



FAMILY HANDBOOK 2026–2027

“Growing independence, curiosity, and community through
Montessori education.”

SECTION 1 — WELCOME & SCHOOL OVERVIEW

Welcome Letter

Dear FMS Families,

Welcome to the 2026–2027 school year at Fayetteville Montessori School. We are honored that you have entrusted us with your child’s education and well-being. At FMS, we believe deeply in the Montessori approach, which values independence, curiosity, individuality, and respect for the whole child. Our school strives to create a warm, inclusive environment where children can confidently explore, grow, and thrive.

This handbook has been carefully prepared to guide you through our school’s philosophies, procedures, and expectations. It reflects Arkansas DHS Child Care Licensing requirements, national Montessori standards, and the values that define our school community. We hope it serves as a clear, supportive resource throughout your family’s time with us.

We are grateful to begin another year of meaningful learning, joy-filled discovery, and partnership with each of you. Thank you for being part of the FMS family.

Warmly,

Victoria Butler

Founder

Fayetteville Montessori School

Emily Johnston

Head of School

Fayetteville Montessori School

Our Mission

Fayetteville Montessori School cultivates each child's natural curiosity, independence, and love of learning through authentic Montessori practices. We provide a supportive, inclusive, and developmentally grounded environment that nurtures academic growth, emotional well-being, and respect for oneself, others, and the world.

Our Vision

To empower children to become capable, compassionate, confident lifelong learners through Montessori education that fosters independence, resilience, creativity, and global awareness.

Core Values

- Respect — for self, others, and the environment
 - Independence — trusting children to do meaningful work
 - Community — partnerships among families, students, faculty
 - Curiosity — fostering a love of discovery and exploration
 - Prepared Environment — thoughtfully designed spaces for success
 - Safety — ensuring the physical and emotional well-being of all children
-

Montessori Philosophy: What Guides Our Work

The Montessori method—developed by Dr. Maria Montessori—recognizes that children learn best in environments that follow their developmental rhythms, honor their independence, and provide purposeful, hands-on materials.

Key Principles of Montessori Education

- 1. The Whole Child:** Montessori education nurtures academic, social, emotional, and physical development.
 - 2. Independence & Confidence:** Children engage in tasks that foster self-reliance and build lasting confidence.
 - 3. Prepared Environment:** Classrooms are intentionally arranged to support concentration, choice, and movement.
 - 4. Multi-Age Communities:** Children learn collaboratively in multi-year age spans, allowing younger students to learn from older peers and older children to develop leadership.
 - 5. The Role of the Montessori Guide:** Teachers observe, support, and prepare the environment—rather than direct every action. Their goal is to connect each child with meaningful work at the right developmental moment.
-

History of Fayetteville Montessori School

Fayetteville Montessori School was founded in 1974 with the mission of providing a joyful, developmentally aligned, and academically rich Montessori environment for families in Northwest Arkansas. Over the years, the school has grown from a small early childhood program to a thriving community serving infants through elementary students. What has remained constant is our commitment to Montessori principles, our belief in children's potential, and our dedication to strong school–family partnerships.

Founder & Executive Mentor: Victoria Butler

Victoria Butler, the Founder and Executive Montessori Mentor of FMS, established the school in 1974. Her vision has guided the development of:

- Multi-age Montessori classrooms
- Natural outdoor environments
- Montessori teacher development pathways
- Community involvement and collaboration

Today, she continues to shape the school's program fidelity, long-term planning, administrative leadership, and educational excellence.

Programs Offered at FMS

Infant Program (0–12 months)

A peaceful, nurturing environment designed for bonding, motor development, language exposure, and exploration. Emphasis includes:

- Consistent caregivers
- Safe sleep practices
- Developmentally appropriate materials
- Individualized routines

Children must be able to take a bottle before starting our infant program.

Toddler and Early Primary Programs (12–36 months)

A classroom designed to support:

- Language development
- Gross and fine motor coordination
- Toileting readiness and learning
- Practical life independence
- Grace and courtesy lessons

- Parallel play evolving into cooperative interactions

Children must be weaned from bottles and able to eat table food before starting our Toddler program.

Children must be walking to participate in our Early Primary Program.

Primary Program (2.5–5+ years)

A robust, three-year cycle that builds:

- Concentration
- Independence
- Academic foundations in math, language, and cultural studies
- Practical life mastery
- Sensory refinement
- Social-emotional skills

Children must be fully toilet independent to participate in our Primary Program.

Elementary Program

Based on the Montessori Cosmic Curriculum, elementary students engage in:

- Research projects
- Collaborative work
- Hands-on science and cultural studies
- Geometry, grammar, and advanced math extensions
- Outdoor exploration
- Community responsibility

What Makes Montessori Education Unique

Freedom Within Limits: Children choose work that engages their curiosity while learning to follow classroom expectations and routines.

Intrinsic Motivation: Rather than rewards or punishments, Montessori environments encourage children to find joy and purpose in meaningful work.

Deep Concentration: Long, uninterrupted work periods help children develop essential attention and problem-solving skills.

Hands-On, Concrete Learning: Manipulatives allow children to explore abstract concepts concretely before moving to symbolic work.

Respectful Community: Through grace and courtesy lessons, children learn empathy, communication, conflict resolution, and collaboration.

How Families Can Support Montessori at Home

- Encourage independence in daily routines
- Offer choices when appropriate
- Maintain consistent routines and sleep schedules
- Limit screen time during the school week
- Use respectful, calm language
- Allow children space to struggle, practice, and master skills
- Foster curiosity through nature, books, and hands-on experiences

SECTION 2 — GOVERNANCE, LEADERSHIP & SCHOOL STRUCTURE

Fayetteville Montessori School is committed to providing a safe, engaging, and developmentally aligned environment supported by strong leadership, qualified educators, and collaborative systems. This section outlines how FMS is governed and how families can understand the structure that supports their children every day.

2.1 — Governance Philosophy

Our governance model is built on three pillars:

1. Mission-Driven Leadership

Every decision—from curriculum choices to safety protocols—is grounded in our mission to foster independence, curiosity, and a love of learning.

2. Shared Responsibility

Leadership, teachers, and families work together to support children’s developmental needs.

3. Transparency & Consistency

Clear communication, accessible policies, and predictable procedures help maintain a strong and trusting school community.

2.2 — Roles Within School Leadership

Effective school operations require a team of leaders who work collaboratively. Each role is distinct yet interconnected, ensuring that the needs of students, staff, and families are met.

Founder & Executive Montessori Mentor

Victoria Butler

As the founder of FMS, Victoria's vision and expertise remain core to the school's identity and long-term planning.

Her Role Includes:

- Ensuring Montessori authenticity across all classrooms
- Guiding leadership development
- Supporting new staff in Montessori philosophy
- Advising on long-term strategy and campus evolution
- Acting as a historical and philosophical anchor for the school

Her ongoing mentorship ensures that FMS remains aligned with best practices in Montessori education.

Head of School

The Head of School serves as the instructional, cultural, and operational leader at FMS.

Primary Responsibilities

- Academic leadership and Montessori program fidelity
- Oversight of day-to-day operations
- Licensing compliance and state reporting
- Faculty development, evaluations, and supervision
- Admissions decisions and classroom placement oversight
- Safety oversight, emergency communication, and crisis response
- Partnership with families and community stakeholders

The Head of School works closely with lead teachers, program coordinators, and administrative staff to ensure continuity of care across campus.

Director of Education & Curriculum

The Director of Education & Curriculum reports partners with the Head of School and serves as the academic leader of the school.

This role ensures Montessori fidelity, curriculum alignment, faculty development, and classroom-level regulatory compliance.

Primary Responsibilities:

- Ensuring Montessori authenticity and instructional consistency across programs
- Overseeing curriculum scope and sequence from Toddler through Elementary
- Conducting classroom observations and providing coaching feedback
- Supporting professional growth and improvement plans
- Guiding program transitions and supporting student placement decisions
- Maintaining classroom licensing documentation and monitoring required staff certifications
- Preparing academic documentation for licensing visits
- Reviewing supervision practices and incident documentation

This position strengthens instructional quality and protects the academic integrity of FMS.

People & Community Coordinator

The People & Community Coordinator focuses on faculty experience, onboarding, and school culture.

Primary Responsibilities

- Coordinating recruitment scheduling and candidate communication
- Facilitating new hire onboarding and orientation
- Supporting staff retention and engagement initiatives
- Coordinating faculty appreciation and community-building efforts
- Serving as a supportive liaison between staff and administration

This role serves as a bridge between staff needs, administrative processes, and program quality.

Admissions & Billing Coordinator

The Admissions & Billing Coordinator oversees family-facing administrative systems and financial processing support.

Primary Responsibilities

- Managing inquiries, tours, and enrollment processes
- Overseeing waitlists and supporting placement coordination
- Preparing and maintaining tuition agreements
- Managing billing cycles and payment tracking
- Communicating financial information with families
- Assisting with time tracking and payroll preparation

This position ensures a smooth admissions experience and clear financial systems.

Administrative Support Coordinator

The Administrative Support Coordinator ensures consistent and efficient campus operations.

Primary Responsibilities

- Maintaining safety documentation and compliance records
- Tracking emergency drills and incident reports
- Managing health and attendance records
- Supporting extended-care programming
- Supporting school technology systems
- Coordinating vendor services and campus maintenance needs
- Overseeing supply inventory and campus walkthroughs

This role supports operational consistency and a safe learning environment.

Program Leads & Classroom Lead Teachers

Lead teachers are Montessori educators responsible for:

Program Leads

- Supporting multiple classrooms in their age level
- Mentoring lead and assistant teachers
- Ensuring curriculum alignment and Montessori fidelity
- Helping with transitions, observations, and childcare licensing compliance
- Providing academic and developmental leadership

Lead Teachers

- Guiding children through the Montessori curriculum
 - Preparing the classroom environment
 - Observing and documenting each child's progress
 - Mentoring assistant teachers
 - Communicating with families professionally and effectively
-

2.3 — Teacher Qualifications & Professional Development

FMS is committed to hiring and developing educators who demonstrate:

- Montessori training or willingness to pursue credentials
- Strong understanding of child development
- Commitment to ongoing reflection and professionalism
- Alignment with the school's mission and values

Professional Development Includes:

- Montessori philosophy training
- Safety and CPR/First Aid certifications
- Annual harassment, child abuse prevention, and mandated reporter training
- Active supervision training
- Curriculum workshops and team collaborations

- Behavior support and trauma-informed care strategies

This ensures a unified, high-quality educational experience across campus.

2.4 — Ratios & Classroom Organization

FMS follows Arkansas DHS Child Care Licensing ratios and often exceeds them to ensure safety and individualized attention.

Minimum Required Ratios

- 0–12 months: 1:4
- 12–18 months: 1:5
- 18–30 months: 1:6
- 2.5–5 years: 1:12
- Elementary: 1:18

Each classroom has staffing designed to support the Montessori work cycle, individualized guidance, and active supervision.

2.5 — How Decisions Are Made at FMS

To ensure clarity and fairness:

Operational Decisions

Made by the Head of School in consultation with the Executive Mentor and Leadership Team.

Curriculum Decisions

Guided by Montessori best practices, lead teachers, and program leads.

Health & Safety Protocols

Follow state licensing, pediatric guidance, and school-wide risk assessments.

Family Partnership Decisions

Made collaboratively with the goal of supporting each child's well-being and honoring family needs within school parameters.

2.6 — Family Pathway for Questions or Concerns

We believe in transparent, respectful communication. When families have questions or concerns, they should follow this pathway:

Step 1 — Classroom Teacher

For instructional, social, or daily concerns.

Step 2 — Program Lead

If further guidance or consistency is needed.

Step 3 — Administration

People and Community Coordinator: For staffing, communication issues, or relational concerns:

Director of Education and Curriculum: For academic, programming, or faculty concerns

Step 4 — Head of School

For unresolved concerns, safety issues, or school-wide questions.

We are committed to listening, problem-solving, and maintaining strong relationships with our families.

SECTION 3 — ADMISSIONS, ENROLLMENT & FINANCIAL POLICIES

Fayetteville Montessori School is committed to maintaining a transparent, equitable, mission-aligned admissions and enrollment process. We strive to welcome families who value Montessori education and who are committed to partnering with the school in supporting their child's social, emotional, academic, and developmental growth.

This section outlines how families enter the FMS community and the responsibilities that come with enrollment.

3.1 — Admissions Philosophy

The admissions process at FMS is designed to ensure:

- A balanced classroom community
- Alignment between family expectations and Montessori values
- Support for each child's developmental needs
- A diverse and inclusive school culture

FMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, national origin, ethnicity, religion, gender, gender identity, sexual orientation, family structure, or disability, in accordance with federal and Arkansas state laws.

Our goal is to create classrooms where children thrive academically, socially, and emotionally while forming meaningful, long-term relationships.

3.2 — The Admission Process

Families typically move through the following steps:

1. Inquiry

Families reach out to request information, attend an open house, or schedule a tour.

2. Tour or Observation

We encourage prospective parents to observe classrooms to understand Montessori practices first-hand.

3. Application

Families submit an application and non-refundable application fee to be added to the waitlist.

4. Review

The Admissions and Leadership Teams evaluate:

- Age and developmental readiness
- Classroom composition needs
- Family alignment with Montessori philosophy
- Sibling and returning family priority

5. Offer of Enrollment

If a placement is available, families receive:

- Enrollment contract
- Tuition and fee schedule
- Required licensing forms
- Medical and immunization paperwork

6. Acceptance

Enrollment is secured once:

- The contract is signed
- Deposit and/or applicable fees are paid
- Required documents are submitted

Spots cannot be held without completed enrollment steps.

3.3 — Waitlist Policy

FMS maintains a year-round waitlist for all programs. Placement is based on multiple factors, including:

- Program-level availability
- Montessori age grouping needs
- Sibling priority
- Returning families
- Child's age alignment with program cycles
- Classroom balance and diversity

Families remain on the waitlist until a placement is offered or they request removal. Each new school year begins with a fresh evaluation of classroom composition.

3.4 — Classroom Placement Criteria

Classrooms are thoughtfully composed to support Montessori principles. Placement decisions are made by the Admissions Committee, which is a combination of teachers and administrators.

Placement factors include:

- Age and developmental readiness
- Enrollment cycle (Infant → Toddler → EP → Primary → Elementary)
- Individual learning needs
- Balance of ages, genders, personalities, and work styles
- Teacher recommendations (for returning students)
- Sibling considerations

Montessori Philosophy on Classroom Placement

Montessori classrooms operate as multi age cycles to support:

- Continuity of learning
- Social-emotional stability
- Deep teacher–child relationships
- Peer mentorship

For this reason, room changes occur at natural transitions when children reach age milestones and benchmarks for the next academic level.

3.5 — Tuition, Fees & Billing Policies

FMS is a year-round, tuition-based program. Tuition supports:

- Montessori educators
- Beautifully prepared classroom environments
- Quality materials and curriculum
- Safe buildings, playgrounds, and campus operations
- Faculty development and training
- Administrative and operational costs

Billing Schedule

- Tuition is annual and payable in monthly installments.
- Monthly payments are not month-to-month enrollment.
- Obligation is for the full academic year regardless of attendance.
- Tuition is due on the 1st of each month
- Late fees apply after the 5th of the month.

Non-Refundable Fees

- Application fee
- Enrollment fee
- Materials fee (if applicable)
- Late payment fees

Late Pick-Up Fees

Late pick-up fees are charged after 6:00 p.m., as outlined in the tuition agreement, to ensure FMS can staff extended-care responsibly.

Returned Payments

Returned checks or declined transactions incur processing fees.

3.6 — Financial Obligations

Upon signing the enrollment contract, families agree to:

- Pay tuition on the schedule selected
- Notify the school of billing concerns in a timely manner
- Maintain updated financial information on file
- Understand that continued enrollment depends on tuition compliance

Failure to meet financial obligations may result in:

- Inability to re-enroll
- Suspension of services
- Termination of enrollment

The school strives to work collaboratively with families to prevent disruptions whenever possible.

3.7 — Withdrawal & Early Termination of Enrollment

Standard Withdrawal (Non-Hardship)

Withdrawals are permitted only:

- At the end of the school year (end of May), or
- Prior to the start of the school year (mid-August)

Families must provide written notice at least forty-five (45) days prior to the student's last day in order for the enrollment deposit to be applied toward the final tuition

payment. Notices received within less than forty-five (45) days will result in forfeiture of the deposit.

Tuition obligations remain in effect through the end of the contracted school year.

Hardship Withdrawal – Life-Changing Events

The School recognizes that extraordinary life circumstances may require early withdrawal. A hardship withdrawal may be considered for documented life-changing events, including:

- Death of a parent or legal guardian
- Serious illness or hospitalization of the student or immediate family member
- Involuntary loss of employment (excluding voluntary resignation)
- Court-ordered custody changes
- Military transfer or required relocation
- Permanent relocation outside a seventy-five (75) mile radius of the School

Hardship withdrawal requests must:

- Be submitted in writing
- Include appropriate supporting documentation
- Provide thirty (30) days written notice, unless medically or legally impossible

If approved

- Tuition responsibility will conclude after the 30-day notice period
- The enrollment deposit will be forfeit and not applied to last month tuition
- No refunds are issued for tuition already paid or months attended

Hardship withdrawal approval is not automatic and is subject to review.

Hardship Review Committee

Hardship withdrawal requests are reviewed by a Hardship Review Committee, which may include the Head of School and designated administrative or leadership representatives.

The Committee reviews requests to ensure decisions are made fairly, consistently, and in alignment with School policy. Decisions of the Committee are final.

Non-Qualifying Reasons for Early Withdrawal

The following circumstances do not qualify for hardship withdrawal consideration:

- Dissatisfaction with classroom placement, staffing, or program changes
- Schedule changes or preference for another school
- Voluntary job resignation
- Extended travel or vacations
- Programmatic, behavioral, or disciplinary matters addressed through School processes

School-Initiated Withdrawal

Though rare, FMS may initiate withdrawal when:

- Safety cannot be maintained despite interventions
- A child's needs exceed the school's ability to support
- Families do not participate in required support meetings
- Tuition obligations are not met
- Repeated policy violations occur
- Family behavior jeopardizes community safety or partnership

Every effort is made to resolve concerns before withdrawal is considered.

3.8 — Custody Documentation & Legal Orders

To support children's safety and consistency, the school must receive:

- Court-ordered custody agreements
- Restraining orders
- Visitation schedules
- Any updates to legal documentation

FMS cannot enforce any custody or visitation restrictions without legal documents on file.

Parents must ensure the school receives the most recent and accurate documentation.

3.9 — Re-Enrollment

Each spring, current families are invited to re-enroll for the upcoming school year.

Priority Order:

1. Returning students
2. Siblings of currently enrolled students
3. Waitlisted applicants

Re-enrollment is only guaranteed if:

- Tuition accounts are current
 - Families remain in good standing
 - Placement is developmentally appropriate for the next cycle
-

3.10 — Annual School Calendar

The school provides a detailed calendar outlining:

- First and last days of school
- Family events and parent education nights
- Holidays, Closures, and Early Dismissals
- Professional development days

- Parent Teacher Conferences

This calendar helps families plan ahead and support consistent attendance.

SECTION 4 — DAILY OPERATIONS & ATTENDANCE

Fayetteville Montessori School is dedicated to creating smooth, predictable routines that support children’s independence, safety, and learning. Daily operations are intentionally structured to:

- honor Montessori principles,
- maintain Arkansas DHS licensing compliance,
- support active supervision,
- ensure clear communication with families, and
- foster a calm, warm, and organized school environment.

This section outlines how each school day flows and how families can partner with FMS to ensure consistency and safety for all children.

4.1 — Hours of Operation

Campus Hours: 6:30 a.m. – 6:00 p.m., Monday through Friday

Montessori Morning work cycle begins by 8:30 a.m. Children benefit most when they arrive before the work cycle begins.

Administrative Office Hours: 7:30 a.m. – 4:30 p.m. (Parents can contact the Classroom Brightwheel Messaging System outside of office hours. Administrative support remains available on campus until 6:00 p.m. for supervision and time-sensitive needs.)

4.2 — Arrival Procedures (Drop-Off)

A smooth, calm drop-off sets the tone for a child's entire day.

Arrival Window

Most families arrive between 7:30–8:30 a.m.; however, the campus opens at 6:30 a.m. for early drop-off.

Upon Arrival

- Sign your child in on Brightwheel.
- Ensure a staff member is present before releasing your child.
- Offer a brief, warm goodbye to support independence and reduce separation anxiety.

Late Arrivals

Arrivals after 8:30 a.m. may disrupt the Montessori work cycle. If your child will be late:

- Message the classroom via Brightwheel before 8:00 a.m.
- Understand that classroom instruction will already be underway, and transitions may require additional time.
- Elementary students arriving after 8:30 a.m. will be marked Tardy

For safety and consistency, parents may not enter classrooms during the morning work cycle unless previously scheduled.

4.3 — Dismissal Procedures (Pick-Up)

Pick-Up Window

Pick-up begins at program-specific times but generally falls between:

- 3:00 p.m.–3:30 p.m. for core day
- 3:30 p.m.–6:00 p.m. for aftercare

Families must check children out via Brightwheel.

Authorized Pick-Up

Children will only be released to adults listed on the child's authorized pick-up list.

FMS may request:

- Photo identification,
- Verification of identity, or
- Contact with a parent for confirmation.

Late Pick-Up

Staff must remain on campus until every child is picked up, so:

- Late pick-up fees apply beginning at 6:00 p.m.
 - Chronic lateness will result in a required meeting to support improved consistency.
-

4.4 — Attendance Expectations

Regular attendance directly supports:

- academic normalization (establishing rhythm and independence),
- social-emotional security,
- peer relationships,
- strong learning outcomes, and
- smooth classroom functioning.

Reporting Absences

Parents must notify the school of absences via Brightwheel by 8:30 a.m..

Reasons to Report:

- Illness
- Travel
- Appointments
- Family emergencies
- Changes in pick-up or drop-off routines

If your child will arrive late, please inform the teacher to ensure a safe transition into the classroom.

4.5 — Use of Brightwheel for Attendance & Communication

Brightwheel is a required system at FMS and is used for:

- Sign-in/sign-out
- Attendance monitoring
- Staff communication
- Daily updates
- Incident reports
- Billing
- Health/symptom notifications

What Families Must Do

- Check children in and out daily
- Enable notifications
- Keep contact, billing, and emergency information updated
- Read school announcements promptly

FMS uses other internal databases for building security, staffing, and employee files. Families do not need to use Frontline, ADP, Entrypass but may see references to it in communication regarding operational procedures.

4.6 — What to Bring

Children should bring:

- Weather-appropriate clothing
- A full change of labeled clothing (left in cubby)
- Appropriate footwear: In-door shoes/slippers, rainboots, tennis shoes

- Diapers/wipes (if applicable)
- Labeled water bottle
- Appropriate outdoor gear (jackets, hats, gloves, rain boots)
- Sunscreen (with parent permission)
- Bug spray (with parent permission)

What NOT to Bring

- Toys from home
- Electronics
- Candy, gum, or sugary treats
- Personal valuables

The school is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged items.

4.7 — Items Provided by FMS

- All meals and snacks
 - Classroom materials and supplies
 - Rest mats or cots (depending on age level)
-

4.8 — Inclement Weather Policy

FMS may delay opening, dismiss early, or close due to:

- Severe weather
- Hazardous travel conditions
- Power outages or utility failures
- Emergency facility situations

Notification will occur through:

- Brightwheel message
- School Social Media
- Local News update (if applicable)

We prioritize safety and follow local emergency recommendations.

Tuition is not reduced or refunded for weather-related closures, emergency closures, or temporary disruptions.

4.9 — Parent Access to Buildings

Key Fob Access

Parents may be issued key fobs with controlled access to buildings. We ask that families:

- Do not share fobs with others
- Do not let unknown individuals “tailgate” into the building
- Immediately report lost or stolen fobs

Visitor Policy

All non-parent visitors must:

- Check in through the main office
- Wear a visitor badge
- Be escorted unless otherwise approved

This maintains both safety and licensing compliance.

4.10 — Front Desk Procedures & Administrative Communication

Parents may visit the front desk for:

- Enrollment paperwork
- Administration questions
- Tuition inquiries
- Lost and found

- Medication drop-off

Professional Boundaries

The front desk should not interrupt classrooms during:

- The work cycle
- Nap
- Transitions

Unless the situation is a genuine emergency.

4.11 — Daily Routines by Program Level

Infant Program

- Individualized schedules
- On-demand feeding
- Developmentally aligned rest
- Outdoor time as weather permits

Toddler and Early Primary

- Morning work cycle
- Outdoor play
- Snack and lunch
- Nap
- Afternoon work cycle or exploration

Primary

- Full Montessori morning work cycle
- Outdoor recess
- Lunch
- Nap or quiet rest time
- Extended day work cycle for non-napping students
- Afternoon choice time

Elementary

- Morning work cycle
- Individual and group lessons
- Outdoor exploration and recess
- Afternoon project work or enrichment

These routines help children feel secure and support cognitive, emotional, and social development.

4.12 — Emergency Contacts & Authorized Pick-Up

Families must provide:

- At least two emergency contacts
- Accurate addresses
- Up-to-date phone numbers
- Names of all adults authorized to pick up

Changes to Authorization

Must be submitted through Brightwheel or in writing.

4.13 — Early Dismissal, Appointments & Mid-Day Pick-Up

If a child needs to leave early:

- Message staff in Brightwheel with advance notice
- Arrive during a natural transition when possible
- Sign in at the front desk marking your child's early departure pickup.

Parents should avoid entering classrooms during work cycles.

4.14 — Maintaining Consistency & Predictability

Children thrive when daily routines are predictable. Families support this by:

- Arriving on time
- Keeping communication clear
- Maintaining consistent sleep schedules
- Preparing children for transitions
- Following school policies consistently

Predictability promotes confidence, independence, and emotional security.

SECTION 5 — HEALTH POLICIES, ILLNESS, MEDICATION & SAFETY

Fayetteville Montessori School is committed to protecting the health, safety, and well-being of every child. This section outlines the procedures we follow to maintain a healthy environment, prevent the spread of illness, respond to emergencies, and partner with families to support each child's physical, emotional, and developmental needs.

These policies are aligned with:

- Arkansas DHS Child Care Licensing
 - American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) guidance
 - Montessori best practices
 - FMS safety protocols
-

5.1 — Philosophy of Health & Safety at FMS

Montessori education emphasizes the whole child, including physical, emotional, and social well-being. A safe and healthy environment allows children to develop confidence, independence, and resilience.

Our health and safety approach is grounded in:

- Prevention — minimizing risks through training, planning, and consistent routines
 - Observation — noticing early signs of illness or distress
 - Partnership — working with families to support the child
 - Preparedness — practicing emergency drills and maintaining trained staff
 - Respect — responding calmly and thoughtfully to children's needs
-

5.2 — Illness Policy (Exclusion & Return Criteria)

To reduce the spread of communicable illnesses and maintain a healthy learning environment, children must stay home when sick.

A child must be excluded from school for:

- Fever of 100.4°F or higher (must be fever-free for 24 hours without medication)
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the past 24 hours
- Unexplained rash or suspected contagious skin condition
- Pink eye with discharge
- Strep throat (may return 24 hours after antibiotics begin)
- Lice (must be nit-free before returning)
- Hand-Foot-Mouth disease with open or oozing lesions
- COVID-19, RSV, flu, or other respiratory illnesses per current pediatric guidance
- Any illness preventing participation in normal activities

When in doubt, we follow the “child must feel well enough to participate” rule.

If a child becomes ill during the day:

- Parents will be notified by phone or Brightwheel
- Child should be picked up within one hour

Tuition is not prorated for absences due to illness, travel, holidays, quarantine, or family choice.

5.3 — Communicable Disease Reporting

Parents must notify FMS if their child is diagnosed with a communicable illness such as:

- COVID-19
- RSV
- Influenza
- Strep throat
- Hand-Foot-Mouth disease
- Chickenpox
- Fifth disease

This allows us to notify other families (without identifying the child) and take appropriate precautions.

The school follows AAP and DHS recommendations for exclusion and return.

5.4 — Medication Administration

FMS will administer medication only when necessary and only with required documentation.

Requirements for Medication

- Must be in the original container
- Must have the child's full name
- Must include dosage instructions and not be expired
- Requires a completed Medication Authorization Form

Types of Medication We Administer

- Prescription medication
- Over-the-counter medication approved by a physician
- Emergency medications (EpiPens, inhalers, etc.)

Staff Training

Designated staff receive training in:

- Medication administration
 - Recognizing allergic reactions
 - Emergency response
-

5.5 — Allergies & Plans of Care

If a child has a diagnosed allergy or medical condition, families must provide:

- A current Allergy Action Plan
- Physician-signed instructions
- Required emergency medication

All allergies are posted discreetly in classrooms and kitchens. Staff are trained to respond promptly to allergic reactions.

5.6 — Injury, Accidents & Incident Reporting

FMS follows Arkansas DHS guidelines for documentation of any injury or incident involving a child.

If a minor injury occurs:

- Teacher provides basic first aid
- An Incident Report is completed in Brightwheel
- Parents receive notification
- Teacher may request a call if further explanation is needed

If a significant injury occurs:

- Parents are notified immediately by phone
- Emergency services may be contacted if needed
- A detailed incident report is completed
- A follow-up plan will be created

All head injuries result in immediate parent notification.

Confidential Records & Surveillance

The School utilizes video monitoring and internal documentation systems for safety, supervision, and administrative purposes. Video footage is used solely for internal safety, supervision, and training purposes. Footage is confidential and may not be accessed, copied, or distributed by families, except as required by law.

5.7 — Mental & Emotional Health

Montessori classrooms support emotional well-being by providing:

- Predictable routines
- Social-emotional lessons (Grace & Courtesy)
- Peaceful conflict resolution
- Calm, respectful communication
- Mindfulness tools appropriate for each age group

Parents will be notified if teachers observe patterns of emotional distress. The school may recommend:

- Behavioral observation
- Adjustments to classroom routines
- A Behavior Support Plan
- Consultation with a pediatric specialist

Our goal is to create a supportive, collaborative plan to help the child thrive.

5.8 — Safe Sleep Policy (Infant Program)

In alignment with AAP and DHS guidelines:

- Infants sleep on their backs
- Cribs are free of blankets, pillows, toys, or bumpers
- Sleep sacks are permitted
- Swaddling is not recommended for infants over 3 months of age and is only permitted with a written doctor's note
- Bottles may not be given in cribs
- Staff visually check sleeping infants every 10–15 minutes
- Sleep logs are maintained

Infants follow individualized feeding and sleeping schedules.

5.9 — Cleaning, Sanitizing & Infection Control

Classrooms follow strict cleaning schedules including:

- Daily sanitizing of high-touch surfaces
- Frequent handwashing for children and staff
- Sanitizing of toys and Montessori materials
- Proper diapering and toileting procedures
- Professional janitorial services after hours
- Deep cleaning during school breaks

These practices promote health and support children's independence and responsibility.

5.10 — Safety Drills & Emergency Procedures

FMS conducts the following drills regularly:

- Fire drills (monthly)
- Tornado drills

Staff receive annual training on:

- Emergency communication
- CPR & First Aid
- Active supervision
- Building evacuation plans
- Campus safety systems
- Lockdown drills
- Evacuation and reverse evacuation drills

Parents will be notified if an actual emergency occurs.

5.11 — Child Abuse & Neglect Reporting

All FMS staff are Mandated Reporters under Arkansas law.

Staff must report if they suspect:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Maltreatment
- Unsafe living conditions

Reports are made to:

- Arkansas Child Abuse Hotline
- Head of School (for internal documentation)

FMS must err on the side of the child's safety and is not required to inform parents before making a report.

5.12 — Sunscreen, Bug Spray & Outdoor Care

With parent permission:

- Sunscreen should be applied prior to outdoor play
- Parents must provide labeled sunscreen
- Bug spray may be applied as needed
- Outdoor clothing must be appropriate for weather conditions

Montessori philosophy emphasizes daily outdoor exploration, so children will go outside almost every day, weather permitting.

5.13 — Food Allergies, Special Diets & Mealtime Safety

The FMS kitchen and classrooms follow strict guidelines, including:

- Preventing cross-contamination
- Careful supervision during meals
- Communication with food service regarding allergies
- Staff training in choking hazard prevention
- Providing vegetarian or dairy free option substitutions when necessary (other allergy related substitutions should be provided by the parent)

Families must communicate dietary needs in writing.

5.14 — Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event of a medical emergency:

1. Staff will call 911 immediately
2. Parents will be contacted
3. Rescue medications will be administered, if applicable
4. A staff member will accompany the child until a parent arrives

Emergency treatment authorization forms must remain current.

5.15 — Supporting Children with Chronic Conditions

For conditions such as:

- Asthma
- Diabetes
- Seizures
- Eczema
- Allergies
- Developmental conditions

FMS requires:

- A current medical plan
- Necessary medications
- Ongoing communication with the family
- Training for staff if needed

FMS may request additional documentation or health professional guidance to ensure safe care.

5.16 — Family Responsibilities Related to Health

To ensure safety and consistency, families must:

- Keep all medical information up-to-date
- Report contagious illnesses promptly
- Notify the school of absences or changes in routines
- Provide required medications and forms
- Follow exclusion guidelines
- Support healthy sleep routines at home
- Respect teacher recommendations when illness is suspected

A strong partnership helps keep our school community safe and thriving.

SECTION 6 — BEHAVIOR GUIDANCE, CONFLICT RESOLUTION & SUPPORT PLANS

At Fayetteville Montessori School, we view behavior through a Montessori lens: all behavior is communication. Children express needs through their actions long before they can express them with words. Our goal is to guide children toward independence, emotional regulation, empathy, and respectful social interaction.

We do this through calm, consistent, developmentally appropriate guidance that helps children learn—not through punishment or shame.

6.1 — Montessori Philosophy on Behavior

Dr. Maria Montessori believed that discipline arises from within the child, not from external control. Therefore:

Montessori discipline is:

- Firm but gentle
- Rooted in respect
- Focused on natural and logical consequences
- Connected to real social interactions
- Supported by a prepared environment
- Based on modeling, not lecturing

Discipline is not:

- Punishment
- Rewards/bribes for compliance
- Shame-based
- Reactive or emotional

Our goal is to help children build skills in:

- Emotional regulation
- Problem-solving
- Social interaction
- Responsibility
- Communication
- Conflict resolution

6.2 — Prohibited Discipline Practices

In accordance with Arkansas DHS and FMS values, the following practices are strictly prohibited:

- Corporal punishment
- Yelling, threatening, or using a harsh tone
- Ridiculing or shaming
- Withholding food, rest, or toileting
- Forced compliance through physical manipulation

- Rough handling of any kind (pulling, grabbing, dragging)
- Isolation without visual supervision
- Using fear-based tactics

Any violation of these practices is taken extremely seriously and may result in disciplinary action, retraining, or dismissal of staff.

6.3 — Positive Discipline Framework at FMS

Our behavior guidance is built on consistent, predictable strategies:

1. Relationship First: Children respond to caregivers they trust. Connection is essential for cooperation.

2. Observation: Montessori teachers observe before intervening to understand why the behavior is happening.

3. Prepared Environment: An organized, peaceful space reduces behavioral challenges.

4. Choice & Independence: Children are more cooperative when they feel capable and respected.

5. Natural & Logical Consequences

Examples:

- “The water spilled. Let’s get a towel to clean it.”
- “If you throw the material, it needs to go back on the shelf.”

6. Modeling: Teachers speak gently, move slowly, and use respectful language.

7. Grace & Courtesy Lessons

Explicit teaching of:

- Interrupting politely
 - Asking for help
 - Taking turns
 - Using inside voices
 - Carrying materials carefully
-

6.4 — Conflict Resolution in Montessori Classrooms

We teach children peaceful problem-solving skills through:

Step 1: Pause & Breathe: Children are reminded to regulate first.

Step 2: Identify the Problem: Teachers help children articulate what happened.

Step 3: Name Feelings: “I feel frustrated because...”

Step 4: Express Needs

“I want a turn.”

“I want space.”

“I need help.”

Step 5: Offer Solutions

- Take turns
- Work together
- Wait and watch
- Try again later

Step 6: Restore the Environment: If work is disrupted, the child helps reset it.

The Peace Table: In Primary and Elementary, a Peace Table may be used for:

- Calm conversation

- Offering peace objects
- Resolving disagreements

It is never used as punishment.

6.5 — Identifying Underlying Needs

Behavior challenges may stem from:

- Fatigue
- Hunger or thirst
- Overstimulation
- Understimulation
- Sensory needs
- Difficulty with transitions
- Social misunderstandings
- Illness
- Anxiety or separation stress
- Developmental delays
- Environmental factors

Teachers look for patterns, timing, triggers, and developmental stages before responding.

6.6 — Aggression, Unsafe Behaviors & Montessori Response

Aggressive behaviors (hitting, biting, pushing, throwing objects, scratching, etc.) are developmentally expected at certain ages but must be addressed immediately to maintain safety.

Montessori teachers respond by:

- Intervening calmly and quickly

- Ensuring all children are safe
- Labeling feelings and needs
- Providing alternatives (“You may hit the pillow, not friends.”)
- Resetting the environment
- Encouraging repair (“Let’s check on your friend.”)
- Observing for patterns

Safety is always the priority.

6.7 — Biting Policy (Common in Early Childhood)

Biting is a natural developmental phase, especially in toddlers who may lack language or impulse control.

FMS response includes:

- Keeping all children safe
- Immediate cleaning of affected skin
- Contacting parents of both children
- Logging an incident report
- Observing for triggers
- Adjusting the environment (teething toys, additional supervision zones, etc.)
- Teaching gentle touch
- Reducing overcrowding in high-interest areas

Families can support by:

- Ensuring consistent sleep routines
- Providing teethingers at home
- Practicing simple language (“Stop,” “My turn”)

A biting child is not shamed; behavior is addressed without labeling the child.

6.8 — When Behavior Becomes a Safety Concern

If behavior interferes with:

- the child's own safety
- the safety of others
- learning
- or the functioning of the classroom

FMS may initiate additional support.

Prior to a formal plan, teachers will:

- Increase observation
 - Document incidents
 - Adjust transitions or classroom environment
 - Try new strategies
 - Collaborate with program leads
 - Communicate with families promptly and respectfully
-

6.9 — Behavior Support Plans (BSP)

If challenging behaviors persist or escalate, the school may recommend a Behavior Support Plan.

A BSP includes:

- Documentation of concerns
- Identified triggers and patterns
- Support strategies used in the classroom
- A plan for skill-building and regulation
- Collaborative goals
- Family responsibilities
- Follow-up meeting dates
- Possible recommendations for outside assessments

BSPs are NOT punitive.

They are supportive and collaborative.

Families are expected to:

- Attend meetings
- Participate in recommended interventions
- Ensure consistency at home
- Communicate openly with the team

Failure to participate in recommended evaluations or support plans may result in administrative review of continued enrollment.

6.10 — When Outside Support May Be Recommended

To best support a child's development, FMS may encourage outside evaluation when:

- Behavioral concerns persist despite interventions
- Delays are suspected
- Sensory needs exceed classroom capacity
- Emotional regulation challenges are significant
- Aggressive behavior continues beyond expected developmental norms

Possible referrals include:

- Speech therapy
- Occupational therapy
- Behavioral therapy
- Pediatric developmental specialists
- Mental health providers

FMS will continue to support the child within our scope while collaborating with specialists as appropriate.

6.11 — Family Partnership Expectations

For consistency and success, families are expected to:

- Maintain respectful communication
- Support Montessori-aligned expectations at home
- Ensure adequate sleep and predictable routines
- Attend scheduled meetings
- Follow through with recommended supports
- Avoid discussing school concerns in front of the child
- Model calm problem-solving
- Trust and partner with the teaching team

A strong parent–school partnership significantly improves child outcomes.

6.12 — When Behavior May Lead to Administrative Review

Although rare, repeated unsafe behaviors may require administrative action.

The school may schedule a meeting to discuss next steps when:

- A child’s behavior repeatedly endangers themselves or others
- A child demonstrates patterns of aggression beyond developmental expectations
- Families do not participate in required support
- Recommended evaluations are not pursued
- Incidents escalate in intensity or frequency

Administrative actions may include:

- Temporary shortened day
- Formal assessment requirement
- Temporary suspension (extremely rare, safety-based only)
- Final withdrawal when the child’s needs exceed the school’s resources

Withdrawal is always a last resort, made only when safety cannot be ensured or the environment is not best suiting the needs of the child.

6.13 — Trauma-Informed Care & Emotional Sensitivity

FMS recognizes that children may carry stress or trauma from outside the classroom.

Teachers use trauma-informed approaches, including:

- Predictable routines
- Gentle redirection
- Choice and control when possible
- Safe, calming spaces (not time-out)
- Empathy and connection
- Awareness of triggers
- Avoiding power struggles
- Respecting a child's need for space

The goal is to help children regain emotional regulation—not suppress their feelings.

6.14 — Supporting Individual Learning Differences

FMS welcomes all learners and strives to support each child through:

- Differentiated instruction
- Sensory materials
- Freedom of movement within the classroom
- Visual cues
- Flexible seating
- Predictable routines
- Connection-based teaching

If additional evaluation is needed, FMS will partner with families to determine next steps.

SECTION 7 — COMMUNICATION & FAMILY PARTNERSHIP

A strong, respectful partnership between families and the school is essential to every child's success. Communication at FMS is designed to be:

- Clear
- Transparent
- Timely
- Respectful
- Aligned with Montessori philosophy

This section outlines how families and staff communicate, what families can expect from FMS, and what FMS expects from families in return.

The School reserves the right to terminate enrollment if a parent or guardian's conduct interferes with the safety, operations, or professional integrity of the School.

7.1 — Philosophy of Communication at FMS

The Montessori method emphasizes:

- Respectful, calm interactions
- Observation before reaction
- Thoughtful and intentional responses

FMS applies these principles to all communication with families.

Our communication goals:

- Build strong relationships
- Share relevant information about your child
- Address concerns with professionalism
- Protect the integrity of the classroom environment
- Collaborate in support of each child's growth

We strive to create conversations that are solution-focused and grounded in mutual respect.

7.2 — Brightwheel: Primary Communication Platform

Brightwheel is the required communication tool for all families. It is used for:

- Daily communications
- Attendance tracking
- Photos and moments
- Meal and nap updates (Infant and Toddler levels)
- Toilet Learning (Early Primary)
- Incident reports
- School-wide announcements
- Emergency notifications
- Parent messaging
- Authorized pick-up updates
- Billing (if applicable)

Families are expected to:

- Read messages promptly
 - Enable notifications
 - Keep profiles and emergency contacts updated
 - Communicate absences through the app
 - Respond to teacher or administrative requests when applicable
-

7.3 — Teacher Response Guidelines

Teachers are with children all day, ensuring safety, providing lessons, observing behavior, and supporting the classroom community. Therefore:

- Teachers will respond within 24 business hours

- Teachers do not respond during instructional hours
- Teachers are not expected to respond after 5 p.m. or on weekends
- For emergencies, call the front office between, contact the administrator on duty, or message administration through Brightwheel.

This protects teacher well-being and prevents interruptions to the Montessori work cycle.

7.4 — Appropriate Uses of Brightwheel Messaging

Families may message teachers regarding:

- Absences
- Late arrival
- Pick-up changes
- Quick clarifications
- Relevant updates (sleep, eating, medication, behavior)

Not appropriate for Brightwheel messaging:

- Lengthy concerns
- Emotional or high-stress messages
- Requests for immediate replies
- Criticism or confrontational communication
- Discussions requiring confidentiality or nuance

If a concern requires more than 2–3 sentences, a meeting should be requested.

7.5 — Administrative Communication

Administrative communication may be conducted via Brightwheel or email.

- Tuition updates

- Enrollment paperwork
- Forms and medical records
- Policy changes
- Meeting confirmations
- Billing questions
- Safety notifications

Families should check their email regularly for school updates.

7.6 — Conferences & Scheduled Meetings

FMS holds scheduled conferences for:

- Early Primary, Primary, and Elementary students (fall & spring)
- Early Primary Toileting readiness discussions
- Behavior Support Plan reviews
- Parent-requested meetings as needed

Conferences may include:

- Child progress updates
- Academic and developmental observations
- Social-emotional growth
- Montessori lessons overview
- Recommendations for home support

Meetings are always solution-oriented, respectful, and child-centered.

7.7 — When to Request a Meeting

Please request a meeting when:

- You have ongoing questions or concerns
- There is a behavioral pattern developing
- You observe changes at home that may affect school

- Your child is preparing for a transition
- Teachers request one

Meetings ensure that communication is calm, clear, and productive.

7.8 — Professional Communication Expectations (Families)

To maintain a positive, respectful school community, families are expected to:

Communicate respectfully- Teachers and administrators must be treated with professionalism at all times.

Use appropriate channels

- Brightwheel for daily updates
- Email for detailed questions
- In-person meetings for concerns

Maintain confidentiality: Discussion of other children or families is not permitted.

Model emotional regulation: Children observe adult behavior closely; we aim to model grace and courtesy.

Avoid discussing school concerns in front of children: This protects their sense of security and connection to the classroom.

Follow school policies consistently: Consistency between home and school supports children's success.

7.9 — What Families Can Expect from FMS

Families can expect:

- Respectful, timely communication
- Professionalism and confidentiality
- Thoughtful responses grounded in Montessori practice
- Clear information about child development
- Support through transitions
- Collaboration in times of challenge
- Safety and transparency
- Observations and documentation as needed

FMS strives to build trust through consistent, compassionate partnership.

7.10 — Parent Boundaries & Classroom Integrity

To maintain a focused, protected Montessori environment:

Parents may NOT:

- Enter classrooms during the work cycle without permission
- Enter children restrooms (family restrooms are available in each building)
- Interrupt lessons or approach teachers unexpectedly
- Use cell phones during drop-off or pick-up
- Engage in confrontational conversations on campus
- Ask teachers about other children's behavior or progress
- Bring unauthorized visitors into the building
- Question staff in front of children
- Attempt to discipline children who are not their own

Parents SHOULD:

- Keep conversations brief during transitions
- Schedule meetings for longer discussions
- Respect staff time and professional boundaries
- Use calm, solution-focused language

7.11 — Family Involvement & Volunteer Opportunities

FMS values parent participation and offers opportunities such as:

- Classroom celebrations
- Cultural sharing
- Garden or playground improvement days
- School events (Harvest Celebration, Trunk-or-Treat, etc.)
- Read-aloud volunteers (as approved by teacher)
- Parent Association projects
- Fundraisers
- Community service initiatives

Volunteers must follow all school safety protocols, including sign-in procedures.

7.12 — Montessori Parent Education

To support families in understanding the Montessori approach, FMS provides:

- Parent education nights
- Workshops
- Classroom observation opportunities
- Newsletters explaining curriculum
- Behavioral and developmental resources
- Recommended reading lists

We believe informed parents create stronger partnerships.

7.13 — Addressing Concerns or Conflicts

FMS strives for collaborative, respectful problem-solving. When concerns arise:

Step 1: Speak with the classroom teacher: Most concerns are resolved at this level.

Step 2: Contact the Program Lead: They support consistency, communication, and curriculum decisions.

Step 3 : Contact the Head of School: For unresolved concerns, safety matters, or school-wide issues.

What NOT to do:

- Confront teachers during drop-off/pick-up
- Send emotionally charged Brightwheel messages
- Request immediate responses
- Engage other parents to solve school-related concerns

FMS will always respond thoughtfully and professionally.

7.14 — Montessori Parent Association (MPA) Framework

The Parent Association exists to:

- Build community
- Welcome new families
- Support school events
- Organize volunteer opportunities
- Provide parent-to-parent connection
- Enhance communication between families and administration

The MPA works in partnership with the Head of School to align projects with school needs. Parents interested in leadership roles may contact the Head of School.

7.15 — Social Media & Online Conduct

Families must:

- Uphold confidentiality
- Avoid posting photos of children other than their own without permission
- Represent FMS positively
- Address concerns privately with the school, not publicly online

Respectful online behavior supports a healthy school community.

SECTION 8 — MONTESSORI CURRICULUM & PROGRAM-LEVEL DETAILS

The Montessori curriculum is internationally recognized for its scientific, developmentally grounded approach to education. Each program level—Infant through Elementary—is designed to meet the cognitive, physical, emotional, and social needs of children at that developmental stage.

This section provides families with a comprehensive understanding of:

- What children learn
 - Why materials are chosen
 - How teachers support development
 - How Montessori differs from traditional models
 - Classroom expectations and routines
-

8.1 — The Montessori Approach to Learning

Montessori classrooms are built upon three core elements:

1. The Prepared Environment

The classroom is intentionally designed with:

- Order
- Beauty
- Accessibility
- Movement pathways
- Real materials
- Defined curriculum areas

Children choose meaningful work that supports concentration, independence, and confidence.

2. The Montessori Guide (Teacher)

Teachers observe, guide, and prepare the environment. Their role is to:

- Present lessons individually or in small groups
- Observe development and interests
- Scaffold new skills
- Maintain peaceful environments
- Support independence without over-assisting

3. Child-Led, Hands-On Learning

Children learn at their own pace. They repeat work they find meaningful and move into advanced work when ready.

8.2 — Curriculum Areas Across All Levels

Although curriculum evolves as children grow, Montessori classrooms include the same core areas:

Practical Life

- Independence
- Coordination
- Concentration
- Care of self (dressing, toileting, hygiene)
- Care of environment (cleaning, polishing, watering plants)
- Grace & courtesy lessons

Sensorial

- Refinement of the senses
- Ordering, pairing, grading
- Early preparation for math and science

Language

- Vocabulary
- Phonemic awareness
- Reading
- Writing
- Comprehension and expression

Mathematics

- Concrete materials
- Place value
- Operations
- Fractions
- Geometry (elementary)

Cultural Studies

- Geography
- Science
- Biology
- History
- Environmental education

Creative Arts & Movement

- Music
- Art
- Drama
- Handwork
- Mind–body integration

These elements become more abstract and complex as children progress.

8.3 — INFANT PROGRAM (0–12 Months)

Program Philosophy

Infants thrive in a calm, nurturing environment that supports bonding, movement, and exploration. Teachers respond promptly and warmly to cues, creating secure emotional attachments.

Classroom Environment

- Low shelves
- Soft lighting
- Simple, beautiful materials
- Floor movement areas
- Mirrors for self-awareness
- Real objects rather than toys with lights/sounds

Curriculum Focus

- Motor development (rolling, crawling, pulling up)
- Language exposure (songs, labeling, conversation)
- Fine motor practice (grasping, reaching)
- Visual tracking
- Sensory exploration
- Social connection and trust-building

Daily Routine

- Developmentally appropriate sleep schedules
- Feeding according to family plan
- Outdoor time as weather allows
- Floor time and exploration
- Music and gentle movement

Family Expectations

- Provide updated feeding and sleep instructions
 - Communicate changes promptly
 - Bring labeled personal items
-

8.4 — TODDLER/EARLY PRIMARY PROGRAM (12–30+ Months)

Program Philosophy

Toddlers and Early Primary students are driven by movement, imitation, and independence. The classroom supports their need for:

- Order
- Repetition
- Language development
- Practical life experiences

Curriculum Focus

Practical Life

- Dressing frames
- Pouring, spooning
- Carrying trays
- Washing, sweeping
- Food preparation

Language

- Naming objects
- Classification (farm animals, fruits, vehicles)
- Songs, vocabulary lessons
- Beginning expressive language
- Matching and sorting

Motor Skills

- Walking on the line
- Gross motor outdoor exploration
- Fine motor refinement

Social-Emotional Development

- Parallel play evolving to cooperation
- Expression of needs
- Learning boundaries
- Gentle hands, waiting, taking turns

Toileting

Signs of readiness are respected; the environment supports independence.

Daily Routine

- Work cycle
- Outdoor exploration
- Snack and meals
- Nap
- Afternoon activities

8.5 — PRIMARY PROGRAM (2.5–5+ Years)

Program Philosophy

The child in the Primary years enters a sensitive period for:

- Language
- Order
- Movement
- Social development
- Independence
- Math
- Sensorial exploration

The Primary classroom is the signature Montessori environment.

Curriculum Areas

Practical Life

Purpose: Build concentration, confidence, responsibility.

Children learn:

- Pouring, spooning, tonging
 - Polishing and cleaning
 - Food prep (cutting, spreading)
 - Sewing and weaving
 - Care of plants and animals
 - Grace & Courtesy (conflict resolution, quiet voices, polite interruption)
-

Sensorial

Purpose: Refine the senses and lay groundwork for math and science.

Materials include:

- Pink Tower
- Brown Stair
- Red Rods
- Sound cylinders
- Color tablets
- Knobbed cylinders

Children develop classification, comparison, sequencing, and discrimination skills.

Language

Purpose: Build literacy through hands-on connection.

Children explore:

- Sandpaper letters
- Moveable alphabet
- Sound games
- Decoding and Encoding words
- Storytelling and dictation
- Reading phonetic words, then sight words
- Early grammar

Mathematics

Purpose: Move from concrete to abstract.

Children work with:

- Number rods
- Sandpaper numbers
- One to one correspondence
- Golden beads (units, tens, hundreds, thousands)
- Place value
- Addition, subtraction, multiplication, division
- Geometric solids and cabinet
- Fractions (introductory)
- Skip counting and squaring chains

Cultural Studies

Includes:

- Geography (puzzle maps, land/water forms)
- History (timelines, personal history)
- Zoology and botany classification

- Science experiments
 - Cultural celebrations and diversity studies
-

Art, Music & Movement

- Daily artistic expression
 - Rhythm, singing, listening activities
 - Yoga and gross motor development
-

Social Development

- Cooperative work
 - Quiet conflict resolution
 - Independence and leadership
 - Community helpers
-

Daily Routine

- 2.5–3 hour morning work cycle
 - Outdoor recess
 - Lunch
 - Nap or Extended Day work period
 - Afternoon work and enrichment
-

8.6 — ELEMENTARY

Program Philosophy

Children entering elementary years become:

- Imaginative
- Social
- Reasoning-oriented

- Fascinated by the “why” behind everything

Montessori calls this the time of the “cosmic curriculum,” where children explore their place in the universe.

Curriculum Focus

The Five Great Lessons

Epic stories that spark curiosity about:

1. Creation of the universe
2. Coming of life
3. Coming of humans
4. Development of language
5. Development of math

These stories serve as springboards for all curriculum areas.

Math

- Abstract understanding of operations
- Multiplication and division with large numbers
- Fractions
- Geometry (shapes, angles, area)

Language

- Grammar function analysis
- Sentence structure
- Research skills
- Creative writing
- Reading comprehension
- Cursive refinement

Cultural Studies

- Physical geography
- Political geography

- Ancient civilizations
- Early U.S. history
- Scientific classification
- Biology and ecology

Science

- Simple machines
- Energy and physics explorations
- Space science
- Experiments and data collection

Social Development

Elementary focuses heavily on:

- Group responsibility
 - Collaboration
 - Empathy
 - Independence
-

8.7 — Daily Work Cycle & Montessori Routines

All programs follow the Montessori model of:

- Uninterrupted work periods
- Respect for concentration
- Individual and small-group lessons
- Mixed-age mentoring
- Purposeful movement
- Grace and courtesy practice

Interruptions are minimized to support deep learning.

8.8 — Montessori at Home Tips

Families can support learning by:

- Including children in real household tasks
- Limiting screen time
- Offering choices
- Encouraging independence
- Creating predictable routines
- Using respectful language
- Allowing extra time for dressing, cleaning, helping

Consistency between home and school strengthens the child's confidence and self-discipline.

SECTION 9 — MEALS, NUTRITION, REST, TOILETING & PERSONAL CARE

Fayetteville Montessori School is committed to supporting the whole child—including their nutrition, rest, physical comfort, and developing independence in self-care. This section outlines:

- What FMS provides
 - What families are responsible for
 - How we keep children healthy and comfortable
 - Montessori-aligned approaches to eating, resting, and toileting
-

9.1 — Nutrition Philosophy at FMS

Proper nutrition supports focus, regulation, growth, and learning. FMS follows a whole-food-based approach emphasizing:

- Balanced meals
- Fresh fruits and vegetables
- Appropriate portion sizes

- Limited sugar
- Diverse food exposure
- Opportunities for children to serve themselves and build independence

Meals align with Arkansas DHS Child Care Licensing nutrition guidelines.

9.2 — Meals and Snacks Provided by FMS

FMS provides:

Daily:

- Morning snack
- Lunch
- Afternoon snack

Menus rotate and include vegetarian and protein-focused options. Meat is served once a week and is limited to chicken, turkey, fish products. Water is always available. Milk may be provided based on licensing requirements and dietary needs.

Family-Style Dining

Children practice:

- Serving themselves
- Pouring water
- Passing food
- Cleaning their space
- Manners and grace

Teachers model healthy eating habits and support children respectfully.

9.3 — Dietary Restrictions & Allergies

If your child has dietary needs:

Families must provide:

- Written medical documentation for allergy substitutions
- Allergy Action Plan (signed by healthcare provider)
- Foods if medically necessary or if religious/cultural requirements differ from school menu

Food Allergies

- Posted in the classroom and kitchen discreetly
- Staff trained to avoid cross-contamination
- Emergency medications kept accessible
- Strict adherence to safety protocols

Peanut/Nut Policy

FMS is a nut aware campus and does not knowingly serve or permit nut products on campus.

9.4 — Infant Feeding Policy

Families provide:

- Breast milk or formula (labeled, dated)
- Bottles
- Feeding schedule or plan
- Introductory foods/purees

Teachers follow:

- Developmentally appropriate feeding practices
- Feeding infants on demand or consistent routine based on family preference
- Safe bottle warming procedures
- No propping bottles
- Holding infants during feeding

Baby-led weaning may be supported by school menu with parent communication and safety guidelines.

9.5 — Hydration Policy

Children have access to water throughout the day. Families should send a labeled water bottle daily.

Water bottles:

- Remain accessible
 - Are refilled as needed
 - Are taken home daily for cleaning
-

9.6 — Rest & Nap Policies

Rest is essential for children’s development and emotional regulation. Each program level supports sleep needs differently.

Infant Program

- Follow individual sleep schedules
- Safe sleep practices (back-to-sleep, empty crib)
- Teachers monitor continuously
- Sleep logs maintained

Toddler/Early Primary

- All children nap daily
- Nap environment is calm and consistent
- Children bring a labeled crib sheet and small blanket (family washes weekly)

Primary Program

- Nap and Extended Day work periods are available

- Individualized napping plan established with guidance from parents and teacher
- Nap is never used as punishment or forced

Elementary

- No scheduled nap
 - Quiet or mindfulness periods may be provided after lunch
-

9.7 — Toileting & Toilet Independence

Toileting is approached respectfully and developmentally.

Early Primary

Teachers support readiness through:

- Observing cues
- Routine bathroom visits
- Simple toileting language
- Stand Up diapering
- Accessible clothing
- Promoting independence

Families partner by providing:

- Extra clothes
- Diapers and wipes
- Toileting supplies if needed

Primary Program (2.5–5 + years)

Children must be fully toilet independent to participate in Primary classrooms.

This includes:

- Recognizing the need to use the toilet
- Managing clothing independently
- Wiping independently
- Washing hands thoroughly

- Remaining accident-free during the day and nap

Accidents:

Accidents are age-appropriate and handled respectfully. If accidents are frequent:

- Staff will meet with families
- A plan will be developed to support readiness
- Temporary shortened days, bathroom reminders, or transition pauses may be recommended

FMS cannot provide diapering or pull-up changing in Primary.

9.8 — Diapering Policy

Diapering is handled with dignity and care.

Teachers:

- Follow DHS sanitary procedures
- Wear gloves
- Sanitize surfaces before and after
- Talk to children calmly during changing
- Encourage participation (lifting legs, retrieving wipes)

Diapers must be labeled and restocked by families. Teachers will notify parents when supplies run low.

9.9 — Clothing Requirements

Children should wear:

- Comfortable, weather-appropriate clothing
- Shoes that allow safe outdoor play (closed-toe required)
- Clothing that supports toileting independence (no overalls or difficult snaps)

Each child must have:

- A full set of labeled extra clothing
- Extra underwear for Early Primary and Primary
- Seasonal layers (jackets, hats, mittens)

Outdoor play occurs daily unless weather conditions are unsafe.

9.10 — Personal Belongings Policy

To maintain order and reduce distraction:

Do NOT send:

- Toys
- Stuffed animals
- Jewelry
- Electronics
- Costumes
- Backpacks filled with unnecessary items

Teachers will redirect items to cubbies if brought.

Do send:

- Nap items (where applicable)
- Water bottle
- Change of clothes
- Weather gear

All items must be labeled to avoid loss or mix-ups.

9.11 — Sunscreen, Bug Spray & Outdoor Care

Families must complete consent forms.

Teachers will:

- Apply sunscreen before outdoor play
- Apply bug spray as needed
- Encourage hats and protective clothing
- Monitor for overheating or cold stress

Outdoor play is an important part of Montessori development—children go outside in most weather.

9.12 — Safety During Meals & Rest

Teachers follow best practices for:

Choking Prevention

- Small, manageable food pieces
- Supervised eating
- Calm, seated mealtimes
- Age-appropriate menu selections

Rest Time Safety

- Children remain supervised
 - Nap mats spaced according to licensing
 - Immediate response to restlessness or distress
-

9.13 — Self-Care & Independence

Montessori education emphasizes supporting children as capable individuals. Children are encouraged to:

- Put on their own jackets

- Pack/unpack their belongings
- Help set and clear tables
- Prepare simple snacks
- Choose clothing
- Brush hair or wash hands independently

Teachers guide but do not over-assist.

9.14 — Hygiene Practices

Teachers support children in:

- Proper handwashing
- Nose wiping (“tissue, blow, throw, wash”)
- Covering coughs/sneezes
- Caring for personal materials
- Keeping shoes and jackets organized

Consistency between home and school strengthens independence.

SECTION 10 — ACTIVE SUPERVISION & SAFETY PROTOCOLS

Fayetteville Montessori School is committed to maintaining the highest standards of child safety. Active supervision is the foundation of our approach and ensures that every child is safe, accounted for, and supported across all environments.

Active supervision at FMS is:

- Intentional
- Developmentally informed
- Continuous
- Proactive
- Required at all times

Every staff member is trained annually in active supervision techniques and DHS safety requirements.

10.1 — What is Active Supervision?

Active supervision is a preventative, engaged, and responsive approach to monitoring children. It includes:

1. Positioning

Teachers place themselves strategically to see all children and materials.

2. Scanning

Teachers constantly observe:

- Movement
- Interactions
- Emotional cues
- Risks
- Transitions

3. Listening

Teachers attune to sounds that indicate:

- Conflict
- Distress
- Play
- Unsafe actions

4. Counting

Headcounts occur continuously, especially during transitions.

5. Anticipating Behavior

Teachers recognize triggers and support children before problems arise.

6. Responding Immediately

If something happens, teachers intervene quickly and calmly.

10.2 — Required Supervision Practices at FMS

All staff must:

- Maintain visual and auditory supervision at all times
- Position themselves to eliminate blind spots
- Never leave a child unattended
- Keep doors and gates secured
- Remain mentally and physically present
- Minimize distractions (no phones, personal conversations, etc.)
- Follow attendance protocols rigorously

Supervision is not passive—teachers do not sit and watch; they circulate, engage, and observe.

10.3 — Supervision During the Montessori Work Cycle

Teachers ensure:

- Children are engaged with purposeful work
- Materials are used safely
- Classroom ratios are maintained
- Conflicts are resolved peacefully
- Children are within sight at all times
- Work areas remain tidy and safe

Because children move freely in the classroom, teachers must stay mobile, alert, and responsive.

10.4 — Playground & Outdoor Supervision

Outdoor environments require heightened vigilance.

Teachers must:

- Spread out to create full coverage of the space
- Monitor high-risk areas (slides, climbing equipment)
- Position themselves to eliminate blind spots
- Stay close to younger children
- Perform headcounts upon leaving and entering
- Prevent rough play or unsafe climbing
- Check gates to ensure they remain latched

Weather Safety

Outdoor play occurs daily unless:

- Temperature is unsafe according to school guidelines
- Severe weather is present
- Air quality is dangerous
- Surfaces are icy or hazardous

10.5 — Ratio Compliance

FMS strictly adheres to ratios:

- 0–12 months: 1:4
- 12–18 months: 1:5
- 18–30 months: 1:6
- 2.5–5 years: 1:12
- Elementary: 1:15

Best Practice at FMS

We staff above minimum ratios in many programs to enhance safety and instructional quality.

10.6 — Attendance Tracking (Brightwheel + Clipboard System)

FMS uses dual attendance tracking to meet both licensing requirements and Montessori best practices.

1. Brightwheel

Parents sign children in/out daily. Teachers use Brightwheel to:

- Track attendance
- Log transitions
- Verify pick-up authorization
- Communicate with families

2. Classroom Clipboard

A physical attendance sheet is maintained for:

- Fire drills
- Evacuation procedures
- Transitions
- Playground attendance
- Specials/extracurricular tracking

Required Attendance Practices

- Mark children in when they arrive
- Mark them out when they leave
- Record transitions immediately
- Perform headcounts constantly
- Bring the clipboard everywhere

Failure to maintain accurate attendance is a licensing violation and a safety risk.

10.7 — Transition Safety

Transitions are high-risk moments and require enhanced supervision.

Transitions Include:

- Moving from classroom to playground
- Going to restroom (on playground)
- Traveling to specials (soccer, music, dance)
- Moving between buildings
- Changing shifts between teachers

During Every Transition, Teachers Must:

- Conduct a headcount before leaving
- Conduct a headcount upon arrival
- Ensure doors and gates are secured
- Position themselves at front and back of line
- Maintain visual contact with all children
- Keep group sizes compliant with ratios
- Move calmly and intentionally

Bathroom Transitions

- Young children are escorted in small groups
 - Privacy is respected while ensuring safety
-

10.8 — Field Trips, Going-Outs & Off-Campus Activities

(For Elementary only)

Safety Requirements:

- Signed parent permission
- Low ratios
- Attendance taken before departure, upon arrival, and before return
- Emergency contact binder accompanies group
- First aid kit & student medications brought
- Cell phones for communication
- Clear teacher positioning assignments

Going-Outs (Elementary) are student-planned outings aligned with Montessori curriculum and require additional preparation.

10.9 — Elopement Prevention & Response

An elopement is when a child leaves a supervised area without permission.

FMS prevents elopement by:

- Maintaining controlled entry systems (key fobs, alarms)
- Supervising doorways and gates
- Using headcounts proactively
- Maintaining visual supervision

If a Child Attempts to Leave:

- Teacher intervenes immediately
- Child is guided back to safety
- Additional staff notified if needed

If a Child Leaves the Area (rare emergency):

1. Alert Head of School/Admin on Duty
2. Secure all other children
3. If not located within 2 minutes, Call 911 immediately
4. Document incident and debrief with family

5. Implement corrective action plan

Prevention practices make elopement extremely rare.

10.10 — End-of-Day Safety

Before closing, teachers:

- Check all indoor and outdoor spaces
- Verify that all children have been signed out
- Confirm medication box is secured
- Lock materials and sensitive items
- Complete the daily attendance reconciliation
- Ensure all exterior doors are locked

The building may only close once all children have been safely dismissed.

10.11 — Security Systems at FMS

To maintain a secure campus, FMS uses:

- Key fob access for families
- Fingerprint clock-in/out for staff
- Alarmed gates
- Locked exterior doors
- Visibility windows in classrooms
- Security camera systems
- Professional security service support, as applicable

Any malfunction must be reported immediately.

10.12 — Internal Safety Audits

FMS conducts ongoing safety audits to inspect:

- Playgrounds
- Fences and gates
- Classroom materials
- Emergency equipment
- Fire extinguishers
- First aid kits
- Lighting
- Flooring and tripping hazards

Audits occur regularly and after any major incident or weather event.

10.13 — Staff Responsibilities for Safety

Every staff member must:

- Arrive on time and prepared
- Maintain professional boundaries
- Use calm, clear communication
- Stay in ratio at all times
- Attend trainings and refreshers
- Report safety concerns immediately
- Follow supervision protocols precisely

Safety is a shared responsibility and a non-negotiable priority.

10.14 — Emergency Communication

In an emergency, FMS communicates through:

- Brightwheel alerts
- Phone calls to primary guardians
- Class cellphones / internal communication systems
- Email (for follow-up)

Families should ensure their Brightwheel contact information is always up to date.

10.15 — Child Safety & Mandated Reporting

All staff are Mandated Reporters and must immediately report suspected:

- Abuse
- Neglect
- Maltreatment
- Unsafe living conditions

Reports are made to DHS Child Abuse Hotline and documented internally.

Staff are not permitted to notify families before or after a report.

10.16 — Staff Conduct & Professional Safety Expectations

All staff must maintain:

- Appropriate tone and language
- Gentle, respectful touch
- Professional boundaries
- Mental and emotional presence
- Ethical behavior
- Team communication and support

Prohibited at all times:

- Yelling
- Rough movements
- Sarcasm or shaming

- Phone use unrelated to job responsibilities
 - Leaving a classroom out of ratio
 - Arguing in front of children
 - Turning back to children for prolonged periods
-

10.17 — Safety Culture at FMS

FMS is committed to a culture where:

- Safety concerns are reported without hesitation
- Questions and clarifications are encouraged
- Staff support each other proactively
- Teamwork enhances supervision
- Children feel secure, supported, and respected

A strong safety culture protects our entire community.

SECTION 11 — READINESS & TRANSITION GUIDES

Montessori transitions occur at key developmental periods and are essential to the child's success in each program level. Because the Montessori curriculum is built in multi-year cycles, each transition must be thoughtful, developmentally aligned, and carefully planned.

Transitions at FMS are:

- Child-centered
- Collaborative between school and families
- Based on readiness—not just age
- Designed to protect the child's confidence and independence

This section explains readiness indicators, transition processes, and family expectations.

11.1 — Overview of Montessori Transitions

Children move through the following program cycles at FMS:

Infant → Toddler → Early Primary

Early Primary → Primary

Primary → Elementary

Each transition considers social, emotional, cognitive, and physical readiness—not solely chronological age.

11.2 — Transition INFANT to TODDLER (0-12 months)

Developmental Indicators

Teachers look for:

- Eating solid foods as the primary source of nutrition
- Ability to sit independently
- Close to walking or taking independent steps
- Longer wake windows
- Transitioning toward one nap
- Interest in exploring the environment beyond infant materials

Classroom Skills

- Sitting in a child-sized chair at the table for meals
- Beginning to feed self with hands or utensils
- Drinking from a child-sized cup with support
- Resting on a floor cot

Emotional Readiness

- Comfort separating from primary caregiver
- Ability to be soothed by teachers
- Curiosity and engagement in a busier classroom environment

Family Preparation

Parents can support by:

- Offering regular opportunities for self-feeding
- Providing a consistent one-nap schedule when developmentally appropriate
- Encouraging movement and opportunities to practice walking
- Practicing short separations from parents

Teachers collaborate closely with families to determine the best time for transition.

11.3 —Transition TODDLER to EARLY PRIMARY (12–18 months)

Developmental Indicators

Teachers look for:

- Walking or pulling to stand
- Increased mobility
- Interest in exploring materials independently
- Emerging language (gestures, babbles, first words)
- Curiosity about peers
- Ability to eat table food
- Longer wake windows
- Reduced need for individual sleep routines

Classroom Skills

- Sitting at a toddler-sized table
- Using simple practical life materials
- Enjoying songs and group activities

- Beginning to imitate movements

Emotional Readiness

- Comfort separating from primary caregiver
- Ability to be soothed by teachers
- Curiosity outweighing clinginess in new spaces

Family Preparation

Parents can support by:

- Encouraging self-feeding
- Offering opportunities to walk and climb
- Labeling objects and modeling simple language
- Practicing short transitions away from parents

Teachers collaborate closely with families to determine the best time for transition.

11.4 — Transition from EARLY PRIMARY to PRIMARY (2.5–3 years)

This is often the most anticipated transition for families. It occurs when children show readiness across multiple domains.

Key Readiness Indicators

1. Toileting Independence

This is non-negotiable for the Primary program.

Children must be able to:

- Recognize the need to use the toilet
- Manage clothing independently
- Wipe independently
- Stay dry for extended periods

- Remain dry during nap

2. Language Readiness

- Uses expressive language to communicate needs
- Follows 2–3 step directions
- Demonstrates expanding vocabulary

3. Social-Emotional Skills

- Separates easily from caregiver
- Shows interest in working near peers
- Demonstrates early empathy (“Are you okay?”)
- Is beginning to regulate emotions with teacher cues

4. Cognitive Readiness

- Ability to focus on a task for short periods
- Curiosity about letters, numbers, sorting, matching
- Imitates practical life tasks

5. Practical Skills

- Carries a tray
- Cleans spills with guidance
- Returns work to shelves
- Participates in group routines

Transition Process

Teachers will:

- Observe the child over several weeks
 - Communicate with parents
 - Schedule a transition meeting if needed
 - Introduce the child gradually to the Primary classroom
 - Support the child as they acclimate to new expectations
-

11.5 — Transition from PRIMARY to ELEMENTARY

This transition represents a major shift from concrete learning to abstract reasoning.

Key Developmental Readiness Indicators

1. Academic Readiness

- Recognizes phonograms and blends sounds
- Writes simple sentences (phonetic spelling acceptable)
- Reads independently or is close to reading
- Understands basic math concepts (units, tens, hundreds)
- Demonstrates understanding of addition/subtraction with materials

2. Social Readiness

- Works cooperatively with peers
- Demonstrates leadership within Primary
- Takes turns and negotiates conflicts
- Shows empathy and flexibility

3. Emotional Readiness

- Longer attention span
- Interest in big-picture ideas (“Why?” “How?”)
- Increased sense of justice and fairness
- Can manage frustration with support

4. Independence

- Cares for materials responsibly
- Cleans up after work
- Follows multi-step directions
- Begins to self-correct mistakes

Cosmic Curriculum Readiness

Children should show curiosity about:

- Time

- History
- Cultures
- Science
- The natural world

Transition Process

- Observations from Primary Lead
 - Assessments as needed
 - Transition meeting with families
 - Gradual visits to Lower Elementary
 - Team decision between Primary & Elementary leads + HOS
-

11.6 — Family Role in Supporting Transitions

Families can support successful transitions by:

Establishing Routines

- Consistent bedtime
- Predictable meal times
- Morning routines that allow independence

Encouraging Independence

- Allowing children to dress themselves
- Giving responsibility for small chores
- Encouraging problem-solving before intervening

Supporting Emotional Resilience

- Talking positively about change
- Modeling calm responses to new experiences
- Offering choices to build confidence

Communicating with Teachers

- Sharing changes at home
- Asking questions early
- Trusting the school’s professional observations

Avoiding Common Pitfalls

- Rushing a child into the next level
- Comparing children to peers
- Overemphasizing academics instead of readiness
- Expecting a “perfect” transition instantly

Montessori transitions are seasonal, not instantaneous.

11.7 — How Teachers Support Transition Success

Teachers facilitate transitions by:

- Observing each child’s developmental needs
- Preparing materials and lessons that scaffold readiness
- Providing opportunities for leadership within current classrooms
- Offering gradual exposure to the next environment
- Meeting with parents to discuss progress and questions
- Collaborating across programs to ensure consistency

Transitions are collaborative, respectful, and intentional.

11.8 — Transition Benchmarks (Summary)

Transition

Core Readiness Areas

Notable Requirements

| | | |
|-------------------------------|--|--|
| Infant → Toddler | Movement, exploration, basic communication | Eating table food, stable mobility |
| Toddler → Early Primary | Movement, exploration, basic communication | Walk confidently |
| Early Primary → Primary | Toileting independence, language, social awareness | Fully toilet independent |
| Primary → Lower Elementary | Academic foundations, social skills, curiosity | Reading emerging, strong math foundations |
| Lower → Upper Elementary | Executive function, leadership, academic readiness | Independence and project skills |

11.8 — Final Notes on Transitions

- Transitions are not driven solely by birthdays.
- Readiness must be demonstrated consistently.
- The school makes final placement decisions with the child’s best interest at heart.
- Children who transition at the right time thrive academically and socially.
- Families who partner with FMS typically find the process smooth and rewarding.

Montessori transitions are a gift, not a rush. Each child’s journey is unique and deeply respected.

SECTION 12 — FAMILY HANDBOOK ACKNOWLEDGMENT FORM

This acknowledgment confirms that families have received, read, and agree to follow the policies and procedures outlined in the Fayetteville Montessori School Family Handbook for the 2026–2027 school year.

The handbook includes policies related to:

- Montessori philosophy and program structure
- Admissions, enrollment, and financial obligations
- Daily operations, drop-off/pick-up, and attendance
- Health, illness, medication, and safety procedures
- Behavior guidance and conflict resolution
- Communication expectations and parent partnership
- Montessori curriculum and classroom practices
- Meals, nutrition, rest, toileting, and personal care
- Active supervision and safety protocols
- Readiness and transition guidelines

By signing below, families acknowledge the following:

Parent/Guardian Acknowledgment

1. Receipt of Handbook

I/we acknowledge that we have received the Fayetteville Montessori School Family Handbook and understand it is our responsibility to read and become familiar with all school policies. This Handbook outlines policies and procedures. The signed Enrollment and Tuition Agreement(s) govern tuition obligations and supersedes this handbook in the event of conflict.

2. Agreement to Follow Policies

I/we agree to follow all policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbook, including those related to:

- Communication
- Attendance
- Tuition and billing
- Health and safety
- Behavior and conduct

- Emergency procedures
- Drop-off and pick-up protocols
- Parent involvement and boundaries

3. Partnership with the School

I/we understand that FMS emphasizes mutual respect, professionalism, and partnership between school and home. I/we agree to communicate respectfully with all staff and administrators and to work collaboratively in the best interest of my/our child.

4. Updates to Policies

I/we understand that policies may be updated throughout the school year to ensure safety, licensing compliance, or operational needs. Notice of changes will be communicated through Brightwheel and/or email.

5. Media & Photo Consent

- I/we give permission for my child's photo/video to be used for internal school purposes (Brightwheel updates, classroom documentation).
- I/we give permission for my child's photo/video to be used for school marketing (website, social media, printed materials).
- I/we do not grant photo permissions.

6. Emergency Medical Authorization

I/we authorize FMS staff to obtain emergency medical care for my/our child if I/we cannot be reached immediately.

7. Acknowledgment of Montessori Transitions

I/we understand that placement decisions and transitions between program levels are based on readiness, safety, and professional team recommendations—not solely age.

SIGNATURES

Child's Name: _____

Program Level: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____

Parent/Guardian Name: _____

Parent/Guardian Signature: _____

Date: _____