your license if Explore Montessori fails to reasonably foresee serious hazards to the health, safety,

or welfare of a child. Therefore, Explore Montessori reserves the right not to release a child to a parent or guardian who is suspected to be under the influence of drugs or alcohol.

Visiting the Classroom

Beginning in October, we welcome parents and visitors to make an appointment to observe our classrooms. We ask that you follow our observation guidelines, sitting in the observation chair quietly, so the children's lesson time is not interrupted. During times of pandemic we may limit outside visitors to avoid any inadvertent exposure. Please contact your child's teacher to determine when visiting options are available.

Playground and Playground Safety

At our school, the playground is an extension of the classroom designed to bring various ages together to experience the outdoors and learn fundamental lessons about life at the same time.

Come visit and watch the children playfully discovering the seasons in...

- landscaped playgrounds and green space
- vegetable/herb and flower gardens
- adjacent trail systems
- creative, natural playground equipment

Faculty who are supervising the children on the playground will be alert to and aware of any situations that may be potentially dangerous or cause any harm or injury to children. The faculty is actively involved with the children and will refrain from any activity that would not allow them to supervise the children properly.

Teachers are strategically positioned around the playground so as to be able to view all areas where children may be playing. Please understand that faculty will not be able to engage in lengthy conversation with parents while on playground duty. We invite you to schedule a time to speak to a teacher when they are not with the children.

Toys

Please do not allow your child to bring personal toys to school.

Parent Conferences

We schedule parent conferences in October and April each year. In addition, we will schedule individual parent meetings during the year, if the need arises. We ask that any concerns you may have be discussed during a conference rather than on the playground or in the presence of the children. You are welcome to access your child's teacher at any time via Brightwheel. Progress reports for Pre-Primary and Primary students will be completed in May.

Newsletters (In Brightwheel)

Explore Montessori & Academy sends our regular Brightwheel newsletter messages to inform parents of the current topics of study, pertinent notices, current news at the school, etc. This enables parents to follow-up on school studies at home through books, trips, and general discussion.

Behavior Guidance

In our class we help the children learn to be loving and kind with each other and the classroom. Children are encouraged to use kind words and gentle hands. We never use punishment or shame to belittle a child in any way. When discipline is necessary, we keep it positive and follow these steps:

1. We state in positive terms what we want the child to know or do (i.e. "sand stays in the sandbox" or "we use our words not our hands")
2. If the child continues the inappropriate behavior, we repeat what we stated the first time and give the child a choice, telling him what will happen if he continues the inappropriate behavior - usually removal from the activity for a period of time (i.e. "Sand stays in the sandbox. If you throw sand, then you will need to leave the sandbox and play on the grass instead").
3. If the inappropriate behavior continues, we follow through with the warning.
4. If the behavior becomes a repeated concern, we ask the child to sit with a teacher for a while watching the other children play or do lessons quietly. We document the behavior, report it to the Head of School and notify or meet with parents when necessary.

Under no circumstances are weapons, toy weapons, or violent play allowed at school.

Behavior Policy for Explore

At Explore Montessori Academy, we understand that many behaviors including but not limited to biting, hitting, & spitting are behaviors that some toddlers may exhibit as a form of communication. While we acknowledge that it's not unexpected for children of this age group, we also recognize that it can be harmful to others. This policy aims to address behavioral incidents with a focus on safety, support, and positive behavior reinforcement.

Prevention:

1. Education and Awareness:
 - Staff will be trained to recognize and understand the reasons behind the behavior in children
 - Parents will be informed about the possibility of the behavior and encouraged to communicate any concerns or observations.
2. Supervision:
 - Adequate supervision will be maintained at all times to minimize opportunities for behavior incidents.
3. Positive Reinforcement:
 - Positive behavior reinforcement techniques will be used to encourage children to express their emotions in non harmful ways.
4. Teaching Alternatives:
 - Staff will guide children in learning alternative ways to express frustration, anger, or other strong emotions.

Response:

1. **Immediate Interventions:**
 - When an incident occurs, the staff will intervene immediately to ensure the safety of all children involved.
2. **Comfort and Reassurance:**
 - The bitten child will be attended with care, providing comfort and reassurance.
3. **Documentation:**
 - The incident will be documented, including details of what happened and any factors that may contribute to the incident.
4. **Communication with Parents:**
 - Both the parents of the child who was bitten and the parents of the child who will be informed of the incident.
5. **Observation and Support**
 - The child who bit will be closely observed to identify potential triggers and address any underlying issues that may contribute to the behavior.
6. **Behavioral Guidance**
 - The staff will work with the child and their parents to develop strategies to prevent future behavior incidents.

Progressive steps for Continued Incidents:

1. **Conference with Parents:**
 - If a child inflicts 2 bites in a one week period (5 days of school attendance) resulting in broken skin or bruising, a conference will be held with the parents to discuss behavior modification.
2. **Temporary Break from School:**
 - If the child again inflicts 2 bites in a one week period (5 weekdays) resulting in broken skin or significant marks, the child will be asked to take a 3 day break from the school. During this break, parents are asked to consult with their pediatrician and related services such as Occupational Therapy or Speech therapy to explore possible causes and solutions for the behavior.
3. **Alternative Childcare Arrangement:**
 - If the child again inflicts 2 bites in a one week period (5 days of school attendance) resulting in broken skin or significant marks, parents will be asked to make alternative child care arrangements within 30 calendar days.

Confidentiality:

All information regarding behavior incidents will be treated with the utmost confidentiality and shared only with staff members.

Review and Revision:

This policy will be reviewed periodically to ensure its effectiveness and may be revised as needed to better address the needs of the children and the community.

Dismissal Policy

We will work with you in giving your child every opportunity to have a successful and enjoyable school year. However, if a child does not seem to benefit from our program, if the parents are delinquent in payments for tuition or fees, or if we feel that for any other reason, our school is not able to meet your child's needs, we reserve the right to dismiss a student from school.

Children may be dismissed from school if their behavior endangers another student or teacher, and/or if they are adversely affecting the positive learning environment in the classroom. A suspension of at least one full school day, and possible dismissal from school, will be given for any act of physical violence.

As a Montessori school we look deeply into every child's personal situation and try many strategies to meet their needs. It is only after we determine that it is not in the best interest of the student, or other students or faculty are adversely affected, that dismissal becomes a necessary course of action. We will address each child's circumstances with the parents and treat each child's personal situation with respect and confidentiality.

Student Achievement

The pace of development cannot be rushed or regulated. We permit children to progress at their own pace, free from pressure. Some students will advance rapidly far beyond age level; others will progress at a more moderate pace. Each child is different and accomplishments will not be the same for everyone. This is one of the benefits of the Montessori approach that leads to the development of each child's self-esteem and love of learning.

We encourage you to speak to one of the teachers or the Head of School if you have any questions or concerns about your child's learning style and progress.

Thank you for sharing the joy and responsibility of your child's education with us!

Medication and Safety

Prevention First and Foremost

The safety and well-being of each child is of utmost importance at Explore Montessori. This includes the prevention of accidents, injuries, and incidents. Explore Montessori strives to prevent such happenings by examining all programs carefully, by hiring qualified faculty, and staff and requiring on-going training in safety, prevention, and first aid. The development of the child protection and safety policies is a strategy to prevent accidents and/or incidents and to be prepared in case of emergency. The process of development and ongoing review of these policies promotes awareness of the need for prevention.

Medication Policy

We must have written authorization from a parent to administer prescription medication to a child at school.

Medication must be in the original container with specific instructions and dosage information from a doctor. Asthmatic students who carry inhalers must have their inhaler with them at all times. Similarly, students who carry an Ana kit or epi-pen for allergic reactions must have it available at all times. Be sure to give medication directly to a teacher for safe storage and administration. We can apply sunscreen and administer over the counter medications, with a signed consent form from the parents.

Illness

As a parent, you accept the inherent risk of communicable disease by entering childcare facility including, Explore Academy. Our policies are in place to assure we keep this risk to a minimum.

If your child will not be attending school, please inform us via Brightwheel.

The medical form and medical release must be filled out and returned before the first day of school.

If your child becomes ill while at school, we will notify you to pick him or her up right away. We are not equipped to care for children that are ill.

Children who have been at home because of an illness should not return to school until after they are **24 hours free of a fever, diarrhea, or vomiting without medication**. Children with conjunctivitis, impetigo, excessive cough, runny nose, or any other contagious illness may not come to school. Please consult your physician if you have any questions. We appreciate your cooperation to help reduce the spread of illness.

According to NAEYC's Healthy Young Children Manual, "children should be excluded if their illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in the program's activities." As you review the policy above, please keep this guideline in mind.

No refunds are available for illness related absences including quarantines or center closures due to quarantine.

Immunizations

Effective October 2022 Explore Academy, Montessori, and Piccolo will accept exemption to immunization from children attending our schools. This decision is in effect until further notice. This exemption applies to all children attending our schools when parents, in good faith, seek exemptions from immunizations due to sincerely held religious beliefs for their children. Signed: Jessica Dehn, Owner

Emergencies

In the event of an accident or sudden onset of an illness, the school will not hesitate to seek proper care for the student. The student's individual emergency instructions on file in the school will be consulted immediately and the parents will be called. If necessary, the child will be taken to the Bozeman Health Emergency room. The consent statement that the parents sign will accompany the child so that treatment can be given immediately in the absence of a parent. It is imperative that you keep the emergency contact information up to date.

Tobacco, Drugs and Alcohol

Explore Montessori is a tobacco, drug, and alcohol free establishment. These substances are not allowed on the premises at any time.

Special Pre-Primary (Infants, Toddlers, and Two's) Information

Arrivals and Departures

The Montessori goal is to provide each child the maximum opportunity to develop his or her potential through independence in a nurturing environment. We appreciate your cooperation and not providing any unneeded assistance for your child as they develop self care skills such as carrying them, hanging up their coat, putting away their lunch box, changing their shoes, etc.

School hours

7:30-8:30am	Arrival (specific time listed in contract)
8:30-11am	Outside - snack - Montessori work period - ends with circle time
11-11:30am	Outside Play
11:30-12:30pm	Lunch
12:30-2:30pm	Naps/Montessori work period
2:30pm-3:00pm	Snack
3-3:30pm	Outside play and full day pick up
3:30-5:30pm	After School/Outdoor Play/Full Day Pick-up

Separation

After saying good-bye, it is best to keep your exit short and sweet —just go out the door and don't look back. Although some children may be upset at first, we want to reassure you that this passes quickly. Having a positive reassuring attitude is important. Do not be tempted to sneak out when your child is happily occupied. It is very important to say good-bye and let them know when you'll be back to pick them up.

We will call to notify you if your child is upset and cannot be consoled after a reasonable amount of time. Children may bring a pacifier or other comfort item at the beginning of the year to ease the transition, if necessary.

In the event that your child is unable to successfully separate from you and integrate into the program, we suggest offering him/her a period of time when you will stay in the classroom for a while each day. If you suspect that your child may have a difficult time separating from you, feel free to talk to the teachers about it and we will help work out a smooth transition.

Primary Caregivers

To facilitate emotional acceptance and bonding with the teachers and ensure high quality care of each child, we have assigned each child to a Primary Caregiver. The teacher who is the Primary Caregiver is responsible to ensure that the children in her care are well fed and have water to drink, have their diapers changed or use the bathroom on a regular basis, and are safe, happy and learning during the time they are at school. They are also responsible to report this information to the parents via Brightwheel on a daily basis. The Primary Caregiver records which lessons the children are learning and using in the classroom, so it can be conveyed to the parents at bi-annual parent/teacher conferences.

The Toddler Environment

The Infant area is designed to be peaceful, calm, and engaging. We practice physical milestones as we nurture each child's development. Teachers will narrate daily activities, read, sing, and play on the floor. Simple toys are introduced as our youngest explorers prepare to move into toddlerhood.

The Toddler area is the first introduction to group schedule, circle time, and work time. Beginning Montessori Lessons are selected to fit perfectly with the children's developmental needs and rotated often. Self help skills are introduced and practiced daily.

The 2s classroom at Explore Montessori is a prepared environment for children from 2 to 3 years of age. It consists of an entryway where each child has a hook or cubby for personal belongings, an activity area, fine motor lesson room, a bathroom with a child-sized toilet, accessible sink and diaper changing area. There is also an activity room for indoor play and gross motor movement with mats, balance beams, and rockers for motor activity. An outdoor fenced-in playground, separated by a fence from the older children's play area, is adjacent to the classroom with a sandbox, gardens, swings, and climbers. We maintain a 1:6 or less ratio of one adult to every six children at all times.

Experience has shown that young children enjoy and are capable of successfully participating in a large variety of Montessori-like lessons that are developmentally appropriate for their age and ability level. The two-year-old environment provides a combination of lessons that have a defined purpose (puzzles, counting materials, vocabulary lessons, practical life lessons such as pouring water or using a baster) as well as creative play materials (a doll house or farm, play telephone), art materials (paint, crayons, glue, paper), and familiar toys or activities such as blocks, cars and trucks, dolls and doll clothes that do not have structure or a defined purpose.

With practice and gentle reminders toddler-age children can be taught and expected to choose and carry a lesson to a table or work rug, work on one lesson at a time, and return a lesson to its place when finished. They can successfully understand the concepts of waiting for someone else to finish their turn, watching but not touching someone else's work, and sharing with friends. They are capable of working on a lesson with focused concentration for long periods of time. They love to imitate and repeat lessons as shown and will often repeat a lesson many times before being finished with it.

Daily Schedule

Following the Montessori lesson time, the teacher turns on a music box that signals to the children that it is time to put their work away, clean up the classroom and get ready for "Circle Time".

“Circle time” is a group experience that usually consists of singing songs, playing musical instruments, movement (marching, jumping, spinning around), finger plays, use of puppets or props, counting activities, repeating the sounds of the phonetic alphabet, showing pictures or flashcards and giving their vocabulary, and a story. Children are invited to get a mat to sit on and join in the circle, but are not required to attend. Circle time lasts between 10 and 20 minutes, depending upon the needs and interest of the children.

Following Circle Time, the children dress and go outside for 30 – 60 minutes depending upon the weather.

Lunch is from 11:30-12pm. The children are encouraged to eat independently and with good manners, and to eat their “main” food before snacks or dessert.

Communication with Parents

The Explore Attendance software, Brightwheel, will log every day to inform you of your child’s eating, bathroom and sleeping routines. You can access this via the parent app at any time.

Incident reports are completed for any minor injury that requires teacher attention or leaves a mark. Bumps are common in young children and we do our best to document so all caregivers are aware.

We will call parents if, for any reason, your child is distressed, and cannot be consoled, becomes injured or ill, or requires medical attention. We will occasionally have to call a parent if a child is overly aggressive or having a difficult time adjusting to the program.

Naps

Children who nap need to bring bedding which includes a fitted crib sheet to cover the sleep mat and a small blanket or quilt for a top cover. We send them home each week to be laundered.

Lunch and Snacks

Please send a nutritious lunch and snacks to school every day. At lunch, we will encourage the children to eat nutritious high-protein food first before eating sweets. We request that you not send treats such as candy, cakes with frosting or soda pop to school.

Label one item for a morning snack and place it in the basket at drop off. Children who are staying for a full day need to bring a second snack in their lunch box and an additional snack for after school.

Suggested snacks and lunches include cheese & crackers, granola bars, nuts, veggie sticks, fresh or dried fruit, bagels & cream cheese, trail mix, cheese sticks, or yogurt.

Class allergies may come up and we will let you know if any other item are prohibited in an individual classroom to keep all children safe.

Clothing

Please keep your child's cubby stocked with the following items **clearly labeled** and appropriate for the seasons:

- 1 pair of indoor shoes or simple slippers with rubber bottoms
- 2 extra sets of clothes
- 6-10 diapers (depending on age-you may bring larger amounts but no more than a single pack)
- Sunscreen
- Sweater/jacket
- Rain suit, Bozeman winter weather is often above freezing and our playgrounds get muddy. There are many options that will keep them dry and warm while we explore all year.
- Snowsuit, winter boots, waterproof mittens & winter hats

Please make sure your child's clothes are designed to be easy for him to dress and undress himself, for example, pants with elastic waist, Velcro shoes, and pant legs without snaps. We will encourage the children to dress themselves as much as they can.

Clothing that is easy for a child to put on and take off by himself is especially important for successful potty training (no onesies please!).

Potty Training

Using the potty is a gradual and gentle process that begins when the child enters the 2-3 year old classroom and is invited to sit on the potty every time he or she has a diaper change. We encourage parents to continue this process at home to provide continuity and success. When a child is successful using the potty both at home and school, they may begin to wear thick cotton underwear to school. We ask that children wear underpants at home for one week with success before beginning to wear them to school. We will remind children who are wearing underpants to use the potty at frequent intervals until they are independent.

Children need to be fully potty trained and three years old before they may enter our Primary preschool program. Children who are not yet potty trained but have turned three may stay in the Pre-primary classroom longer, or may be asked to continue working on potty training at home before entering the Preschool classroom.

Dismissal Policy

We will work with you in giving your child every opportunity to have a successful and enjoyable school year. However, if a child does not seem to benefit from our program, if the parents are delinquent in payments for tuition or fees, or if we feel that for any other reason, our school is not able to meet your child's needs, we reserve the right to dismiss a student from school. Children may be dismissed from school if their behavior endangers another student or teacher, and/or if they are adversely affecting the positive learning environment in the classroom. A suspension of at least one full school day, and possible dismissal from school, will be given for any act of physical violence.

As a Montessori school we look deeply into every child's personal situation and try many strategies to meet their needs. It is only after we determine that it is not in the best interest of the student, or other students or faculty are adversely affected, that dismissal becomes necessary course of action. We will address each child's circumstances with the parents and treat each child's personal situation with respect and confidentiality.

Special Primary (3 – 6 year olds) Information

Arrival and Departure

Montessori observed that unneeded assistance is an obstacle to development. We encourage you to give your children the opportunity to develop independence by allowing them to do the things they are capable of doing by themselves. In this spirit, we ask you to say good-bye to your child at the sign-in desk.

School hours

7:30–8:30am	Arrival
8:30–9am	Outdoor time
9–11am	Montessori work period - Snack
11–11:30am	Circle Time
11:30–12:30pm	Outside Play
12:30–1pm	Lunch
1–3:00pm	Montessori work period/Snack/Naps for those who nap
3–3:30pm	Outside play and full day pick up
3:30–5:30pm	After School/Outdoor Play/Full Day Pick-up

Clothing

Please send a pair of slippers or other soft shoes with rubber soles to be kept at school and used as “inside shoes.” These should be simple without extra frills like animals or lights, and be easy for your child to put on and take off. Inside shoes keep the classroom clean while offering a protective covering for the child’s feet in the event of having to evacuate the classroom for an emergency or emergency drill.

Your child also needs an extra set of clothes (including underwear & socks) to keep on hand at school. Please remember to bring replacements when the extras get used. Weather-appropriate clothing is needed on a daily basis so children can enjoy the outdoors and fresh air year ‘round. For example, rain coats with hoods and rubber boots for rainy days, and jackets, snow pants, boots, hats, and mittens during the winter months. Rain pants are great for mud!

We ask that the children’s hair be clean and tidy. Please do not allow your child to wear T-shirts with superheroes to school.

Lunches and Snacks

Please send a nourishing lunch, morning snack and water bottle labeled with your child’s name. Juice will not be allowed in water bottles or the classroom. If your child stays extended, please send an additional snack (or two) for the afternoon. ***Please do not send sweets such as candy, cakes with frosting, pudding, sweet drinks, juice, or soda pop.*** Thank you for your cooperation.

Recommended snacks include: cheese & crackers, granola bars – low sugar, nuts, veggie sticks, fresh or dried fruit, bagels & cream cheese, trail mix, cheese sticks, or Greek yogurt (high in protein, low in sugar). Please do not send Gogurt or other “squeezable tube” snacks. They are too messy & not very filling. Please send snacks that your child can eat independently.

Curriculum

The Montessori Preschool Curriculum, for children ages 3 – 6 years, is a unique three-year systematic program, where each year’s activities are logical and consistent extensions of what has come before. The core curriculum areas include language, math, sensorial, 7 practical life. Other areas included in the classroom include physical geography, cultural studies, science and nature, arts and crafts, gardening, music, and physical education.

Birthdays

Parents may join us to celebrate your child’s birthday at school. We follow the Montessori tradition of the child walking around the “sun” for every year since they were born. Please bring or send a picture for each year of your child’s life along with brief comments about something they said or did during each year. If you would like to bring a treat, please bring fruit so that all the children with allergies or dietary concerns may be included. If you are planning a home birthday party for your child, *please do not pass out birthday invitations at school or in cubbies*. Those not invited have hurt feelings.

Show and Share

Show and Share is not a scheduled routine in the Primary Classroom. If your child has something special they would like to show from a recent trip, please notify the teachers to schedule an appropriate time to bring them in.

Parent Nights

In the spring, two evenings are set aside for Mom’s night and Dad’s night in our preschool classrooms. This allows the students to bring their mothers and fathers on each respective night and show the parents what they do during school.

Toys from Home

Please do not allow your child to bring personal toys to school.

Naps

Please let your child’s teacher know if you would like him/her to nap at school. Children who nap need to bring bedding which includes a fitted crib sheet to cover the sleep mat and a small blanket or quilt for a top cover. We send them home every other week to be laundered.