



# Parent Handbook

## 2011-2012

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**Dear Parents,**

A heartfelt welcome from all of us at Grace Montessori Academy. We rejoice in God's bountiful blessings and anticipate a wonderful year.

First – We are a non-denominational Christian School dedicated to nurturing our children to a joyous relationship with God through Jesus Christ.

Second – We are a parent-oriented, parent-involved school. You are your child's most important teacher. We are here to provide you with the support, expertise and care to help you succeed at one of life's most demanding, yet satisfying jobs... raising and nurturing your child.

Third – We are a Montessori school dedicated to providing your child a hands-on, independent learning environment that instills the love of learning.

We are all excited to begin this new school year with your children. We are confident that the child will enjoy our loving and academically challenging environment. Please join us as we begin this great work of building a school. You are so important to us, and we desire to work together for the greater good of the child.

Grace and Peace,

The Board of Grace Montessori Academy (GMA)

**ABOUT OUR SCHOOL**

**Our Mission**

Grace Montessori Academy is a nurturing, Christian educational community.

**Our Vision is to:**

We teach the child a love for learning and moral principles that will assist the child in developing their knowledge, self-discipline and self-esteem allowing them to realize and achieve their individual potential.

We teach the child personal responsibility, tolerance, mentoring others and to contribute their unique gifts to the world.

We teach the child to love Christ and desire to become His disciple in the world.

We teach children from ages 3 to 12.

We financially assist those who cannot afford to attend.

We reach out to all people in the community.

We aspire to disciple beyond the children by reaching out as a positive influence to the families.

We aspire to be a Christian Montessori teacher training center.

We are an exemplary Christian school known for pace setting excellence with impeccable character as an organization.

### **Our Goals**

*INSPIRATION*. To prepare children for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning. To establish a foundation of learning with joy, love and appreciation that nurtures curiosity, creativity and imagination.

*INTEGRITY*. To promote strong moral character and human values.

*RESPECT*. To inspire strong life skills where students learn to respect themselves, others and the environment.

*SPIRITUAL*. To encourage every child to begin and develop their relationship with God the Father through Jesus Christ.

*ACHIEVEMENT*. To provide a rich, integrated curriculum with a holistic approach to learning through language, math, sensorial, practical life, cultural, physical science, history, geography, music, art, botany, and zoology. To offer an accelerated curriculum that prepares students for today's world and promotes academic excellence. To assist each child in reaching his highest potential.

*RESPONSIBILITY*. To build strong “help to life” skills that promote independence and personal responsibility. To develop exceptional time management, communications, conflict resolution and community stewardship skills.

*GROWTH*. To develop self-confidence and self esteem. To develop focus and strong concentration that produces an intrinsic satisfaction of work.

### **Our Beliefs**

Grace Montessori Academy sets as its guiding principles the two greatest commandments given to us by Jesus Christ: “The most important one is this: ‘Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one. Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself. There is no commandment greater than these.’” Mark 12:2 9-31

These guiding principles are supported by the following beliefs that will be taught in various ways through all the grade levels.

WE BELIEVE...the Bible to be the inspired and authoritative Word of God.

WE BELIEVE...in one sovereign God, Creator of all things, eternally existing in three persons:

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

WE BELIEVE...that Jesus Christ is the living Son of God, ever present among us, and in our classrooms, serving as a model for our lives. We honor and believe in: His sinless life; His substitutionary death on the cross; His bodily resurrection; and His ascension to the right hand of the Father.

WE BELIEVE...that our salvation through Jesus Christ is God's generous gift to us and it is by this grace through faith that we are saved.

WE BELIEVE...that faith enhances learning and that a strong academic program must be based on the Christ-centered view of life where wisdom and knowledge are centered in God rather than in man. Biblical morals and values are the foundation for development of an enduring love for learning.

WE BELIEVE...that the Montessori approach to early and lower school education promotes a love of learning and discovery resulting in academic excellence that exceeds state standards. Promoting a Christian environment enables teachers and students to work cooperatively and creatively, engendering respect for the individual and for the group while emphasizing the presence of God in all our work.

WE BELIEVE...that all children can do great things.

## **Responsibilities**

### **Of the School**

- To provide a program that is stimulating, developmentally appropriate, and academically challenging.
- To provide an environment that is clean, safe, and attractive.
- To maintain the standards and licensing required by State, County and City agencies.
- To provide teachers who demonstrate excellence in teaching, guiding, and caring and who are committed to the mission and vision of GMA.
- To follow the goals and mission statement established by the parents and the board.

### **Of the Parent**

- To bring the child to school on regular and consistent basis per the chosen schedule.
- To bring the child to school on time.
- To fulfill financial and legal obligations to the school promptly.
- To support both the school and the child:
  - by attending parent meetings and conferences
  - by keeping informed on goals and policies of the school
  - by volunteering time and effort
  - by keeping informed through checking e-mail and communicating with the school

### **Of the Child**

- To construct the adult s/he will become.

### **School Structure**

Grace Montessori Academy is a non-profit corporation incorporated in the State of Montana and governed by a Board of Trustees. The Board hires the Head of School who in turn hires the Certified Teachers. These individuals work together to promote the overall mission, vision, and goals of the school.

Grace Montessori Academy currently offers classes at the preschool/kindergarten (ages 3-6); lower elementary (ages 6-9); and upper elementary (ages 9-12.)

## ACADEMIC INFORMATION

### **Bible Curriculum**

Our Bible curriculum is from Christian Schools International. The DK Children's Illustrated Bible will be the primary translation used at GMA. We focus on God's providential work through history. Children have bible lessons weekly and apply Bible truths in every avenue. Children also learn about bible history through our beautiful Parable Boxes. These boxes are presented as lessons and available for the child to engage in during their work period.

### **Care of Books and Lessons**

Textbooks and lessons not belonging to the child are to be cared for with extraordinary attention. Children are taught to respect the classroom materials and demonstrate reverent stewardship. Any lessons or books damaged, intentionally or not, will be repaired or replaced by the responsible child and parent at full cost.

### **Curriculum Information**

To distill it to its essence, Montessori means meeting the needs of your child. Specifically, Montessori can be recognized by incorporating these major points:

- Hands-on Material – where you use all your senses to learn.
- Multi-age Grouping of Children – where, like a family, everyone helps everyone else to learn. All the material is present for the whole age group; therefore, students are able to learn at their own pace.
- Prepared Environment – where the trained Montessori teacher knows the developmental needs of the children and prepares a classroom environment with an atmosphere of calm and order, warmth and care, awareness and joy.
- It is the fostering of independence allowing students to do for themselves.
- It is the assumption of responsibility by the learner for his own learning and well being.
- It is the learning to make wise choices sometimes in a context of making poor choices and living with the consequences.
- A Montessori environment fosters respect for the child.
- It is the mastering of the learning material, leaving no gaps in the learning process.
- It is the understanding of the concepts, not just the doing of them.
- It is the preparation for the next stage of life.

### **Grades and Testing**

Letter grades are comparative models of describing a child's development instead of a description. Our Montessori program communicates with parents and future schools about the children/s progress through written narrative reports and portfolios of children's work, complemented by parent-teacher conferences during the school year. The Montessori didactic materials are designed so that self-correction occurs naturally. Observation and assessment occur continuously in a Montessori classroom. It is the role of the Teacher to evaluate objectively by observation. Lesson plans are developed for each child according to his or her

abilities, interests and needs. Each child's documentation report comprehensively captures the child's progress. The teacher will communicate with the family if further testing is required.

GMA complies with the State standards for Early Childhood, Lower and Upper Elementary essential skills. We use these guidelines as a baseline for measuring a child's progress. Parents will find that our program exceeds the State Standards and provides the child with a comprehensive educational experience. GMA participates in standardized testing.

### **Homework**

Homework is assigned to the Elementary Students and on occasion to our Kindergarten Students. Homework is minimal and is given for the following reasons:

- To reinforce the learning of facts and concepts taught in the classroom
- To encourage research on a given topic or book
- To connect home to school

### **Homework Folder**

Students in the Elementary Program are issued homework folders at the beginning of the year to help them organize their assignments.

## **ADMISSION PROCESS**

### **Admission**

Parents interested in enrolling their child in Grace Montessori Academy should make an appointment to visit the school. At this time, the parent(s) will have an opportunity to observe the classroom and meet the Head of School and the Teacher. New students may apply for admission at any time.

Children must be 3 years old and toilet-trained before entering the Early Childhood program.

### **Enrollment Procedures**

Our admissions process is fashioned to provide you with sufficient information about Grace Montessori Academy and to provide us with sufficient information about your family to ensure that the school's educational program is the optimal learning environment for your child. Here is the process:

1. **Visit the school:** We ask that all interested families schedule a time to visit our school so they may observe the classroom environment.
2. **Application:** Submit a Registration Form and return to Grace Montessori Academy, 125 25<sup>th</sup> St W., Billings, MT 59102. **You do not need to wait until after you have visited the school to submit an admission form. You may do so at anytime.**
3. **Waiting List:** Your child will be placed on our active waiting list after your Registration

Form has been received. You will be notified by mail or phone if we are able to place your child.

- a. **Enrollment:** Children are selected from the waiting list according to the needs of the individual classroom communities. We strive for communities that reflect balance in age and gender.
  - b. If we are unable to find a place for your child, we will contact you in late spring, asking if you would like to remain on the waiting list or withdraw. It is possible that your child may be accepted later in the spring or even over the summer if a place becomes available.
4. If your child is accepted into our program, we will contact you to confirm enrollment. We will then mail you a Registration Packet containing enrollment information. Please return this, along with a **non-refundable \$150 Enrollment Fee**, to the school per the deadline stated in the Acceptance Packet. If you are enrolling during the spring semester the enrollment fee is pro-rated to \$75. The enrollment fee covers the cost of a t-shirt and school supplies.
5. GMA does require a Tuition Deposit (non-refundable) to complete the enrollment process. This is due the first week of June. This Tuition Deposit is equal to the first month's tuition fee and is applied to the first tuition payment for August 1.
6. GMA conducts a Welcome and Orientation Forum in early August. Please check your school calendar for dates. GMA encourages all families to attend. Mid-year orientation may be conducted if we have a significant amount of new students.
7. If you have any additional questions regarding this process or if you need to update your child's information, please call us at (406)-652-1739.

### **Nondiscrimination Policy**

Grace Montessori Academy does not discriminate on the basis of gender, race, color, national origin, disability, religion or age in the administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, and all other school-administered programs. Our teachers emphasize moral instruction, kindness, and compassion to all children.

Grace Montessori Academy is committed to maintaining a learning environment that is free of discrimination. In keeping with this commitment, we will not tolerate harassment of students or employees by anyone, including but not limited to staff, vendors, parents or students.

### **Tuition and Fiscal Policies**

We realize that private education represents a financial investment for a family. GMA attempts to keep the annual tuition as low as possible by assigning only those costs directly related to education. We also offer three payment plan options as listed below:

**Option A:** Payment in full on or before August 1. (Receive a **3% discount**)

**Option B:** Payment of full tuition in two equal payments, first installment due August 1 and the second installment is due January 1.

**Option C:** Payment in 10 equal payments, the first payment due June 1 (non-refundable tuition deposit) and 9 remaining equal payments (September-May,) due by the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month.

Grace Montessori Academy offers a **5% discount for siblings** enrolled in the program.

In order to meet our fiscal responsibilities, a late fee of 15% of the amount due can be charged for outstanding invoices that are not paid by the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month. If a payment remains unpaid, for 30 days after it is due, a student will be excused from the program until pay

A thirty-day written notice must be submitted if you are withdrawing prior to the close of the school year. If notice is not received, parents/guardians are responsible for that month's installment tuition payment.

All fiscal problems, questions, or other changes should be addressed to the Head of School.

If a parent needs to change their child's schedule, a "Schedule Change form" must be completed and submitted to the Head of School. The Head of School will notify the parent if and when the change is to take effect.

Once a child has been admitted into the program, GMA reserves the right to enroll the child on a trial basis for up to four weeks in length to determine preschool readiness and appropriateness of the schedule. If at any time prior to the end of the trial period the school determines that it is not a "match" between the child and the school, the family shall be released from their contract without a thirty-day notice. The family will be fiscally responsible only for the actual time enrolled.

We reserve the right to dismiss a child who does not appear to be benefiting from our environment, or who exhibits behavioral patterns we are not able to handle. In addition, a child may be dismissed if we determine that the parents are unwilling to support the Parent Responsibilities as outlined on Page 8 of the Parent Handbook and/or the Christian and philosophical approach of the school.

We reserve the right to dismiss a family whose account is delinquent.

Grace Montessori Academy carries an insurance policy that provides coverage for every child during school hours and also covers the school's liability in case of an accident. There is no additional charge for this insurance as it is included in your tuition rate.

Because we must pay our staff and expenses every month, no credit can be given for absences or family vacations/trips. If your child misses a day due to illness, we cannot exchange another unscheduled day for you to "make it up".

## **Scholarship Fund**

Grace Montessori Academy offers a scholarship program to current and incoming students. The School utilizes a professional online service, SSS, to collect the necessary financial information from the families. Parents must request an application and follow the procedures outlined on that form. The deadline for applications is stated on the form. The Scholarship Committee reviews the application and grants scholarships based on availability of funds.

## **ATTENDANCE**

### **Absences**

When your child is absent, please call the office **each day by 9:00 am** to inform the school of the absence. We recommend that you plan your family vacations during our school vacations.

In the Elementary program, students should be absent less than ten (10) days per year. If your child is prone to be sick more than most students, please don't take school time for vacations.

We are a school built on experiential learning. When your child is gone, he misses that part of the curriculum making it more difficult to attach the next building block of knowledge without special teacher time.

### **Class Sessions**

EARLY CHILDHOOD: 8:30 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. for half days and  
8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m. for full days.

ELEMENTARY: 8:30 to 3:00 p.m.

Early drop-off is available at 7:30 and After-school care from 3:00 until 4:00. The fees for this are \$5.00 per hour. Late pick-up fees are \$1.00 per each minute past pick-up time unless previous arrangements have been made.

### **Drop off and Pick up**

EARLY CHILDHOOD      Drop-off - 8:15-8:30  
Half day pick-up - 11:50-12:15  
Full day pick-up – 2:55-3:15

Remember you are entering a school zone, please drive with extreme caution. We ask that all parents use the drive around as this will promote a safer delivery of your child into our school. A familiar staff member will be present to receive your child from the vehicle and assist them into the school. Drop offs work best when they are short and sweet! Please allow your child the independence to manage his/her own belongings (backpack, coat and personal belongs) especially in carrying them to his/her locker. Teachers are available to assist once the child has entered the school. Our philosophy with this transition is to allow the child to do for themselves what they are able to do.

If you must enter the school, we ask you to park along the street or in the adjacent mall parking. Do not leave your car unattended in the drive around. Please do not feel that you must

linger to help your child “settle in”. This important time of the day is where the first steps of independence begin, and where the teachers can bond with the children.

If anyone other than the child’s parent is responsible for picking up a student, their name must be list in the Authorized Pick-up section of the Health and Medical Form. If we are not familiar with this individual, the school has the right to ask for identification. If not, a written permission slip is required from the family before the child can be released. The school’s policy is to protect the child in all matters of divorce and separation. The school needs to have a copy of any legal documents regarding restrictions in visitation rights.

Upon pick-up, please use the drive around. **A staff person will deliver your child to your car. In addition, the teacher will place the child in your car and buckle them for you.** This will save time and make the line move faster. Please do not leave your vehicle at anytime while in the circular driveway. Please do not allow your child to move about unrestrained in the vehicle while waiting in the line.

### **Punctuality**

**Children should arrive no more than 15 minutes before class session and be picked up within 15 minutes of the close of the school session.** Late pick-up fees are \$1.00 per minute past pick-up time unless other arrangements have been made. We request that the early drop-off children be escorted into the school by their parents as the teachers are still preparing for the morning. For regular scheduled children, the teachers will greet you at 8:15am in our circular drive way to receive the children from your cars. Please review the above drop off and pick up procedures.

### **Tardiness**

We wish to encourage all families to be on time for school. Your child’s teacher will know that you put an importance on her time with your child, and your high expectations will increase your child’s productivity and ability. Students who arrive late take time away from the rest of the class while the teacher catches them up.

School begins at 8:30 a.m. Your child is late if he is not here when circle time begins. Teachers feel that this time is so important in order to gently transition the child into the morning work cycle.

Please make a *resolution to be on time!* Please save those few “late days” for emergencies (lost keys, flat tires, etc.). It will help make your child’s day even more productive. Please see page 8 on Parent Responsibilities.

### **Toys**

We welcome “news” at school. Objects brought should be educational in nature. These might include books, puzzles, pictures, travel souvenirs, natural objects, etc. Sharing can also include any interesting experience the child would like to relate to classmates. Toys or other similar items are discouraged.

## **COMMUNICATION WITH PARENTS**

Grace Montessori Academy exists to assist parents in their responsibility to teach their children. This foundational principal assumes parental involvement and communication. To facilitate this communication, GMA will take the initiative in a variety of ways to keep the parents abreast of activities and important updates. GMA encourages parents to participate through classroom visits, notes, and calls to our program.

### **Classroom Visits**

Normalization is a Montessori term used to define a child who has achieved independence, orderliness, concentration, self-control, and concern for others. Children new to the school are not expected to be normalized. This process is ongoing and is optimized by consistent attendance. Most children will experience this phenomenon approximately eight weeks into the program. This is why we ask parents to visit after the child has had some opportunity to normalize to the environment. Once this has occurred, we welcome families into our classrooms. Please schedule a visit with the teachers in advance as we want to make sure we optimize this special opportunity. The front office will check you in and provide you with our observation form which outlines the goals of your visit. Parents are there to observe and allow the child to demonstrate what they have learned. This will help increase the child's confidence in the classroom, not to mention how proud they will feel by doing this. We ask that the parents refrain from engaging in lessons with the child as this is a time for them to show you what they can do all by themselves! This is a wonderful opportunity to see your child learning and participating in the environment. Please be mindful that sharing observations about other children with others is a violation of their confidentiality.

### **Communication**

The Grace Montessori Academy newsletter is published monthly. In addition, we may send home "Notes Home" or "Ask me About" forms to communicate with you about updates and/or your child's progress.

### **E-mail and Website**

Our website and regularly checking e-mails are two important ways to stay connected to the school. If you need to make contact with the school the primary e-mail accounts are:

Front Office: [office@gmamt.org](mailto:office@gmamt.org)

Head of School: [headofschool@gmamt.org](mailto:headofschool@gmamt.org)

To log on to the school's secure parent website go to [gmamt.org](http://gmamt.org) and click the parents for grace tab at the top of the screen. This link takes you to a Google page and you login with the following:

E-mail: [gracemontessori.parents](mailto:gracemontessori.parents)

Password: montessori

If you have a google account you may need to log out of that account to access the school's page. Many types of accounts are Google accounts such as Billings Public Schools.

The parent page has pictures, calendars, handbooks, sign-up forms and other helpful documents.

### **Emergency Conditions**

Grace Montessori Academy holds regular fire drills and has a tornado emergency plan in place. Parent will be contacted by the school in case of an emergency. GMA will only close due to severe cold weather (-20 with wind chill) or when Billings Public School bus systems are not running. We do not conduct recess when the weather is 0 degrees or if there is a significant wind chill factor. If the weather is severely cold, please check your local radio station.

### **Parent/Teacher Conferences**

Fall and spring dates are set aside for parent/teacher conferences (usually in November and May). Classes will not be in session during this time. At the parent /teacher conference you will be given a report of your child's progress, which includes physical, social and intellectual development. When you come for your conference, you will meet with your child's teachers for a fifteen minute period for Early Childhood and 30 minutes for Elementary. Fall conferences focus on what is in our curriculum and how we will be setting goals for the year. See the school calendar for conference days. We strongly urge all parents to attend as we discuss progress and set goals together.

We welcome requests for additional meetings throughout the year should you feel that you need more. Please contact the Head of School or your child's teacher to set up a meeting.

### **Telephone Communication**

Parents are encouraged to call teachers at school. Your child's teacher will call you back at a convenient time if she is busy teaching. Parents will receive a school directory to be used for school use only.

School correspondence and telephone calls will be handled through the school office between the hours of 8:00 am - 4:00 pm. The school phone number is 652-1739.

## **CONDUCT**

Grace Montessori Academy is a community of Christian people who are and must be committed to the moral and intellectual integrity of the school and for its prosperity under God's hand. This means that we are responsible for one another –parents for students, teachers for students and each other, students for each other. When we protect the integrity of one person by helping him to make wise, Biblical choices or by helping him to honorably face the just consequences of misconduct, we promote the well-being of the child and the school. The following is intended to help us maintain and restore Biblical relationships and behavior.

## **Conflict Resolution Policy**

In spite of the best efforts of both parents and the school, it is inevitable that conflicts will arise. When they do, it is important that they are handled in a Biblical manner and in a way that leads to effective resolution. Grace Montessori Academy encourages children to learn to handle conflict in a peaceful manner. GMA utilizes the Young Peacemaker's Curriculum to teach conflict management to our young children. When a conflict arises, the teacher accompanies the child to the Peace Table, and with the teacher's guidance, the children work through their conflict through confession, repentance and restoration. GMA functions within the principles of Luke 6:31: "Do to other as you would have them do unto you." As the children grow in maturity, often times they are able to resolve conflict in this manner without the teacher's supervision. If this is the case, the teacher may ask the students about the outcome of the Peace Table encounter.

## **Discipline**

We expect all of our students to come to school able to follow our code of conduct.

## **Classroom Conduct**

We keep our hands to ourselves. (This includes legs, feet, etc.)

We use an inside voice and walking feet (when inside).

We listen to our friends and our teachers.

We speak from our heart. (No name-calling, threatening or making fun of others.)

We let the workers work. (We do not interrupt or distract others.)

We base our actions on Grace and Courtesy.

We exhibit truthfulness in all of our actions.

We show respect for lessons, teachers, self and others.

We complete our work with love.

We honor God in our work, conduct, language and relationships.

## **Playground Conduct**

We keep our hands to ourselves.

We play safely. (No scary, chasing games.)

Everyone is included.

The most important of our ground rules is the ability to keep our hands to ourselves. Children who are not able to do this may not be ready for a school environment, regardless of how bright they are. If this is a persistent issue with your child, we may not be able to accommodate continued enrollment.

## **Techniques**

Under no circumstances will corporal punishment be used at Grace Montessori Academy.

Grace Montessori Academy's approach to discipline models the Love and Logic methodology. The process is summarized as follows:

- We will present our code of conduct to the children and support their understanding of it.
- In cases of conflict we will institute:
  - Verbal Discipline with Redirection: The teacher will state to the child that their

choices are not acceptable and redirect the child to other choices whenever possible and/or explore with them their choices in terms of appropriateness and safety.

- Denial of privileges: When the child repeatedly misuses a lesson, the child loses the privilege of working on this lesson.
- Restitution: A teacher will encourage a child to make right the wrong committed either verbally or by actions.
- If the safety and well being of others is still threatened, or if the child is unwilling to reasonably work within classroom expectations, they will be temporarily removed from the group under the supervision of a teacher or assistant.
- If the child does not become calm or safe in a quiet area, or remains unreceptive to appropriate choices, the parent will be notified to pick up their child.

If this occurs on a regular basis, or if the child is regularly unsafe or inappropriate around other children or the physical environment, the child may be temporarily suspended from school for 1 to 3 days and a conference will be scheduled with the parents. During the first conference, the Head of School and parents will work on strategies to improve the classroom experience. If after a period of observation the situation has not improved and/or the child experiences another suspension, the parents and Head of School will meet to review the appropriateness of the environment for the child.

Grounds for suspension involve behavior that is cruel or unsafe, and/or disrespectful or disruptive to the child or others. Examples may include hitting, biting, or verbal abuse. When every effort has been made to help a child, but the behavior has not improved, or if the offense is of such serious magnitude, the Head of School may dismiss the student. The student is separated from the school for the remainder of the year. A dismissed student may apply for readmission, though acceptance is not guaranteed.

At any time, Grace Montessori Academy reserves the right to dismiss a child whose parents do not support our philosophies and approaches, or who does not appear to benefit from our program.

Guidelines for assistance with child behavioral issues are on file in the school office.

## **Dress**

### **Early Childhood and Kindergarten**

#### **Clothing**

Sturdy, practical clothing and shoes work best in the school environment. **The shoes should be ones the child can take on and off by themselves.**

Children do come into contact with mud, paint, food and other substances, so dressy (or brand-new) outfits are not recommended at school. Hats are only worn outside.

We go outside at least once a day. Please dress your child with all seasonally appropriate clothing for outdoor play. In warmer weather, we ask that all children come to school with

sunscreen already applied to exposed skin. Sandals are fine for outside, but no flip-flops, please. Sun hats are recommended. In colder weather, we ask that all children come with the appropriate clothing: hats, gloves, snow pants, jacket, and boots. **Please remember to dress children in clothes that they can easily handle with minimal assistance.**

We ask that all children bring “inside shoes” which they will change into once they have arrived at school.

**Please make sure you mark all personal belongings with the child’s name.**

## **Elementary**

Grace Montessori Academy has chosen a dress code policy for our elementary students.

All clothing must be neat, clean, mended and modest with an appropriate length and fit. Free dress days will happen occasionally through the year at the school’s discretion.

**Tops:** Solid color polo shirts, sweaters or oxford button downs

- Students may wear Grace T-shirts on Fridays and on field trips.
- Shirt logos no greater than one square inch

**Bottoms:** Khaki, tan or navy colored pants/slacks

- Shorts, skorts and Capri-style pants may be worn during warm autumn and spring seasons. Shorts must be a minimum finger-tip length and maximum knee length

**Dresses:** Khaki, tan or navy colored shift style jumpers or skirts

### **Shoes & Accessories:**

- Sport-style shoes (non-marking) are encouraged – especially on PE days. Shoes with laces must be tied.
- Jewelry should be subtle, age-appropriate and should not have any theme that is considered gothic.
- Make-up must be age-appropriate and only in subtle, natural shades.

### **Not allowed:**

- Sleeveless shirts
- Blue jean or denim pants
- Sweatpants
- Baggy style or athletic shorts
- High heel shoes
- Hats may not be worn indoors.

The Head of School reserves the right to determine what is appropriate.

Resources for purchasing dress code compliant items:  
JCPenney, Gap, Dillards, Target, Lands End, Old Navy, Aeropostale

### **FIELD TRIPS**

Grace Montessori Academy will conduct field trips throughout the school year. A permission form will be provided in advance to all parents and must be returned before the child is permitted to attend the trip. Transportation for field trips will be provided by First Student Busing Service.

In compliance with Montana State Law children six years old and under or those weighing less than 60 pounds must be in a child protective restraint within in an automobile. A child protective restraint is an approved car seat or booster seat.

### **GUESTS**

Students may invite extended family to visit the school when prior permission is obtained from the Head of School. All visitors must report to the office for check-in. Small guests must be watched carefully by the family and not be allowed to disrupt the working environment. We discourage their presence on the playground only for safety reasons.

### **ILLNESS**

**A child who is not feeling well or has obvious symptoms of illness should not be brought to school. Requesting that the child be kept from outdoor play at school is not an acceptable solution. *A child, who is not well enough to go out during our regular outside times, is not well enough to attend school. When your child has a fever of 100 degrees, diarrhea or has been vomiting please keep him/her home until free from these symptoms for at least 24 hours.***

The Health Department requires that all children returning to school after a contagious illness, or after leaving school because of an illness, be accompanied by a note from the parent or physician stating that the child has been sick and is now well. These notes will be kept in our permanent files.

If a child becomes ill during school hours, or indicates a physical inability to participate, you or your emergency referrals will be contacted. Please notify the faculty if your child has contracted a contagious illness. We will be alert to the symptoms in the other children and let parents know if there is a communicable illness present.

If your child requires medication during school hours, we will need your physician to fill out a Medication form, which is on file at the school. Medication needs to be brought to school in the original bottle. We will record the times and dosage given at school. Teachers cannot administer non-prescription medicine such as cough syrup or Tylenol unless they receive written instructions from the parent and it is handed to a teacher in its original bottle or packaging. If your child has a cough, please do not send cough drops. We consider cough drops to be easily confused as candy, as well as a choking hazard and therefore inappropriate and unsafe in the classroom.

### **Guidelines for the exclusion of Ill and Infected Children**

It is sometimes difficult to determine when to send a child to school if an illness is suspected. We hope that the following will help you make this determination.

The parent or legal guardian, or other persons authorized by the parent will be notified immediately when a child has a sign or symptom requiring exclusion from the school as described below:

- The illness prevents the child from participating comfortably in school activities;
- The illness results in a greater care need than the faculty can provide without compromising the health and safety of the other children; or
- The child has any of the following conditions:
  - Temperature; oral temperature of 100° or greater; ear/armpit temperature of 101° or greater accompanied by behavior changes or other signs and symptoms of illness until medical evaluation indicates inclusion in the school.
  - Symptoms and signs of severe illness such as unusual lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, irritability, persistent crying, difficult breathing, wheezing or other unusual signs such as nasal discharge green or white, until medical evaluation indicates inclusion.
  - Unspecified respiratory illness, severely ill children with the common cold, croup, bronchitis, pneumonia, otitis media.
  - Diarrhea.
  - Vomiting illness (two or more episodes of vomiting in the previous 24 hours) until vomiting resolves.
  - Mouth sore with drooling, unless health care provider or health official determines the condition is non-infectious.
  - Rash with fever or behavior change, until health care provider determines that these symptoms do not indicate a communicable disease.
  - Purulent conjunctivitis (defined as pink or red conjunctiva with white or yellow discharge) until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
  - Scabies, head lice or other infestations, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
  - Impetigo, until 24 hours after treatment has been initiated.
  - Strep throat or other streptococcal infection, until 24 hours after antibiotic treatment and cessation of fever.
  - Chicken pox, until 6 days after onset of rash or until all sores have dried and crusted.

- Pertussis, until 5 days of appropriate antibiotic treatment has been completed to prevent infection.
- Mumps, until 9 days after onset of parotid gland swelling.
- Measles, until 6 days after onset of rash.
- Rubella, until 6 days after onset of rash.
- Herpetic gingivostomatitis, Herpes simplex, who cannot control their secretion.
- Flu, until 24 hours after they no longer have a fever, or signs of a fever, without the use of fever-reducing medicines. They should stay home even if they are using antiviral drugs. GMA will institute the most current CDC recommendations with respect to flu outbreaks.

## **Immunization Forms**

1. Immunization forms need to be completed and in the child's personal file before the child can start school.
2. The 3<sup>rd</sup> week of September, the administrator will check all student files to make sure that the IMMUNIZATION FORMS are current and up to date. If a form is missing, one will be sent to the parents to be completed and returned.
3. If a student is exempted for personal beliefs or has a medical exemption, the student shall be considered as having met all requirements with a signed document stating beliefs and waiver.

## INJURY

A certain number of minor scrapes and bumps are to be expected as children grow in their knowledge of the physical world and their own capacities. We do our best to maintain playgrounds and classrooms in a safe condition. Standard first aid procedures include applying ice to bumps and washing out cuts and scrapes with soap and water, then applying Band-Aids as necessary. We will notify parents of any bumps to the head through a “Band-Aid Report” you can find in your child’s backpack.

In case of more serious injury, your child’s physician will be called for recommendations of treatment and parents will be notified. It is imperative that we have you complete the Health and Medical Form for your child so we have this important information.

## LOST AND FOUND

Unlabeled personal items found in and around the building will be taken to the lost and found basket inside the school. Valuable items should not be brought to school. **Please label all of your child’s belongings.**

## LUNCHES

If your child is scheduled to attend our all day program, s/he will bring a lunch from home. If a child forgets their lunch, the school will provide a wholesome lunch and charge the parent \$3.00.

We have observed a direct correlation between a child’s capacity to learn, his mood (aggressiveness, distractibility, whining, etc.) and what s/he eats for breakfast, snack, and lunch. Breakfast is the most important meal of the day for your child. Food consumed at breakfast greatly affects the learning process and the ability of your child to assimilate the education being provided. It is, therefore, incumbent upon you to see that your child eats a protein-filled breakfast before he comes to school. This might include eggs, meat, whole wheat bread, peanut butter, cheese, etc. Grace Montessori Academy provides a wholesome mid-morning snack of a complex carbohydrate and/or protein and fruit with water, milk or juice. Please provide a fresh nutritious lunch for your child each day.

Food is not to be left in lockers to be re-used by children over a period of days. Lunches should include both a protein source, and a fruit or a vegetable (or both). **Please, no candy, “fun fruits”, fruit roll-ups, Gatorade or soda-pop in children’s lunches.**

Do not include medicine of any kind – including herbal medicines or vitamins – in your child’s lunchbox. Please observe the policy regarding these items outlined under “Illness and Medication”. We will remove any of the above items and send them home with a note should

they be found in a child's lunch.

We are not able to accommodate lunches that require refrigeration or reheating. Our refrigerator space is limited and reheating meals is very time consuming and takes our staff away from the children. Please remember to pack appropriate eating utensils and a napkin.

### **Lunch Ideas:**

- Sandwich on whole grain bread, cut-up fruit, carrots, milk or vegetable juice.
- Warm or cold pasta, spaghetti, macaroni and cheese or beans in a small thermos, salad with dressing, vegetable, cut-up fruit and milk.
- Brown rice, a protein source and vegetables fried in olive oil, fruit, and bottled water.
- A protein source, mashed potatoes or corn, butter, cherry tomatoes, and fruit.
- Plain yogurt sweetened with fruit or a touch of maple syrup, whole grain bread with butter, whole grain crackers with cream cheese, and milk or water.

### **Milk Program**

Grace Montessori Academy has an optional milk program that you are welcome to sign-up up for upon registration. Milk is served during lunch time only. A one time yearly payment will be made in the fall.

## **PARENT VOLUNTEERS**

### **Parent Volunteers**

The success of Grace Montessori Academy relies on the extensive involvement of our parents. Volunteering is a pertinent factor in GMA providing high quality education at a low cost. To help spur this effort, families are required to contribute five hours of volunteering per semester. This can be completed through work days, maintenance, teacher support tasks, recess and lunch duty, etc. The parents are responsible for letting the office know that they are volunteering. If a family does not fulfill this duty by the end of each semester a \$20 per hour charge will be assessed for every uncompleted hour.

There are many ways that parents can volunteer. Please see the supplementary Volunteer Handbook for additional ways to get involved.

- Lunch time help: These volunteers, on a weekly basis for a 1 hour block of time, monitor our students during lunch. This also includes clean-up of the kitchen area following lunch.
- Library Support: These volunteers help assist in logging books and collecting books for the library.
- Speakers: Parents with a gift of teaching or speaking are invited to volunteer to speak to classes about their careers or areas of interest.
- Recess help: To monitor the children during recess time for a 45 minute block of time.
- Materials Making: Assist teacher in creating materials for classroom use.
- Special Events/Field Trips: Chaperoning of field trips.

## **Donations**

Grace Montessori Academy is a not-for-profit school (501c3). Financial sustenance for the school comes primarily from tuition fees paid by parents. However, approximately 6% - 10% of our annual income is derived from fundraising programs throughout the year. We gratefully accept any and all donations. Any donation given to the school is tax deductible. We will periodically distribute a wish list for classroom or playground materials, office equipment, building and grounds needs or other supplies through the newsletter.

## **PHOTOGRAPHY AND PUBLICITY**

Grace Montessori Academy students are photographed on a regular basis. These photos are primarily used for internal use, but may be used to promote the school. Each family is given a Permission Form seeking permission for the school to utilize these photos in this manner. Make sure you return this form to the office so we may respect your desires.

## **SPECIAL EVENTS**

### **Parent Orientation**

Grace Montessori will be conducting an orientation to get parents familiarized with teacher and the school policies and procedures.

### **Fall Social**

This is our fall open house where parents can come and get acquainted with their child's learning environment and each other. It is a good time to network with other families! Our teachers are available to answer any questions you may have about our Christian Montessori Method.

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are special and at Grace Montessori Academy we celebrate them. Birthday celebration takes place at the circle.

We ask that you bring one picture showing each year of the child's life (We will return them) which represents their individual timeline. The child is asked to carry a globe around a lit candle which represents the sun, the center of our universe. S/he carries the globe around the sun the number of years they have lived. (4 years old=4 orbits) When a parent is able to join us, they help with this part of the celebration.

Important: Please let us know if we need to celebrate on a different day than your child's actual birthday, or what day you would like to celebrate if your child birthday falls on a weekend or holiday. Please contact us if you plan to bring a birthday treat or join us for the celebration. If you are not comfortable with our birthday celebration procedures, please notify us.

### **Thanksgiving Food Drive**

The elementary children organize a food drive for the Billings Food Bank. Notes will be sent home asking for donations from all the families of GMA.

### **The Thanksgiving Harvest Feast**

This may take place on the Tuesday before Thanksgiving. The Elementary students, with the help of parents, prepare a Thanksgiving Feast for our school. It is a wonderful time to share our thanks with our schoolmates. The students have time to socialize with friends while enjoying delicious food the children are proud to have prepared. Following the feast, classes resume as usual. This is not an early dismissal day. Parent Volunteer help will be solicited for this event.

### **Christmas Celebration**

Grace Montessori Academy will be conducting a Christmas program to celebrate the birth of our Savior Jesus Christ.

### **Valentine's Day**

Our celebration of Valentine's Day within the Grace Montessori Academy classroom is a wonderful experience that further generates the feeling of community, friendship, and the ability to give/share. It is a special time when we celebrate each other and each of our unique qualities, which in turn enhances the child's self esteem and contributes to his social skills development.

Class rosters are distributed to aid students in addressing valentines to all classmates. The party includes opening and reading each valentine, followed by a snack. It has been customary for the teachers to assist each child in making a valentine for their parents/family.

### **Other Celebrations**

Grace Montessori Academy may have other celebrations throughout the year, but we will let families know in advance.

### **The Last Day of School**

On the last day of school all the children get together for games and activities.

## **PROGRAM DESCRIPTION**

### **Montessori Education**

Dr. Maria Montessori, the first woman doctor in Italy, originated the Montessori approach to education in the early 1900's. Her method of teaching centers on the needs of the whole child using hands-on materials and cultural activities. She believed that young children are constantly learning through the *absorbent mind* and adults can help nurture the child's natural interests and perceptions through the *prepared environment*. The teachers of Grace Montessori Academy guide and encourage each child through one on one lesson presentation, rather than only through regimenting and directing the group as unit. The Montessori materials challenge the child to do his/her best and to be successful in completing a task. Joy of accomplishment and self-esteem are some of the rewards.

The unique cycle of learning provided at Grace Montessori Academy is designed to take advantage of the child's *sensitive periods* that occur between the ages of three-six, six-nine and nine- twelve when s/he can absorb information and profound life understandings from a specifically ordered and enriched environment. Grace Montessori Academy creates a Christian,

nurturing atmosphere where each child is treated with sensitivity, honesty and respect.

In the early childhood class, the children learn to take responsibility for themselves and for each other. They learn to get along with children of different ages and abilities, to respect each other's work and work space, and to treat each other with courtesy. The classroom becomes a thriving community where children are treated with respect and dignity and want to treat others with the same respect and dignity.

The elementary-aged child is in a period of heightened social development, so s/he needs group experiences. Multi-aged groupings mean more small-group options relative to ability and interest. These children are also extremely curious about the world around them and mechanics of how things work.

### **EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAM**

“To Grow in Wisdom and Stature before God and Men” (Luke 2:52)

Grace Montessori Academy is dedicated to helping children “grow in wisdom and stature before God and men.” We interweave three essential components in order to work towards this goal:

- The Montessori Method
- Scriptures
- An active program of parent education and participation

#### **The Prepared Environment**

The prepared environment is Maria Montessori's concept that the classroom environment can be designed to facilitate independent learning and exploration by the child. The Montessori classroom invites activity and participation appropriate to each child's age and maturity. It is active yet calm. Here, the child experiences a blend of freedom and discipline in an orderly space designed to meet his needs.

#### **Practical Life Skills**

The Practical Life exercises found on the pink shelves are an essential part of the Montessori curriculum. The purpose of Practical Life is to provide the child with the opportunity to develop a sense of independence. The teacher prepares the environment in such a way as to entice and excite the child. Lessons are set up individually on trays and are regularly rotated with new and/or developmentally higher tasks. The child learns basic fundamental activities such as: care of self, grace and courtesy, control of movement, care for the environment, basic nutrition and food preparation, and order. This area also promotes the fine motor skills in preparation for writing. The development of hand coordination also assists in conceptual development and the materials are designed to encourage independent thinking, logic, problem solving skills and an understanding of sequence, order and natural limits. The young child is given the opportunity to be spontaneous while fulfilling his natural curiosities and developing self-esteem and self-confidence.

#### **Sensorial Skills**

The sensorial area found on the peach shelves consists of Montessori's materials that are

designed to help the child sort out the many varied impressions perceived by the senses. The two functional concepts of the sensorial materials are: how to make careful distinctions between similar and different objects; and how to grade a set of similar objects that differ in a regular and measurable way from the greatest to the least degree. These materials are self-correcting, allowing the child to see the problem without being shown by an adult. The child gains visual and muscular knowledge of geometric forms, leading to an awareness of form in the environment, with use of the geometric cabinet, geometric solids, constructive triangles, and binomial and trinomial cubes. The materials give our students a foundation for the later study of mathematics and geometry.

Summary of the purposes of the Sensorial Work:

- Develop and refine senses
- Classify and categorize
- Develop mathematical base
- Develop order, coordination, visual perception, and independence
- Develop conceptual thinking
- Prepare indirectly for language and math development
- Develop aesthetic sense of beauty and harmony

### **Language Skills**

The language avenue found on the blue shelves has a wide range of activities to develop pre-reading skills. Language begins with nomenclature exercises that teach the names of things in the child's everyday environment. These naming exercises focus on the correct pronunciation of words and segue into many ear-training exercises and lessons that prepare the child for a phonetic foundation to reading. Children spend time matching objects, then picture cards to strengthen the visual discrimination skill necessary to recognize letter symbols when reading. They trace letter shapes using Montessori's sandpaper letters while repeating the letter sound, thus using a highly successful multi-sensory approach to letter recognition and proper letter formation. Once the children recognize their basic phonic sounds, they begin putting three letter words together. The program prepares the child to begin simple phonetic reading from Bob Books and A-Z Readers. The language program provides the child with the concrete foundation for all further language development. At GMA, phonemic and phonological awareness skills are strongly emphasized through a variety of materials and activities. We also introduce basic grammar lessons with fun, concrete and attractive material. Our program believes in bringing classical literature and poetry into the classroom by reading aloud stories from the Junior Great Books Series and other original sources of beautiful literature.

### **Math Skills**

The Montessori math materials found on the yellow shelves provide beautiful lessons that move from the concrete to the abstract in teaching math concepts. We start by introducing quantity, then the symbol and finally the association between quantity and symbol. Mathematics is taught by giving the child objects to hold, count and manipulate. In small sequential steps, each learner develops a mathematical mind. These activities help the children learn fundamentals of the four mathematical operations (simple addition, subtraction, multiplication and division), as well as measurement, fractions, time telling and exercises in the value of money to ensure a solid mathematics foundation. The children do not merely learn to count; they are also able to visualize the whole structure of our numeration system.

### **Science and Nature Skills**

The science program covers topics in Biology, Botany, and Zoology. Included are the studies of: living things and how they are affected by the environment, plant and animal life, health practices, and nutrition.

In order to stimulate their minds and curiosity as well as to prove the basic concepts of various disciplines of science, the students are given the opportunity to conduct experiments and utilize many hands on materials.

### **History and Geography**

In geography, students learn about the solar system, land and water forms, globes, maps, flags and multicultural awareness. In history, they will learn time, calendar, seasons and personal family history. The children gain an awareness of the world around them by exploring other countries, customs, food, music, climate, language and animals. This helps raise their consciousness about other people, to gain an understanding and tolerance, and therefore compassion for all the people in the world.

### **Art and Music**

Art and music are essential extensions of the sensorial and language activities. Music classes will be conducted weekly by a Certified Music teacher employed by the school. The art curriculum exposes children to all forms of art expression. This introduction includes studies of pictures by famous artists through our “Child Size Masterpieces” curriculum.

### **Bible**

Our Bible curriculum is “God’s Family.” We focus on God’s providential work through history, emphasizing Christian values and encouraging each child’s personal relationship with God on a daily basis. The children have weekly Bible lessons with basic scripture memorization. Parable boxes are available for the children to explore which will help reinforce the lessons being taught. We apply Bible truths in every subject.

### **Spanish**

The children are introduced to basic conversational Spanish that includes numbers, colors, and basic phrases through the Montessori Spanish Curriculum. Lessons are given weekly and reinforced throughout the week.

### **Physical Education**

Outdoor time with a climber, swings, and equipment to develop gross motor skills is scheduled daily. The time spent outdoors is important to develop your child’s social and physical skills. The children also engage in care of the outdoors through planting flowers and tending to a small garden. Our Kindergarten and Elementary students have a formal PE program weekly

### **Goals for Children Leaving the 3-6 Environment**

#### **Spiritual Formation**

- Develop a love for Christ that creates a desire in the child to become disciples and share

this love with others.

### **Personal Skills and Qualities**

- Control of body
- Control of movement and voice level in the classroom
  - ability to walk in the classroom
  - ability to sit for a lesson
  - ability to keep hands to self
- Ability to concentrate with minimal distraction while engaged in work
- Ability to follow directions from the teacher
- Ability to communicate appropriately
  - raising hand
  - waiting politely
  - waiting your turn
- Ability to care for self
  - hand washing
  - dressing oneself
  - packing of own schoolbag

### **Work Habits**

- Enjoyment of work
- Ability to engage in work with minimal distractions
- Concentration and order in work
- Ability to complete work cycle
  - choosing work independently
  - completing work
  - fulfilling purpose of the work
  - putting work away beautifully

### **Character Development**

- Grace and Courtesy: exercise of good manners and understanding of when to do so
- Respect for others (teachers and peers)
- Respect for the environment and the materials in it
- Spirit of helpfulness towards peers
- Self-respect and self-discipline
  - pride in work
  - pride in environment
  - self-confidence
- Love of Learning
- Love of Order

### **Language Skills**

- Phonemic awareness: ability to segment sounds
- Reading phonetic readers

- Rhyming
- Recognition of basic sight words
- Knowledge of the phonetic sounds and names of the letters of the alphabet
- Movable Alphabet: ability to produce phonetic phrases when writing with movable alphabet
- Phonograms- sh/ch/th, silent e, qu: read and use with movable alphabet
- Introduction to grammar symbols for noun, article, adjective, and verb
- Blending words in writing and reading

### **Handwriting Skills**

- Proper pencil grip
- Able to write first and last name in d'nealian, using capital letters where appropriate
- Able to write all letters of the alphabet in cursive with correct formation
- Able to connect letters to compose words
- Able to correctly form numbers

### **Math Concepts**

- Recognition of numbers to 50: quantity, symbol and sequence
- Linear counting to 100
- Bank Game: concept of exchanging, addition and multiplication, introduction to subtraction and division
- Stamp game: introduction to all four operations
- Beginning memorization of addition facts

### **Classroom Schedule**

7:30 – 8:30	Early drop off (Must be registered for this service.) Gates will be opened.
8:15 - 8:30	Regular drop off
8:30 – 8:45	Morning Circle: Greetings, calendar, scripture, group lessons
8:45 – 11:10	Work Period: children choose materials independently and teachers present lessons. Music, Spanish and Second Step take place during this period at a regularly scheduled time.
11:15 – 11:45	Outside time have returned to the classroom
11:45 – 12:00	Gates opened. Preparation for dismissal
12:00 –12:15	Dismissal of morning students
12:00 –12:30	Lunch for all day students
12:35- 1:00	Quiet Reading time; rest for nappers
1:00 – 2:45	Work Period and brief recess time
2:45 – 3:00	Dismissal of all day students
3:00 – 4:00	After School care

## **ELEMENTARY PROGRAM**

“To Grow in Wisdom and Stature Before God and Men” (Luke 2:52)

Grace Montessori Academy is dedicated to helping children “grow in wisdom and stature before God and men.” We interweave three essential components in order to work towards this goal:

- The Montessori Method
- Scriptures
- An active program of parent education and participation

\*Portions of this description of the Montessori curriculum are reprinted with permission from NAMTA booklet: "What is Montessori Elementary?" edited by David Kahn.

#### The Montessori Elementary Teacher: An Enlightened Generalist

Just as in early childhood, a child in Montessori elementary has the same teacher for three years. The trained professional is an “enlightened generalist”, with knowledge deep enough to know the fascinating details of each of the disciplines and broad enough to connect those details into a “big picture” across the disciplines. S/he is also fully trained in the principles of child development.

A teacher who has a child for all subjects for three years gains an intimate knowledge of the child. The teacher is keenly tuned into the unique personality of each child. This sensitivity permits the teacher to direct each child into areas of natural interest.

#### The Prepared Environment

A spacious classroom serves our students. An open floor plan leads to a shared common room for research and collaborative work. Like all Montessori rooms, the elementary is divided into 3 age groups: lower elementary consisting of grades 1-3; and upper elementary consisting of grades 3-6. This encourages broad social development.

The elementary-aged child is moving from an understanding of the physical world to an understanding of abstract concepts. Montessori provides diverse and creative passages to abstraction. The prepared environment provides the “keys” of each discipline in a manner that meets the elementary child’s needs for inspiration as well as order. Materials in the academic disciplines (including mathematics, grammar, reading, writing, geometry, botany, zoology, and geography) enable the child to not only learn skills and concepts, but to experience the inherent beauty and order of each of these disciplines.

#### An Integrated Curriculum: Capturing the Imagination

Research has shown that engaging the child’s imagination enhances the learning process. Research also indicates that a focus on grand, interconnected concepts facilitates learning. This research confirms why the Montessori approach has enabled elementary children to learn so well over the years.

In the elementary class, an integrated curriculum activates the child’s imagination and immerses him in a grand vision of the universe. This is done through the Great Lessons.

The Great Lessons, a series of five stories, present broad themes from natural and human history. These inspire the child and prompt him to ask questions: I wonder how many solar systems there are; I wonder what color the first ocean was; I wonder ... “The Story of Plants and Animals”, “The Story of Writing”, “The Story of Numbers” – within the context of these great themes, the child studies the details of the disciplines: science, mathematics, social studies, and language. The story provides the overview; the children then investigate the disciplines in detail. Because of the unifying thread of the Great Lessons, no subject is studied in isolation from the others. Knowledge is intertwined even though discrete in its parts.

Montessori’s excellent learning materials and advanced curriculum ensure a solid mastery of basic skills. The Great Lessons provide the child with the opportunity to be an active learner who puts his skills to use as he pursues his desire for meaningful knowledge. In addition, children will participate in their own “going out” excursions which will further enhance classroom learning.

### **Sense of Gratitude and Responsibility**

The Great Lessons inspire a sense of gratitude in the child. God has provided innumerable gifts through the natural world, through the history of human civilizations, and through the history of salvation. Recognizing these, the child's natural response is one of gratitude for all that we have inherited. At the same time, the child develops a sense that he, too, has a responsibility to contribute to the continuing stream of human progress. Thus Montessori elementary experience provides the foundations for life commitment through moral and social responsibility.

Our lower elementary language program supplements the core Montessori language curriculum with high-quality programs that build solid literacy skills in our students. **The Spell to Write and Read Method** is a comprehensive approach to teaching spelling and reading. It provides them with the tools to recognize the 70 phonograms and 29 spelling rules for analyzing our language.

Our writing program, “**Excellence in Writing: Structure and Style**” begins in our second semester. Through systematic instruction and practice, students gain strong skills in the structure of writing clear paragraphs and cohesive reports.

The elementary enrichment programs include basic Latin, Bible Lessons, Health and Physical Education, and Music.

### **Beyond the Prepared Environment: Going Out**

The “going out” of the Montessori elementary student is based on individual or small-group interest in extensions of classroom study: a walk to a park; a visit to the art museum or zoo; a visit to a retirement home; or cleaning up the environment. These projects build the child’s sense of social purpose and moral responsibility.

### **A Complete Day of Learning**

Our teacher/student ratios are low: not more than 10: 1. Students start their day in Circle Time, where they verbalize Commitments as to what they are going to do that day. We then have a 3 hour uninterrupted Work Time, during which the children independently manage their time, utilizing their Contracts to complete lessons in Math, Language, Bible, Geography, History, Botany, Zoology, Science, and Cultural, and Reading Groups. After lunch, a brief period for quiet reading and play, we then have 1 ½ hours for Cultural and Extracurricular activities (Latin, Music, Art, Science, PE) and Checkout with the Teachers. Checkout allows us to discuss the student's progress that day and help in developing the child's time management skills while providing our Teachers with One on One time with each student daily. After Cleanup Jobs and the End of the Day Circle, the student's school day is complete.

A **detailed curriculum outline** is available upon request. Please check with your child's teacher.