



Thacher Montessori School Family
Handbook
2018-19

From the Interim Head of School

Greetings New and Returning Families,

I hope you've all had plenty of quality time with family and friends this summer and are feeling ready to help your child start a new school year at Thacher Montessori. I am pleased to offer this revised 2018-2019 Family Handbook. My colleagues and I worked this summer to incorporate several changes as well as improvements in the presentation of the Family Handbook. There is a lot of information to cover, and I encourage all families to set aside time to read through the entire book to be well-informed on our policies and procedures for this year.

At the heart of Thacher Montessori is our mission statement, core values and anti-discrimination policy that you will find on page 5. We hope you will embrace these important tenants as we have, as we strive to strengthen the bonds in our Thacher community. The section entitled The School Day, pages 7-9, will provide you with the information you need to be ready for the first day of school. There is also important information to assist you in a timely drop off and pick up of your child(ren) and how before and after school care operate. An impactful change to this year's handbook is the attention we are placing on the health and safety of all the children in our care, pages 11-13; 23. Our school nurse is dedicated to strict adherence to MA mandated health regulations and attention to allergy protocol. She is offering multiple staff trainings to keep us abreast and aware of best practices. Parents may always contact the nurse with any concerns or questions.

Find ways to get connected! This year our Thacher Parent Council will be connecting current parents with our newcomers to reinstate the "buddy" program. Your "buddy" family will be available to facilitate a smooth transition into our community and to answer your questions. New families will also be personally welcomed by your child(ren's) lead guide at back to school orientation and visiting day. *Notes Home* will be electronically sent to you each Friday to keep you abreast of happenings around Thacher and you will receive pictures and/or notes from your lead guide, as they share a glimpse of classroom life. Parents are encouraged to make connections through our new Facebook group chat and by the end of November the new Thacher website redesign will be available bringing many improvements.

I relate to how busy families are with careers, commuting, new births, and making time for family. With all you have on your plate I hope you will save some room for participation in the Thacher community.

Again, welcome to the 2018-2019 academic year at Thacher Montessori. Delve right in to our new and improved Family Handbook and enjoy this exciting read!

Warmly,

Deba Dunn Palma
Interim Head of School

I. Our School

Our Mission

Thacher Montessori School is a diverse, collaborative learning community. Through the Montessori method we embrace each child'

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Core Values

Montessori

Our core values are grounded in a strong foundation of authentic Montessori philosophy and pedagogy, which guides our curriculum, community, and school culture.

- We have deep respect for each child's individual strengths, needs, background, and interests.
- We approach learning and teaching with a focus on hands-on work, exploration, and discovery.
- Our classrooms and outdoor environments are carefully prepared to be beautiful, inviting, and inspiring.



Academics

We are committed to creating a challenging, dynamic, and robust academic program, developing students who have a love of learning, value hard work, and strive to reach their full potential.

- We nurture collaboration, self-expression, problem-solving, and critical thinking skills.
- We nurture creativity and curiosity, giving students the freedom for in-depth exploration of individual interests.
- We enable exploration and discovery and understand that mistakes are part of the learning process.
- We are dedicated to providing strong, creative, and excellent teachers.

Balance

As a school community, we value and strive to achieve balance in our approach to work and learning.

- For our students this means allowing time to play, discover, be creative, spend time with their families, and explore interests outside of school.
- We promote a work/life balance to support each person's well-being and individual growth.
- We strive for a peaceful and supportive environment that allows everyone the time, space, and resources to do their best.
- We work towards a holistic experience that brings together academics and real life experiences that speak to the development of the whole child.

Community

We value a community that is inclusive, collaborative, and connected.

- We are welcoming to new students, families, teachers, and members of the wider community
- We treat each other with kindness and caring, and build relationships at all levels, between all community members.
- We strive to communicate openly, honestly, and with positive energy

Diversity

We value all types of diversity and encourage active participation from all members of our community.

- We create and foster an inclusive and diverse environment.
- We educate our community to understand diversity in the world around us.
- We nurture confidence and a strong sense of self in our students.

Environment

We value the natural world, both as an extension to the learning in the classroom and as an important way for our community to join together in caring for the earth and its resources. We also value the Montessori prepared environment as a place designed to inspire and support optimal learning.

- We integrate outdoor education at every level, with daily access to outdoor and natural spaces.
- Nature education, exploration, and travel are a core part of our philosophy, learning, community building, and rites of passage.
- Our indoor environment is carefully prepared and cultivated to be a place of calm, child-centered, and transformative learning experiences.

Respect

We value and demonstrate respect for ourselves, one another, and the world around us.

- We value each other, our work, and our ideas.
- We exercise grace and courtesy, treat each other with kindness, and seek to cultivate positive, respectful relationships.
- We believe in working collaboratively and strive to resolve conflicts in peaceful and productive ways.
- We teach conflict resolution throughout the school.

Non-Discrimination Statement

Thacher is a nonsectarian Montessori school that does not discriminate against individuals in its admissions, employment policies, and procedures on the basis of race, color, creed, religion, sex, pregnancy or pregnancy-related condition, marital status, political beliefs, sexual orientation, gender identity, family style, national origin, cultural heritage, ancestry, age, physical or mental disability, genetic information, veteran status, military service, application for military service, or any other status protected by applicable law.

Montessori Philosophy

Montessori education is a proven, systematic approach to serving the developmental needs of children from birth to adulthood. Rooted in the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, the method combines careful observation of the child with an understanding of child development that helps guides (teachers) identify the appropriate type and level of work for each individual child at the right time. Each child is presented materials and experiences at the optimal time for their learning—and is offered the freedom, time, and space to explore. In this way we maximize each child's potential and foster a love of learning, intrinsic motivation, self-confidence, respect for others, independence, and social awareness.

Accreditation

Thacher Montessori School is accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS) and the Association of Independent Schools of New England (AISNE). The Toddler and Children's House levels are recognized by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI).

Incorporation

Thacher Montessori School is incorporated in the Commonwealth of Massachusetts as a not-for-profit educational institution overseen by a Board of Trustees, which consists of current and alumni parents and other interested members of the business community. The School is tax-exempt under section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of the Internal Revenue Service.

II. The School Day

Before School Care

Before School Care starts at 7:00 AM. Parents must park and walk children through the gate to the third set of doors on the south end of the building. Pre-registration is required for before school care. If children are not registered for before school care on a yearly basis, families should call the main office at least 24 hours before care is needed; drop in children will be accepted, as space allows. Pre-registration is critical to manage the number of children in before school care and will be strictly enforced.

After School Care

The After School Care (ASC) Program runs from pick-up time until 4:45 or 6:00 PM. Those children not registered for the full year may come on a drop-in basis, as space allows, for an additional fee. Please call the front desk to arrange drop-in care for your child.

Pick-up from the ASC Program at 4:45 PM is in the pick-up circle. ASC staff members bring the children out to the circle and help them into your car. If you need to collect your child before or after 4:45 PM, you will need to park your car and ring the buzzer at the front door to be let in. Should the ACS staff be outside with the children, you will be directed to the appropriate playground. You may take your child after checking in with the ASC staff and signing the dismissal log.

All children must be picked up by 6:00 PM sharp. A late pickup fee will be assessed if you are late. Out of courtesy to our ASC staff, we request that you adhere conscientiously to this final pick-up time. The school reserves the right to take additional steps to ensure a prompt pick up by 6:00 PM if a family repeatedly violates this policy.

If you need to contact the ASC Program, please call the Front Desk at 617-361-2522, extension 10.

After School Enrichment

Various enrichment classes are offered to Elementary and Adolescent Program students after school. The offerings for each session will be announced via email and through *Notes Home*, our weekly newsletter. There is a fee to participate in each enrichment class, which varies depending on the complexity of the class. Enrichment fees are reduced for those children enrolled in ASC year-round to account for the fees already paid. All participants must register online.

Pick-up from enrichment classes happens in the circle. If you need to collect your child early, please proceed to the front door, ring the bell, and wait for someone to receive you. The front desk can direct you to the appropriate room to meet your child.

Drop Off

Elementary and Adolescent students arrive between 8:00 and 8:15 AM. Children's House students arrive between 8:20 and 8:40 AM. Parents should pull into the drop-off circle where Thacher staff open the car doors to allow the children to get out of the car on their own (the youngest are helped by Thacher staff) and walk into the school by themselves.

Since independence is a large part of the child's work in a Montessori school, please respect your child's ability to be guided by the staff to leave the car, walk to his or her classroom, take off shoes, coat or sweater, put on indoor shoes, and walk into the classroom. You can help your child develop a sense of empowerment and self-sufficiency by encouraging a brief and peaceful goodbye in your car at morning arrival time. It should not be necessary for you to get out of your car to assist the staff. In case of inclement weather, the staff will have umbrellas. Please do not send umbrellas with your children.

Toddler Drop Off

The Toddler Program begins at 8:15 AM. Families with toddlers have a designated parking area that is located to the right of the building, near the gazebo. Toddlers should walk with their parents along the sidewalk to the front door and proceed down the hall to the inside door of the toddler classroom. The exercise of walking into school gives them practice and begins their journey to independence.

Sibling Drop Off

Families with children or carpool members in both Children's House and the Elementary or Adolescent Program can drop all children off between 8:00 and 8:20 AM. Older siblings will be taught how to walk younger siblings to Before School Care before going to their own classrooms. There is no charge for Before School Care in this instance.

Families with toddler siblings may join the drop-off line for the older child to be greeted by staff and allowed to enter the building independently. The parent can then proceed farther up in the circle to park at the curb, help the toddler out, and walk the toddler through the front doors to the toddler classroom.

Late Drop Off

Should you need to drop your child off late, please park and walk your child into the front foyer of the school. A staff member will ensure that your child walks independently from the foyer to his or her classroom.

Tardiness

Consistency in arriving to school on time each day helps children develop a positive attitude towards their work and assists them in developing social skills and a greater sense of community. It also eliminates disruption to the classroom environment. In order to benefit fully from the Montessori environment, as well as to minimize the disruption it places on the classroom as a whole, children are expected to arrive to Thacher on time each day. While occasional late arrivals are understandable, chronic lateness will be addressed by the assistant head or head of school.

Absences

Thacher Montessori follows Chapter 76, section 1 of the Massachusetts General Laws which states that all children between the ages of six and sixteen must attend school. The school may excuse up to seven-day sessions or fourteen half-day sessions in any period of six months.

Pick Up

Car Seat Policy

Massachusetts child car seat laws require children to be in a car seat or booster seat until they turn 8 years old or until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall. Thacher staff will not place a child in a car without appropriate child seating and safety restraints. Children being transported on field trips must have proper car seats or safety belts when traveling in private vehicles.

11:30 Pick Up

This program is available to three-year-old children in their first year of Children's House. The classroom assistants bring children outside and help the children into their car seats once cars have pulled up in the circle. Each family will be issued a nametag for their car visor for easy identification of vehicles.

Afternoon Pick Up

Children are dismissed at the traffic circle under the supervision of the guides or assistants. Each family will be issued a nametag for their car visor for easy identification of vehicles. Thacher runs a staggered pick up process to alleviate traffic congestion. The schedule runs as follows:

- Children's House: 2:45 – 3:00 PM
- Lower Elementary: 3:00 – 3:15 PM
- Upper Elementary: 3:15 – 3:30 PM
- Adolescent Program: 3:30 – 3:45 PM
- Toddler Program 3:45 – 4:00 PM

Except for families with a Toddler student, younger siblings are dismissed with their eldest sibling at the eldest sibling's pick-up time. The younger siblings are kept in sibling after school care for no additional charge. For families with a Toddler sibling, the older student stays in after school care until 3:45 PM. Both siblings will be brought to their car by the Toddler staff.

We ask that elementary level parents not arrive early for pick up due to traffic considerations. Our parking lot cannot accommodate all of the extra cars, and excess traffic on Route 138 is dangerous. Please, if you are early, park at the Trailside Museum until it's time to pick up your child; you and your fellow parents will be safer and pick-up will run more smoothly.

Carpool

When arranging a carpool, please include the names of drivers of the carpool on your emergency release form (on the parent portal). You can add people to that form at any time. Once we have the necessary release information from you, you can let your child's guide know about the arrangements you have made, and we can release your child to the appropriate driver.

Alternative Contact Pick Up

For our students' protection and safety, no child will be released to anyone other than the parents without previous written authorization. Please fill out the emergency contact form on the parent portal and designate release contacts (those individuals authorized for regular pick up) and emergency contacts (individuals Thacher can contact in case of an emergency when you are not reachable). For your child's safety, we will check ID's on everyone who picks up (other than you). Please let your contacts know that they should expect to show identification in order to pick up your child.

Early Pick Up

If you need to pick up your child early please let the front desk and your child's teacher know via email, phone call, or written note so that your child will be ready to be dismissed at the appropriate time. Keep in mind that teachers are not always able to check email and phone messages during the school day. When you arrive to pick up your child, please sign your child out at the front desk, and a staff member will get your child from the class. Because other young children can become distressed when seeing someone else's parent, we ask you not to go directly to the classroom.

Running Late at Pick Up

If you find yourself running late at pick up, please call the front desk. If a parent or caregiver does not arrive during the dismissal time, the student will be walked to the ASC room, greeted by a staff member, and properly supervised until the parent or caregiver arrives. The parent or caregiver should pick up the child at ASC. The drop-in ASC fee applies in this situation.

III. Student Health and Safety

Health

Thacher has a registered nurse on site daily from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM. In addition, staff members are trained and certified in first aid, CPR, AED protocol, Concussion protocol, and EpiPen administration. Classroom staff members are not able to administer medication to students, except epinephrine via auto injector in cases of anaphylactic reaction. The school nurses are able to administer medications (such as Benadryl, Tylenol, and antibiotics) when they are on duty at the school. Students who are able to take medication with limited supervision **may** get permission to self-medicate once evaluated by the school nurse.

Thacher does not provide vision, hearing, growth, or postural screenings. These are routinely provided by the child's primary health care provider.

Medical Forms

Massachusetts State Law requires that every child have a physician's school/camp medical form on file at Thacher. Each family must provide a current form (exam within the last 12 months) when their child enters Thacher, and annually thereafter. All students must also submit a current health form to the nurse's office annually. This means providing an updated form immediately following your child's yearly physical exam with up-to-date immunizations and a physician's certificate showing dates and dose of the immunizations or an exemption for medical or religious reasons signed by the parent. This must be renewed on a yearly basis in accordance with the MA Department of Public Health.

Absences Due to Illness

While missing school can be difficult, children who are ill should remain at home. Students must remain at home until they have gone 24 hours without symptoms if any of the following conditions are present:

1. **Fever** (temperature at or above 100 degrees). Children must be fever-free without medication for 24 hours before returning to school.
2. **Vomiting**
3. **Diarrhea**
4. **Discharge** from the eyes, nose, or ears
5. **Sore throat**
6. **Persistent cough**
7. **Rash**
8. **Contagious disease.** Parents should call the school immediately if a student becomes ill with a contagious disease (such as conjunctivitis, chicken pox, fifth's disease, strep throat) so that we may alert the school community and notify other parents as to risks of exposure. The child must be checked by the school nurse prior to returning to school.
9. **Head lice** and/or any untreated nits (Head lice must be treated before children return to school.)

If your child is ill, please notify the school of his or her absence prior to 8:30 AM or as soon as possible. A note from your child's physician indicating safe return to school is required after any hospitalization. If the physician feels your child may return to school in the presence of the above listed symptoms a note from the physician will be required. Should a child become ill during the school day with any of the above listed signs or symptoms, the school will contact the child's parents and request that the child is taken home. If the child's parents cannot be located, the school will contact the people identified on the child's emergency contact form. Please provide the school with an accurate list of people authorized to pick up your child in the case of an illness or an emergency.

Nutrition

School policy requires the elimination trans-fats in foods/snacks offered to classrooms or in after school care programs. While families' choices for their own children are not limited, we urge families to adopt similar guidelines on trans-fats for the sake of their children's long-term health.

Life Threatening Food Allergy Policy

For the safety of all the students in the school, Thacher Montessori is a nut-free school. Please do not send anything containing or processed with nuts or peanuts to school for snack or for lunch. Please read food labels when packing lunches with products such as granola bars and wheat breads as these products are often processed with nuts. If your child's had a recent exposure to an allergen before coming to school, please alert the school nurse so that the student may be assessed periodically for rebound allergy symptoms (which may occur for 24-48 hours after exposure).

Thacher recognizes that students with documented life-threatening food allergies are considered disabled and are covered by the Americans with Disabilities Act, Public Law 93-112, and section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973. Thacher realizes its obligation to develop and implement guidelines for the care of food-allergic students. Such guidelines shall include, but not be limited to: staff development, strategies for identifying students at risk for life-threatening allergic reactions, means to manage student's allergy including avoidance measures, designation of typical symptoms, and following dosing instructions for medications. In addition, the school nurse is registered with the Massachusetts Department of Public Health to train unlicensed personnel and biannually trains staff to administer epinephrine by auto injector to students with life-threatening allergic conditions.

Medication

Medications of any kind, prescription or nonprescription, can only be administered with a physician's order and permission from the parent and or guardian. Medication must be in its original container (i.e., not loose in a plastic bag). Prescription medication must be provided in the original pharmacy container with the pharmacy label intact. A written record of the administration of medication, including the dose, date, time, and name of the person administering the medication is kept in the child's classroom or in the nurse's office. All medications must be delivered to the school nurse by an adult, along with the proper documentation. Parents are encouraged to ask their doctors if medications can be given in doses that do not require administration during school hours, but if a prescription medication is required to be taken during school hours please ask your pharmacy to provide separate bottles for school and home. No more than a thirty-day

supply of medicine may be delivered to school. Provided Epi-pens must contain both original Epi-pens provided by the pharmacy. Inhalers must be provided with the original pharmacy box and label as well as with a provided air spacer for administration.

Safety

Bullying Prevention and Intervention

Thacher Montessori prohibits all forms of bullying based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability. The civil rights of all community members are guaranteed by law. Thacher is committed to providing a physically and emotionally safe environment, free from all forms of bullying, for all students, staff, and other constituents. Please see Appendix 1 for the full Bullying Prevention and Intervention policy.

Fire Drills

Fire Drills are conducted regularly in coordination with the Milton Fire Department. Each guide discusses and practices proper fire drill procedures with her class in September and periodically throughout the school year. The Milton Police Department partners with us in doing lockdown drills. Only staff members will be involved in practicing lockdown drills.

Crisis Plan

Thacher has a comprehensive Crisis Manual with appropriate processes for dealing with in-school emergencies as well as environmental emergencies. The school works with Milton Police Department and receives instruction from their specialists on how to deal with intruders at the property. The staff are regularly drilled for lockdown emergencies and how to protect the students. A copy of this manual is available for viewing at the front desk.

Visitor Registration

All outside doors of the school remain locked during school hours. Press the buzzer to the left of the front door and listen for the click to be admitted. All visitors to the school must sign in at the front desk and wear a visitor's badge.

Car Safety

Massachusetts child car seat laws require children to be in a car seat or booster seat until they turn 8 years old or until they are 4 feet 9 inches tall. Thacher staff will not place a child in a car without appropriate child seating and safety restraints. Children being transported on field trips must have proper car seats or safety belts when traveling in private vehicles.

Massachusetts and Federal Laws & Regulations

Americans with Disabilities Act, Public Law 93-112

We are highly sensitive to the safety of our students and comply fully with all parts of PL 93-112. For more information on the details of PL 93-112 please call or come into the office.

Asbestos Free Policy

In compliance with the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act, Thacher is an asbestos-free building. A management plan is in place to ensure the continuity of this policy.

Environment-Friendly Pest Management Policy

In compliance with the Environmental Pest Management Act, Thacher uses only environmentally safe and human safe pesticides in the control of pests on the premises; an IPM plan is in place to ensure the continuity of this policy

Suspected Child Abuse or Neglect

Thacher Montessori School's lead guides, assistants, and administrators are mandated reporters under Massachusetts law. This mandate requires them to immediately make an oral or written report to the Department of Children and Families when, in their professional capacity, they have reasonable cause to believe that a child under the age of 18 years is suffering from abuse and/or neglect. In addition to filing with the Department a mandated reporter may notify local law enforcement or the Office of the Child Advocate of any suspected abuse and/or neglect.

If a staff member reports a concern to the head of school, the head will convene and chair a team to further establish cause and reason for filing. The head and team will consider whether to gather more information from parents before acting, and will determine whether to inform parents about the filing.

Reports of child abuse/neglect may be made directly to the Department of Children and Families at their website (www.mass.gov/dcf) or to the Department's hotline phone number: 800-792-5200.

For additional information about Massachusetts Law about Child Abuse and Neglect, please visit <http://www.mass.gov/courts/case-legal-res/law-lib/laws-by-subj/about/childabuse.html>.

IV. Being a Parent at Thacher

Peace and Safety at Thacher Montessori School

At Thacher we strive to maintain a safe and peaceful environment in which all members of the community can work and learn cooperatively. We, the adults in the school, adhere to the same standards of behavior that we expect from the children. To help you reinforce the same standards with your children in the school and for the safety of the whole community, we ask the following:

- Please sign in and out at the front desk and wear a visitor badge when you visit the school.
- Please do not interrupt the classroom when it is in session by entering, calling, or otherwise disrupting the important work of the children. You are always welcome to schedule a time to speak to a guide or observe in a classroom. If you need something delivered to your child, please ask for assistance at the front desk.
- Please avoid using cell phones or a loud voice in the school hallways.
- When you pick up your child from the classroom or ASC, please reinforce our consistent message to the children of walking calmly and quietly in the hallway and allowing your child to carry his or her own belongings.

Parent/Guide Communication

Communication with your child's guide is important in both urgent situations and for ongoing dialog regarding your child. We encourage strong communication from the very beginning of the year starting with Orientation and continuing throughout the year. Please do not hesitate to call with questions about the Montessori classroom, your child's experiences, or any other concern you may have. We see ourselves in partnership with you and welcome your questions and conversation. The various communication channels are listed below.

- **Phone Call**

You can reach your child's guide by calling the school and leaving a message either at the front desk or the classroom voicemail. If you have an urgent message that pertains to the current day, you should call the front desk at extension 10 and leave a message. Guides focus completely on the children during the day and do not answer the phone or check messages. Your child's guide will return your call as promptly as possible and you can discuss any questions or issues you may have at that time.

- **Email**

Your child's guide will provide you with an email address so that you can reach him or her with questions and concerns. Again, guides focus completely on the children during the day and do not check email. Your child's guide will likely check email after the children go home, so reserve this mode of contact for non-urgent communication.

- **Conferences**

Two official parent conferences are scheduled during the year, once in the fall and again in the spring. This is a fantastic opportunity for you to sit alone with your child's guide for an uninterrupted conversation. Details about conferences and how they are scheduled will be communicated in the school's weekly newsletter, *Notes Home*.

- **Meetings**

If you would like to meet with your child's guide, please call and schedule a meeting. You may request a meeting at a mutually agreed-upon time with the guide at any point during the year.

Please note that school meetings and pick up or drop off times are not conducive to meaningful conversation with staff. At pick up especially, guides need to focus on placing each child expeditiously and safely in a car. They cannot take time to talk at that point in the day. Please understand that they care about you and your child's day, but a phone call or email with questions will work much better.

Home/School Communication

Class Parents

Each classroom has a class parent (or two) responsible for helping the guide with particular projects and communicating with the rest of the class when specific help is needed. You may be contacted by your class parent to help with a field trip, volunteer to do a classroom presentation, or with various other opportunities.

Notes Home

The school sends home information pertinent to the coming weeks in *Notes Home*, which will be sent to your email address every Friday. You will find upcoming events, important updates, and many opportunities to stay connected in *Notes Home*. We expect parents to read this communication every week.

Website

The school website contains a wealth of information for parents. We post copies of *Notes Home*, printable forms, school calendars, and other news. The website is updated often and is designed for you to conveniently access the information you need. Check it often: www.thacherschool.org.

Social Media

Thacher maintains an active presence on several social media sites, including Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram. Following the school's activity on these sites will keep you informed of the many educational and enrichment activities that go on during life at school. Links to Thacher social media sites are located on the homepage, as well as the "Blogs and Social Media" page in the Thacher Parents section of the school website.

Parent Education

The partnership between Thacher Montessori School and the families we serve goes beyond the children in the classroom. We run a program of parent education designed to enhance and enrich the Thacher experience for the whole family.

Orientation

Orientation is the first opportunity you have to communicate with your child's guide. The guide will give you information for the year, answer questions, and set you at ease about the beginning of the school year. It is critical that you attend Orientation; both new and returning families are strongly urged to be present. If you have an unavoidable conflict, please call your child's guide ahead of time so that he or she can send home any pertinent information.

Education Events

Thacher guides offer events for the parents in their classrooms to gain further understanding of the Montessori method and materials. This is a wonderful way to gain understanding about the way in which

your child is learning every day and provides the perfect forum for questions. There is also an opportunity for parents to learn more about the next classroom level that their child will experience at Thacher. Guides share the highlights of their classrooms with parents from lower level classrooms.

Parent/Child Morning and Afternoon

These parent/child events allow your child to share his or her classroom with you in a manner completely different from a simple observation. Your child will show you work that he or she is doing in the classroom and may present it to you as the guides have presented it to him or her. In this way you are able to take part in the experience of being in your child's classroom as a participant and your child may experience actively sharing his or her knowledge with you.

Classroom Observations

Classroom observations can be scheduled from mid-October through April. We encourage you to schedule an observation in your child's classroom and/or in other classrooms. They last from 20 to 45 minutes and allow you to see your child in his/her classroom setting, or to see a classroom other than your child's where you can observe the dynamics of a room without distracting your child from his/her day. Observations are generally done between 9 and 11 AM. Please call the front desk to schedule your observation any time after October 16.

Guest Speakers

Thacher hosts speakers to talk to our community about Montessori topics as well as parenting in general. Our evening speakers have addressed everything from bringing Montessori into your own home to Internet safety. Evening speakers are announced in *Notes Home*.

The Journey

The Journey is an opportunity to experience the breadth of Montessori education through the presentation of sample lessons by Thacher students. This event is designed to provide a glimpse into the way your children learn and explore through the use of the Montessori materials -- and how they gain and expand their knowledge as they move through each subsequent level from the Toddler Program through the Adolescent Program. The evening will help you see the joy that comes through spontaneous activity in education and the benefit of self-directed engagement in establishing tendencies for lifelong learning.

Parent Resources

If you have concerns about your child's classroom experience, please contact your child's guide. You are welcome and encouraged to make an appointment with the assistant head or the head of school with questions about the Montessori method, the learning environment, or your child's particular experience at Thacher.

Another resource is the Parent Library, which is located in the front hallway. The book collection includes resources on Montessori and is available to all parents. Simply check out books on the clipboard located on the library shelf.

The following list of books is suggested as recommended reading for Thatcher parents. Many of these books are available in our Parent Library.

Books about Montessori Education

- Trevor Eissler, Montessori Madness
- Rita Kramer, Maria Montessori: A Biography
- Angeline Lillard, Montessori: The Science Behind the Genius
- Paula Polk Lillard, Montessori: A Modern Approach
- Paula Polk Lillard, Montessori Today
- Maria Montessori, Advanced Montessori Method (2 volumes)
- Maria Montessori, The Absorbent Mind
- Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence
- Maria Montessori, The Montessori Method
- Maria Montessori, The Secret of Childhood
- Maria Montessori, To Educate the Human Potential
- Heather Pederson, One Hundred Child Development Tips: Insights and Suggestions from Montessori Teachers
- Heather & Jason Pedersen, What is Montessori?

Books about the developmental needs of children and childhood

- T. Berry Brazelton, Touchpoints Three to Six: Your Child's Behavioral and Emotional Development
- JoAnn Deak, Girls Will Be Girls
- David Elkind, Parenting Your Teenager
- Robert Evans, Family Matters
- Brooks Goldstein, Raising Resilient Children
- Daniel Goleman, Emotional Intelligence: Why It Can Matter More Than IQ
- Dan Kindlon and Michael Thompson, Raising Cain
- Sara Lawrence-Lightfoot, The Essential Conversation
- Sharon Maxwell, The Talk
- Mary Pipher, Reviving Ophelia, Saving Selves of Adolescent Girls
- William Pollack, Real Boys
- Madeline Swift, Getting It Right With Children
- Jim Taylor, Positive Pushing

Community Events

Potluck Dinners

In the fall, class parents organize a potluck dinner for each class. Classroom potlucks have taken a variety of forms, but are sure to be a well-attended opportunity to get to know fellow parents.

Rising Up Ceremony

At the end of the school year, students who have completed their current program level (Toddler, CH, LE, UE, or AP) and would rise to the next level at Thacher receive a certificate in the school's Rising Ceremony. Special recognition is given to Thacher's eighth grade graduates.

All families are encouraged and welcome to attend the Rising. Musical performances by the students showcase some of their accomplishments from music class. The graduating 8th grader speeches are the highlight of this end-of-year recognition, providing us with tears, laughter, and swelling us with pride in their individual growth and accomplishments.

Families with young children may leave at anytime during the ceremony, should your child get restless. You are welcome to go back to the school playground and your child can enjoy the play area.

End of Year Picnic

After the graduation ceremony there is a school-wide gathering. The event provides a closing to the year as well as a casual setting for adults and children to share time with friends before saying goodbye for the summer. The school typically provides a cake and families bring a picnic lunch.

Thacher Parent Council (TPC)

The Thacher Parents Council (TPC) supports the mission of Thacher Montessori School and helps to strengthen our school community by sponsoring events for families, parent education, and fundraising. Every parent and guardian of a Thacher student is a member of the TPC. The TPC welcomes all parent volunteers and invites you to share your enthusiasm, talent, and ideas with our community. The TPC oversees class parents, staff appreciation efforts, and holds several community events each year. Volunteers are needed to coordinate and assist with each event. Although the TPC may choose to launch a new event, these four events have been held for several years.

- **Back to School Picnic**
The picnic is a kick-off to the new school year and is usually held on a Sunday in September.
- **Pancake Brunch**
In late October or early November, all families are invited for a Sunday brunch. Traditionally, the TPC serves pancakes and other breakfast fare.
- **Around the World Brunch**
The Around the World Brunch is a celebration of world cultures enjoyed through a potluck of food dishes contributed by our families. This event is usually held on a Sunday in January.
- **Thacher Benefit Auction**
The TPC holds a benefit auction for Thacher each spring. Past events have included raffles, dinner, live music, and both a silent and live auction. Money raised from the event impacts the daily lives of

our students by providing financial aid, or through purchases of items such as playground equipment and specialized music materials. The event is usually adults-only and held off-site.

Development

One measure of the strength of an independent school is the level of engagement of its community. There are many ways to be engaged at Thacher, including volunteering, making a financial gift or gift-in-kind (books, equipment, etc.). By sharing time, skills, and resources, everyone can help support the school in a meaningful way.

Volunteering

There are several opportunities for parents to volunteer, both in and out of the classroom, as well as with the Thacher Parents Council. Parents are asked to fill out a volunteer interest form at the time of enrollment. Background checks are required: see Section V. Policies and Procedures for information on volunteer requirements.

Fundraising

Fundraising is crucial to our ability to deliver on our mission and it creates a solid foundation of philanthropy upon which we build a bright future. Our core giving campaign is the Annual Fund. Annual giving is essential to helping us reach beyond the limits of tuition dollars on a yearly basis as we strive to provide the best education possible for our children. The annual fund is applied to initiatives that span the needs of all grade levels, enhance our children's educations through special programs and new opportunities, and enable us to reinforce the Thacher mission.

While your child is at Thacher we ask that you place the school among your top philanthropic organizations. As the generosity of previous families has helped create today's school community for your child, so will your generosity help to build a robust school community going forward for current students and those who have yet to walk through the door. The participation of our parent community is also an important measure of success in the Annual Fund. Foundations and corporations look at parent participation when assessing the engagement of a community within a not-for-profit organization and use that information as a criterion for funding. We are grateful to our parents, alumni/ae, grandparents, staff, and friends for their commitment to the school.

There are other fundraising campaigns outside of the Annual Fund. Among these is a scholarship fund set up to honor our school founder, Maureen Coughlan. We also have an Adopt-A-Book program that allows friends and family members to honor a Thacher student or staff member by purchasing a library book in their name. Books that are adopted have special bookplates and students receive a special certificate letting them know of the new book(s). For more information, contact the librarian.

V. Policies and Procedures

Behavior and Discipline

Grace and courtesy are intricate parts of the curriculum at Thacher Montessori School. All members of our community are expected to respect one another, use manners with each other, care for their space, and care for the wider environment. Children at Thacher learn to resolve their conflicts with one another and to seek the help of an adult if necessary to aid them in peacefully solving problems. Please see the appropriate section of the handbook for more information about behavior and discipline as applied at each level.

When a student is enrolled at Thacher, it is understood that both the student and his or her parents agree to uphold all the rules and regulations of the school. Repeated failure to support these regulations will culminate in the school's requiring the withdrawal of the student. A child may be suspended or withdrawn from school for parent/guardian's failure to pay tuition in a timely manner, on-going behavioral issues, or for engaging in physically or emotionally violent behavior toward self or others.

Cancellations, Delays, and Early Closures

The head of school may make the independent decision to close school even though Milton public remains open. We have staff and families who live far from Thacher in towns that can sustain weather conditions more severe than Milton, making travel unsafe. Thacher will follow the schedule of the Milton public schools for all-day school closings due to weather, etc., and announcements will be made on the following TV stations: WBZ (channel 4) and WRKO (channel 7). Closings also will be communicated through email and posted on Thacher's social media sites. You may also call the Thacher cancellation and information line for closing announcements: 781-897-5720.

The head of school will make decisions about mid-day or early closings and will notify parents by email, the website, and on the cancellation line. If a storm should start while school is in session, please call us if you are not going to be at your listed phone numbers. We must be able to reach you in case of early dismissal. Should you feel that you need to retrieve your child early during a storm, you are welcome to do so. The safety of your child and family are our priority. You are free to pick up your child at any time.

Dress Code

While Thacher does not have a formal dress code, parents should help students to use discretion in what clothing is and is not appropriate for school. Student dress should allow for comfortable participation in the many physical and outdoor activities that are part of the school day. Clothing should cover the body adequately, be clean, and be within bounds of good taste in order not to create a distraction from work. The school discourages t-shirts and other items with commercial advertisement. Any political advocacy or messages of hate are prohibited. Hats may be worn to school, but not inside the school building. When clothing is deemed inappropriate, the classroom guide or head of school will call the parent(s). The head of school has the right to deem what is appropriate or inappropriate.

Some particular dress prohibitions:

- Exceptionally baggy clothing
- Tops with thin, spaghetti straps
- Inappropriately cut clothing
- Clothes that do not cover undergarments
- Extremely short shorts or mini skirts (these garments must be at least mid-thigh in length)
- Hats, hoods, or visors within the school building
- Shirts with inappropriate logos or messages
- Shirts that do not cover the entire torso

Clothing Considerations for Younger Children

Please encourage your child to choose clothing that he or she can easily manage. Beltless pants are appropriate for children under four years old. Snaps may be easier to manage than buttons. Care of self and independence in toileting and dressing are curricular goals in Montessori programs for younger children. Please support our effort to help your child dress himself or herself. Thacher Montessori is committed to keeping the environment as neutral, character-free, and media-free as possible.

Indoor Shoes

Once inside the school, children proceed to their cubbies where they hang up their belongings and change their shoes. Indoor shoes serve several purposes; for all children they keep outside dirt off the classroom floors and are the shoes your child will wear outside in case of a fire drill or other emergency evacuation. For the younger children indoor shoes present an opportunity to practice independence.

Please consider the possibility of a fire drill in rain or snow when selecting your child's indoor shoes. Bedroom slippers are not acceptable for this purpose. A slip-on, non-skid, comfortable pair of shoes for working on the floor is appropriate.

Lost and Found

We strongly urge you to label all of your child's clothing. When identified, a labeled piece of clothing can be placed back in the student's cubby and returned home. For unlabeled clothing, the Lost and Found is located in the far lobby by the gym. Parents are encouraged to check the Lost and Found regularly for any missing items. The contents of the Lost and Found are generally displayed on tables during parent conferences. Any items that are unclaimed after that period will be donated.

Food Allergy Policy

For the safety of all the students in the school, Thacher is a nut-free school (both tree nut and peanut). Please do not send anything containing or processed with nuts or peanuts to school for snack or for lunch. Please read food labels when packing lunches with products such as granola bars and wheat breads as these products are often processed with nuts. Please contact the lead guide to inquire about any allergies prior to providing food for a classroom event. The lead guide will collaborate with the school nurse to insure students with

allergies to various foods remain safe from exposure. See Section III: Student Health and Safety for more information.

Internet Use Policy for Students

The Internet is a vast network, linking computers around the world. It has great potential both for use and abuse. This policy exists to help ensure that students use this valuable resource in a safe and appropriate manner. For the most part, only students in Upper Elementary and the Adolescent Program will use the Internet as part of their classroom work. At the beginning of the school year, students and parents at the Upper Elementary and Adolescent Program levels will be asked to sign a user agreement. All Internet access done through Thacher Montessori School must be consistent with and in support of the School's curricular guidelines and educational objectives. Internet access through the School is a privilege. Thacher may revoke a student's privilege if it is abused. Inappropriate conduct via Thacher's Internet access system will be subject to disciplinary action in conformity with the School's rules and local and federal laws

Student Responsibility

Each student is expected to take individual responsibility for his or her appropriate use of the Internet. While all student use of the Internet is to be conducted under adult supervision, adults are not expected to monitor student use at every moment.

Administrators' Access to Student Files

Uses of Thacher's Internet access system are not private. Thacher may examine all student computer files and records. Administrators will cooperate in providing access to law enforcement authorities when required.

System Security and Resource Limits

Students are expected to follow procedures and guidelines that they are given to protect the security of the School's computer system and respect the system's resource limits, including rules regarding downloading software and files.

Network Etiquette

Students are expected to follow rules of Internet network etiquette, as well as any rules that apply to their particular classroom. These include acting respectfully towards others and using language that is not offensive.

Internet Filtering Practices

In order to help provide safe Internet access for all students and in accordance with the Federal Children's Internet Protection Act (CIPA), there is filtering in place designed to block inappropriate websites. However, no filtering is 100% effective. Thacher will make all reasonable efforts to monitor the online activities of minors while using computers.

Unacceptable Use

The following uses of Thacher Internet access are unacceptable for students:

- Accessing, transmitting, or receiving obscene, pornographic, or illegal material.
- Engaging in cyber-cheating or plagiarism. Plagiarism is taking material created by others and presenting it as if it were one's own. Any school policies on cheating, cyber cheating, and/or plagiarism are applicable to students' use of the Internet.
- Infringing copyrights, including software and information in text or visual format.
- Participating in commercial or political activities that are not directly related to the educational purposes of Thacher Montessori School.
- Accessing chat rooms, engaging in instant messaging, or posting to bulletin board services.
- Posting or filling out forms with private or personal information about yourself or information about another person.
- Attempting to access another person's files.
- Receiving or sending email from personal home accounts.
- Tampering with computer hardware or software, unauthorized entry into computers, and knowledgeable vandalism such as transferring viruses or destruction of someone else's computer files.

Disclaimer of Liability

Thacher disclaims all liability for the content of material that a student may access on the Internet, for any damages suffered in the course of or as a result of the student's Internet use, and for any other consequences of a student's Internet use.

Tobacco, Drugs, and Alcohol Use

Cigarettes, tobacco products, illegal drugs such as marijuana, and alcohol are prohibited on the premises of Thacher or at any site used in an official capacity by Thacher. Additionally, speaking of activities that involve the students' use of said products in a manner that seeks to promote the use of the products, will not be tolerated. Use of the above items by a student is grounds for immediate suspension. Occasionally, the school holds adult-only events at which alcohol may be served.

Re-Enrollment at Thacher

Parents receive an Enrollment Agreement and Tuition and Fees Schedule in February. If there is any question regarding the status of a student's opportunity for re-enrollment, the School will notify the family in lieu of sending an Enrollment Agreement. Current families should follow the steps outlined below in the re-enrollment process:

- The Enrollment Agreement will be available to current families on the parent portal in February.
- Each family must re-enroll by signing and returning the Enrollment Agreement and paying the non-refundable tuition deposit.
- After the re-enrollment deadline, the School cannot guarantee that a current student will be re-enrolled. A child is considered re-enrolled only when the Enrollment Agreement is signed and returned and a non-refundable tuition deposit is paid to the School. If you have questions or

concerns about changing family circumstances or issues particular to your child that make your child's return uncertain, please speak with the Admissions staff, the business manager, or the head of school as soon as the concerns are known to you.

- Acceptance of the Enrollment Agreement by the School is predicated on the completion of the year in progress and full payment of the current year's tuition and fees. If a child should not meet the behavioral expectations set forth in this Handbook, or his or her parents' payment of the current year's tuition and fees is not made in full, the School reserves the right to terminate the contract and refund the tuition deposit.
- The School believes that a positive and constructive working relationship between the School and a student's parents (or guardians) is essential to the fulfillment of the school's mission. Thus, the School reserves the right not to continue enrollment or not to re-enroll the student if the School reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent (or guardian) make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interfere with the School's accomplishment of its educational purposes.

Provisional Period Policy

All students enrolling at any level for the first time are considered provisional for the first 60 days. If, during that time, the program is seen as incompatible by the school with the child's needs, the child may be unenrolled. Prior to un-enrollment, two meetings will take place. The first will be scheduled at the end of the first 30 days and will include the head of school, the child's guide, and the child's parents. A second meeting will take place after the second 30 days to determine if attempts to resolve the areas of concern have been successful. If not, the child will be asked to leave the program and the family will be excused from any further financial obligation beyond a proration of the tuition for services already provided by the school.

Class Placement Policy

In all of our deliberations about class placement, our first priority is the needs of the child. Therefore, we base our decisions concerning class placement on several factors including the child's social, emotional, and academic development, as well as any particular needs the child may have. In addition, guides take into account the dynamics of each classroom in relation to each child's personality and learning styles. Parental input is considered if offered in writing to the admissions specialist. Final placement decisions are determined by the head of school in consultation with the guides. The School does not make changes for a child from one classroom to another while the child is in the midst of the three-year cycle unless the guide and administration deems it in the best interest of the child.

Student Information

In compliance with Massachusetts General Laws, c. 71 34A, Thacher will provide to any student's parents/guardians or former student (18 years of age or older) that student's *educational record*, which consists of the student's *transcript* and "temporary record." For purposes of law, a student's transcript is a record containing the name, address and phone number of the student, the student's birth date, as well as the name, address and phone number of parent or guardian, course titles, grades, or equivalent thereof when grades are not applicable, course credit, grade level completed, and the year completed.

Parents or Guardians are invited to inspect their child's educational record by arranging with the Front Desk at least one day beforehand. Guide recommendations to other schools will be kept confidential from the parent or guardian only if the parent has signed a document indicating that he or she has waived the right to access that portion of the record.

A parent or guardian may, by written request to the head of school, add relevant information to the record or remove inaccurate, misleading or irrelevant information. Upon denial of such a request by the head of school, the parent/guardian may appeal to the school's Board of Trustees.

Student records are available to Thacher professional staff. No information in the student's educational record is available to anyone outside of Thacher professional staff without written permission of the student's parent or guardian.

Massachusetts General Laws also require that we retain a child's permanent record for 60 years but destroy all temporary record information within seven years of the child's departure from Thacher. If a parent/guardian wishes to preserve the student's temporary record, they must request it within thirty days of the student's departure from the school.

Leaving Thacher

Application to Secondary Schools

As students approach their eighth grade year, they begin to make plans for secondary school. Some families choose their local public schools while others consider having their child continue with independent schools, both day schools and boarding schools. The director of alumni relations and secondary school placement will begin conversations with families in the seventh grade year to support each family's transition to secondary school. Families are encouraged to attend local secondary school fairs to become acquainted with the options available for private and independent schools. The head of school works with a member of the administrative staff who acts as the placement coordinator. All requests for transcripts and recommendations should go through this coordinator to ensure timely completion of applications.

Application to Other Schools

While our School is designed to serve children through Middle School years, we recognize that some families may also want to consider other schools prior to eighth grade. We view the process of applying out to other schools as an opportunity to support parents in considering these options.

Please note that for any grade level, all requests for school forms should be given to the front desk to ensure that they are returned on time to the schools to which you are applying or transferring. All forms must be submitted to the front desk **at least two weeks** prior to their due dates; otherwise, we cannot guarantee completion and delivery by the due date.

When you are applying for your child to attend other schools, we will send written assessments and standardized test scores from the last two years unless specifically requested to do otherwise. Most schools require materials sent by Thacher to be done so confidentially. Thus, we are not able to provide families with copies of recommendation letters or other materials.

Voluntary Withdrawal Procedures

Parents may withdraw a child through a formal written request at any time. Since Thacher students are enrolled for a year at a time, tuition is non-refundable and voluntary withdrawal in no way negates a family's tuition obligation.

Exit Interviews

Families leaving Thacher are required to participate in an exit interview before the school year ends, or prior to the student/family leaving, if departure occurs during the year. Families may chose to meet with the head of school and business manager, or with the assistant head of school and the business manager. Once families notify the School that they will not re-enroll their child(ren), the office manager will contact the family to schedule the exit interview.)

Volunteer Policies

Background Checks

Thacher Montessori School is committed to ensuring the safety of its students and staff. Parents and guardians who volunteer at school, serve as chaperones for field trips, and have direct, unmonitored contact with students are required to undergo fingerprinting and must also have a current CORI (Criminal Offender Record Information) on file, which should be renewed every three years, as required by the Department of Elementary and Secondary Education. Volunteers under the age of 18 and those who are guests under the supervision of a staff member at the school are exempt. The following background check forms and instructions are available via the links below, as well as at the Front Desk and on the Forms page in the Thacher Parents section of the website:

- [Background Checks Policy](#)
- [Thacher CORI Form](#)
- [Thacher Fingerprint Based Background Check Procedures](#)

There is a \$35 charge for fingerprinting when the appointment is made online. Please submit your receipt to the business office for reimbursement.

Volunteer Drivers

From Lower Elementary through the Adolescent Program, Thacher students begin to leave the school for field trips, going out activities, and other ventures. The school's insurance carrier requires that all parent drivers for these trips carry liability insurance of at least \$100,000 per person/\$300,000 per accident, in addition to the required background checks specified in the previous paragraph. Proof of this coverage must

be sent in annually for a volunteer driver to be approved. (This can be found in your automobile insurance policy. Please send in a copy of the page listing your coverage limits for this year.)

Guidelines for Volunteer Chaperones

Parent chaperones make it possible for us to take our students out into the community to broaden their learning experiences and we appreciate these volunteers immensely. The following are some guidelines that we ask you to follow when you are a chaperone:

- Please ensure that each child has his/her own seatbelt or car seat/booster seat, as is required.
- Please do not play DVDs in the car.
- Please do not stop for food or beverages.
- Please do not buy gifts or other items for the children on the trip.
- Please give yourself a break from your cell phone. We request that you do not take calls except in emergency situations.

VI. Fees and Payment Procedures

For your convenience in making tuition payments, Thacher Montessori School has contracted with Smart Tuition, a nationally known tuition management company, to handle all tuition payments except for those paid in full on June 1. Payments to Smart Tuition may be made by automatic deduction from your bank account, through mail-in payments, or by credit/debit card using American Express, MasterCard, VISA, or Discover.

Drop-in Before School Care and After School Care and other non-tuition charges will continue to be billed by the school office and paid directly to Thacher. Visa, MasterCard, and Discover may be used for any charges made directly through the school.

Tuition Policy

In an effort to collect tuition and other outstanding costs in a timely manner, the business office has instituted the following policy:

- Two weeks after a payment is due, the business office sends out a past-due statement.
- If there is no satisfactory response within two weeks after the past-due statement is sent, the business office sends a return/receipt requested letter informing the parents that a finance charge will be assessed on all accounts more than sixty days in arrears. This letter also states that it is necessary for the parent to make an appointment to meet with the business manager.
- If there is no response within one week to the letter from the business manager, the business manager, or designate, makes a phone call to the parent(s) reiterating the information provided in the letter.
- If the response is insufficient within two weeks after the phone call, the business manager sends another return/receipt requested letter stating that Thacher reserves the right to send the overdue account to a collection agency and/or suspend the child(ren) from school until payment is made. Decisions regarding suspension reside with the head of school and the Board of Trustees.

- Smart Tuition may charge late fees, follow-up fees and failed payment fees as necessary. Please visit www.smarttuition.com or call 888-868-8828 to familiarize yourself with the details of their policies.

Financial Aid Policy and Procedures

Thacher grants financial aid to students who have been admitted to the school and whose parents/guardians have demonstrated a need for assistance in meeting tuition expenses associated with attending Thacher. Questions pertaining to financial aid should be directed to the head of school or the business manager. In September, a school-wide notification is sent explaining Thacher's financial aid policy and how to apply. From October through January, a monthly reminder is sent in notes home encouraging families to submit their financial aid application in a timely manner. The deadline to receive all required information is January 31, 2019, but getting the information in sooner is recommended. In October, interested families may start the financial aid application for the next academic year by accessing FAST through the admissions section of our website at www.thacherschool.org. All applications are held in strict confidence. Notifications of financial aid decisions are mailed to families on March 10 of each year. Families receiving financial aid must reapply for financial aid in subsequent years. Families receiving financial aid must reapply each year with a new application.

Refund Policy

Thacher tuition is based on the entire academic year; therefore, if a child is withdrawn prior to the end of the year, parents are still obligated to pay the remainder of the tuition. If parents want appeal the refund policy they may do so, in writing, to the head of school. Parents must state the reasons for their departure, any extenuating circumstances, or hardships that they believe impacts a review and possible reconsideration of our policy. This appeal is presented to the financial review committee and a response is provided to the family within two weeks of receiving the appeal. Place-holding fees (deposits) are also non-refundable, regardless of the reason.

Tuition Credits

There is no credit given for absences from school regardless of the length of the absence. There is also no credit given for school closings, regardless of the reason.

Policy on Fee for Late Pick Up

Although we appreciate the problems that may occasionally occur due to traffic and weather, it is important that our staff be able to give their full attention to those students scheduled to be in their care. Children scheduled for pick-up at 4:45 PM who are not picked up by 5:00 PM will be sent to Late Aftercare and their accounts will be charged accordingly. The fee for late pick-up of children after 5:30 PM is \$15 per quarter hour.

Returned Check Fee

Because Thacher incurs a fee each time a deposited check is returned for insufficient funds, a charge of \$25 will be attached to the student's account for each instance of a returned check.

VII. Academic Programs and Daily Routines

General Daily Routines

Food at School

Thacher is a nut-free school. Please read the food and allergy policies in Section III: Student Health.

Snacks: Toddler and Children's House

Snacks are important for children's ability to sustain concentration and are part of the practical life exercises in the classroom. In the Toddler and Children's House levels parents take turns providing a week's worth of simple, nutritious snacks for their child's class. Each classroom guide plans the snack schedule in his or her classroom. Any special snack arrangements should be made directly with the classroom guide. Be sure to check the food and allergy policies in the Section III Student Health.

When dropping off your children on your snack day you can either park and carry in the bags or tell the staff member who opens your vehicle door that you have snack and the staff member will direct you to a stopping point where he or she can help you unload the bags and bring them inside. We are happy to help!

Snacks: Elementary and Adolescent Program

Elementary and Adolescent Program students are encouraged to bring their own nutritious snacks in their lunch boxes. Fresh fruits, vegetables, and unprocessed foods are encouraged. Soft drinks, candy, and gum are prohibited.

Lunch

Please provide your child with nutritious lunches that he or she will eat in easily opened containers. Prepackaged food is generally difficult to open and is impossible to reseal to bring home leftovers. We teach respect of the earth and strongly request your support by packing lunches in reusable containers. We suggest bringing foods in Tupperware-type containers that are easy to open and reusable. This helps with our trash-less lunch policy. Fresh fruits, vegetables, and unprocessed foods are encouraged. Due to the frequency of food allergies, children may not trade food.

Library

The Maureen Coughlan Library is available to all Thacher students during school hours. Students are issued a library card at the start of the school year, and our librarian is available daily to assist students in finding books specific to their interests and/or projects.

Recess

Children go outside every day except in the most extreme weather or at times when their classroom schedule precludes outside time. They must be adequately dressed for the weather and can bring extra necessities in their Thacher bag or, for older children, a backpack. During the winter they should bring snow pants and any

other gear necessary to stay warm and dry. Please put your child's name on everything, as our lost and found bulges with unnamed clothing every year.

Parents are asked to apply bug spray and sunscreen prior to their child's arrival at school each day. Should parents wish to have staff re-apply product throughout the day, a written doctor's order is required. Thacher does not supply sunscreen and insect repellent.

Birthdays and Other Celebrations

Thacher Montessori School emphasizes inclusion and a respect for all traditions. For birthdays, each level has its own unique practice that is described in level-specific orientation letters and meetings. We ask that families refrain from sending in invitations with their children for distribution. If you plan to host a party outside of the school, please handle invitations via email or regular mail. Thacher Montessori School does not emphasize any major tradition of celebration but welcomes all traditions. We seek to be respectful of every family's traditions and customs.

Academic Support/Tutoring

Our trained academic support specialist is available during school hours when guides, in conjunction with parents, decide that extra academic assistance is necessary for a child. The academic support specialist and guide will make arrangements with parents and the student for services. Billing will be done by the business office.

Toddler Program – The First Plane of Development

Overview

Dr. Montessori called this first stage in human development (birth – age 6) “infancy” and referred to it as the time of the absorbent mind. She believed the first three years of life were the most fundamental in the development of human beings. This makes this age child different from any other time of life. The child is literally creating the person she will become. At this stage, children are sensorial explorers, building their intellects by absorbing every aspect of their environment, the culture and language.

The first three years of each plane (as she called each 6-year period) show the most dramatic changes in development. During the first sub-plane (birth – 3) the child in the Toddler Program has an unconscious absorbent mind. This means she is taking in the whole environment through all five senses unconsciously. She is constantly absorbing impressions but does so without knowing that she is and without willing it to happen.

Toddlers awaken to the joy of connecting with people outside the family. They want to learn to take care of themselves little by little, but they still need to be nurtured by a trusted adult. Toddlers are aware of their needs, and they are learning a vocabulary to express those needs. At this age, children are developing balance, coordination and muscular development. The ability to concentrate and focus is beginning to emerge at this time.

Classroom Environment

The Toddler classroom embraces Dr. Montessori's philosophy. Thacher provides a safe, structured, nurturing, beautiful indoor and outdoor space where toddlers grow and learn. The room is home-like and it invites exploration of child-sized materials that are based on activities of the home.

Through careful observation of the children, the teacher or guide is able to link each child to whatever aspect of the environment will enhance the child's physical, psychological and social development at any given time. The teacher is always looking out for the "sensitive periods" when the child demonstrates an intense interest in a particular activity that is essential to his or her growth.

The adults in the environment are the children's models. They conduct themselves in the way they expect the children to conduct themselves. Children at this age learn, not only through individual lessons and independent practice, but also through their attention to what the adults in their lives do.

An open, supportive relationship between teachers and parents is essential to provide optimal conditions for the toddler in the Montessori classroom. Daily communication, formal conferences and parent education classes contribute to an atmosphere in which each child is able to realize her or his full potential.

Curriculum

Practical Life and daily living skills: Toddlers will experience real life situations such as food preparation, dressing and undressing, washing, polishing, pouring, table setting, carrying things, cleaning and grace and courtesy. Their learning experiences include washing and drying their hands, removing their diapers, grooming and toilet learning. Toddlers are encouraged to be as independent as possible but are always supported in their efforts by the guides.

Sense awareness: Sense awareness is learning about dimensions, shapes, colors, touch, hearing, taste and smell. Working with the materials, building blocks or pouring water, toddlers see the effect their own actions have on the materials. They begin to understand cause and effect. Sequencing activities, like hand washing with logical steps (wetting hands, using soap, rinsing, and drying) address the toddler's sense of order and help build a capacity for logical thought.

Language development: Toddlers first acquire language connected to their observations and environment. Daily activities therefore include stories, singing and talks and dialogues, as well as special materials to help the toddler develop more abstract vocabulary.

Movement, art and music: The children are free to move around at will, carrying heavy objects, walking the line, climbing and taking long walks outside. Art and music are approached from a skills based perspective and the children can freely choose cutting, gluing, painting, crayons, or clay. We listen to music of all varieties to help children develop an ear for music as well as more formal instruction on rhymes, moving to music and practicing duplicating rhythms.

Daily Routine

Being a part of the classroom community helps toddlers develop a sense of rights and limits for themselves and others. The guides model appropriate behavior in movement, speech and tone and help toddlers express needs and feelings verbally. Social interaction with other children, development of language skills, care of oneself and the environment, food preparation, music and movement activities are integral to the Montessori toddler experience.

- Early morning: Toddlers are escorted to their classroom by parent or guardian and greeted by the guides.
- Morning: The morning will include individual and/or guided exploration of the room, toileting needs, community snack, structured outdoor walk, outdoor free play on the toddler playground, story time, and lunch. Individual and structured movement, songs, music, and art are also available.
- Afternoon: Toddlers nap in the afternoon and are put down together in a specified napping area of the room. Children are given the opportunity to work when finished napping.

Personal Articles

Please provide the following to be kept at school (labeled with child's name):

1. Complete change of clothing (three or more of each article).
2. A supply of diapers.
3. Napping articles: crib sheet, blanket, travel size pillow (optional, something special that your child sleeps with for comfort.) Roll-up nap mat with pillow preferred.
4. Note: Napping articles will be sent home weekly to be laundered.
5. Indoor Shoes: children must be provided with shoes to be kept at school that are worn only indoors to provide cleanliness. Please send in shoes that slip on in order for your child to independently learn to put on their shoes themselves.

Children should be dressed in comfortable clothing that allows the child easy movement. To empower the child, the clothing must be easy to put on and take off in order to promote independence.

Drop Off and Pick Up

Drop off: Please park your car in the parking lot to the right of the school in the spaces reserved for toddler families and visitors. This will allow you to walk your child on the sidewalk all the way to the front door. Please walk your child into the school and to the Toddler classroom inside door.

Pick up: Upon entering the parking lot, please turn right and follow traffic to the curb in the circle. Your child will be escorted to your car by a toddler staff member and buckled into his or her car seat.

Separation

Children between the ages of fifteen and thirty-six months are just becoming aware of themselves and becoming more independent, which can be a confusing time in their lives. In order to make the Toddler Program a positive and happy experience, teachers and parents need to work together to assist each child in his or her journey towards independence. One of the greatest challenges is the separation of the child from

the parent – a natural evolution in a child’s growth but one that nevertheless may be fraught with emotion and anxiety.

A central task for toddler and parent at this time is to become separate people. Your child is realizing that he or she can do things on his or her own. The love and trust developed during the initial bonding stage will certainly be tested as “separateness” develops.

We ask you to say goodbye to your child at the door. This is not meant to keep you out of the room, but to allow your toddler to separate from you and then enter the toddler environment. It is important for your child to have a very clear and consistent separation every day. In the event that your child begins to cry and not want to enter the school or leave you, try not to be upset. This reaction is not unique but sometimes a parent’s concern for their child transfers into anxiety. The staff has experience in handling this. Please say goodbye as kindly and firmly as you can, give a kiss and leave. We will take loving care of your child and will comfort him or her. Remaining at the door or lingering in the hall will only make parting more difficult for you and your child. Please don’t worry.

Please feel free to call us with any concerns or questions you may have.

Snack

As part of our curriculum, the children are provided with snack every day. Snack is a time where the children learn how to prepare and taste various foods, set the table, learn proper table manners and to socialize. Each family is asked to take turns bringing in snack for specific weeks. Please note that every family will be asked to provide snack for the class several times during the school year. A notice will go home in advance providing a list of the items that are required for your snack week.

Lunch

Lunch is a social event as well as a learning experience. Please provide your child with nutritious lunches that he or she will eat in easily opened containers. Prepackaged food is generally difficult to open and is impossible to reseal to bring home leftovers. We suggest bringing foods in Tupperware-type containers and zip-type bags. The least amount of disposable waste is encouraged. Due to numerous allergies, children may not trade food. Thacher is a nut-free school.

Naptime

Parents/guardians provide a crib size sheet, small pillow, and one snuggle toy to be used for napping. Thacher provides small individual cots for each child. Bedding will be sent home weekly to be laundered. Please refer to your welcome letter from your child’s guide for more information.

Behavior and Discipline

“The only true discipline is inner-discipline.”

-Maria Montessori

Maria Montessori described discipline as primarily indirect. Children learn self-control by engaging in rationally organized, calm, quiet, spontaneous work. The role of the adult is to model and facilitate. Children receive lessons in grace and courtesy to model polite and respectful behavior. This is the basis to positive discipline in the classroom. We set an expectation of all children and adults to observe the following rules of respect:

1. Respect for self.
2. Respect for others.
3. Respect for materials, tools, and equipment.
4. Respect for the environment.

Through adult modeling, children learn to respect one another, the school's property, and the property of other children. Children learn also to use gentle and kind language. The children learn when and how to touch another child, but only if the other child wants to be touched. If there is a conflict between children, the adult models appropriate behavior and facilitates the children's use of these simple peace tools to find resolution.

All inappropriate behavior is acknowledged, and the adult redirects the child to positive behavior. Children have clear and consistent rules and the adults in the classroom work with the parents to ensure their adoption.

Children's House – The First Plane of Development

Overview

Dr. Montessori called this first stage in human development (birth – age 6) “infancy” and referred to it as the time of the absorbent mind. This makes this age child different from any other time of life. The child is literally creating the person she will become. At this stage, children are sensorial explorers, building their intellects by absorbing every aspect of their environment, including the culture and language.

The second sub-plane is recognized by the conscious absorbent mind. In the Children's House (3-6) the child still has the absorbent mind, but has experiences through conscious learning; she realizes she is learning. Conscious learning begins when the hand becomes the tool of the brain as the child manipulates the objects (the materials) she discovers in her environment. The child is aware of her thoughts, can think for herself, and must be allowed to actively participate in life around her. The child needs to “do it myself” and by herself. As the child's individuality and uniqueness is emerging in all areas (social, emotional and spiritual, intellectual and physical) she can only learn through her own experiences, by doing with her hands. During this time sensitive periods occur enabling the child to concentrate on developing a particular skill when the interest and need for that information is strongest.

Sensitive Periods

Children during the first six years of life experience “Sensitive Periods” for the acquisition of knowledge in certain areas. Children during this time exhibit intense interest, focus, and concentration on a particular area such as language or math. This is the time a child learns quickly and in an almost effortless way. Our guides

are attuned to the developing child and keen to present the appropriate materials when the particular sensitive period of interest is observed in the child.

Three Period Lesson

This method of learning is at the core of lesson presentations by the guides. The first introduction of a concept or lesson is the presentation or “showing” the lesson. The second period is a time when the child is processing the information, developing an understanding of the concept through working independently or with the guide. The third, and final, stage of the three period lesson is the “knowing” when the child has the ability to easily express his knowledge from memory or teach another child.

Grace and Courtesy

Guides or teachers at Thacher are models of courtesy and respect for the children in addition to giving lessons in appropriate manners. Children learn to wait, politely interrupt, respect themselves and others, respect other’s work space, use “indoor” voices in the classroom, use proper table manners and learn playground etiquette. In the Children’s House the Guides follow the Montessori Peace Curriculum and help children learn and understand peaceful resolutions to conflicts or disagreements.

There are both logical and natural consequences in the classrooms. A natural consequence is the most effective correction of mistakes or mishaps. For example, if you drop a glass it will break. A logical consequence is when a child misuses a work or abuses a freedom and the logical consequence is decided by the guide. This is never done as a punishment. The Guide uses a positive lesson in a calm, respectful and friendly manner. For example, if a child is running in the classroom the Guide may invite the child to observe how the other children are sitting, working, or walking in the classroom. She might ask the child to “take a break” to go to the peace area, or another area of their choice, and return to work when they are ready.

Freedom and Responsibility

In the Children’s House there are logical limitations that are guidelines for appropriate behavior. Children are not born with knowledge of good and bad, right and wrong. The guides in the classroom model respectful, responsible behavior and give children clear guidelines that are neither too strict nor too free. There are specific freedoms in the Children’s House classrooms:

- Children are free to move around the room at will. They may choose where to work: at a table or at a work rug. They may not disturb the work of others in the pursuit of their movement.
- Children are free to talk with each other. They must use “indoor voices” that do not disturb others and they may not interrupt the work of others.
- Children are free to choose their work. After the guide presents a lesson, children are free to choose that work at any time. Children are directed to use the materials carefully, with respect for their intended purpose.
- Children are free to work as long as they like. They follow their own rhythm and unique timing; children in the Children’s House do not have work scheduled for them.
- Children are free to repeat. Repetition of work builds concentration, focus and a sense of completion for children. With the first exploration the child is working at a superficial level, but with repetition the child gains a deep understanding, knowledge, and skill for which the material was intended.

Curriculum

At Thacher children in the Children's House have a 3-hour uninterrupted work period each morning. This allows for the child's needs and tendencies--to move, be independent, explore, create order and community, and to repeat work--to be realized. In turn, the child develops concentration and focus, which leads to perfecting her efforts, building confidence and self-esteem.

- Practical Life activities like table washing, sewing, or polishing enable children to develop coordination, order, concentration, independence, and a mathematical mind. These activities also prepare children for writing.
- Sensorial materials allow children to explore through all five senses; touch, sight, hearing, smell, and taste. These early experiences of classification and ordering are important in developing the mathematical mind.
- Language is probably the most exciting development in the Children's House and the classroom is filled with language experiences. We begin with spoken language, vocabulary enrichment activities, phonetic objects sorted by their component sounds that enable children to decode their first books. Children learn to read by writing words or stories using the moveable alphabet.
- Math in the Children's House takes the child from concrete, sensorial exploration to abstraction. Using beads and other manipulatives, children associate concrete quantities with number symbols. They not only see numbers like 10 or 1,000, they actually feel the difference between a ten bar and a thousand cube. They learn about place value and receive lessons in addition, multiplication, subtraction, and division using color-coded symbols and beads.
- Cultural Studies include the sciences, zoology and botany, both physical and political geography, biomes of Earth, and the study of world cultures.

General Routines

Arrival

When children arrive they go to their cubby and independently take care of their belongings: put away lunch box, hang up outerwear and Thacher bag, and change into indoor shoes. An assistant from each classroom is stationed in the cubby areas to monitor the safety and behavior of the arriving children.

Morning Work

Lead guides greet welcome each child entering the classroom with a handshake and verbal greeting. Children are free to socialize with each other until arrival time ends at 8:40 AM. They are also free to go directly to a work of their choice. At Thacher we provide the traditional Montessori 3-hour uninterrupted work period every morning.

Snack

A child will help one of the adults in the room to prepare snack each day. Snack is available during the course of the morning for children to serve themselves and join a friend at the 2-person snack table. They clean up their space after eating in preparation to receive the next child. Please see the section on Student Health for

more information as well as the policy on Food Allergies. Your guide will also share practical information in your welcome packet.

Early Dismissal

A small number of beginning students go home at 11:30 AM. These children are escorted by an assistant to the front of the school to wait for pick up by a parent, guardian, or authorized person. Children remaining for the full day begin to prepare for lunch, by cleaning up work, going to the bathroom, washing and drying hands, and getting their lunch boxes.

Lunch

We use cloth placemats and napkins and children follow their classroom's routine in the preparation and set-up for lunch. Generally, children choose where, and with whom, they will eat and proper table manners are taught and expected. Please see the section on Student Health for more information as well as the policy on Food Allergies. Your guide will also share practical information in your welcome packet.

Recess

After the children have finished lunch, thoroughly cleaned the table, chair and area where they ate, they go to their cubby area and ready themselves for outdoor play. Recess lasts about 30 minutes.

Nap

Children who nap are brought in from recess about 5 minutes before the other children. At this time their mats have been placed in the designated napping area by one of the assistants. Children are encouraged to put out their sheet and blanket independently. An assistant stays with the nappers, singing, reading a story, or playing music as they fall asleep. Your guide will also share practical information in your welcome packet.

Afternoon Work

All children who do not nap have a brief time to relax with the lead guide after coming in from recess before they begin the afternoon work cycle. Dismissal is at 2:45 PM. For more detailed information, please refer to the welcome packet from your child's guide. Attendance at Children's House drop-in and the parent orientation evening the day before school begins is strongly encouraged.

Behavior and Discipline

Grace and courtesy are part of the curriculum at Thacher Montessori. All members of our community are expected to respect one another, use manners with adults and peers, and care for their space and the environment. Children at Thacher learn to resolve their conflicts with one another and seek the help of an adult if necessary to aid them in peacefully solving problems.

Behaviors that disrupt the peace and safety in the Children's House community are:

- Repeated interruption of others during the work period
- Failure to follow instructions and/or rules

- Excessive roughness and/or aggressive role-playing, including pretend gun/weapon play
- Encouraging others to break the rules
- Poor sportsmanship

Serious Disciplinary Behaviors

- Repeated failure to follow instructions/rules.
- Repeated conversations or comments about fighting and encouraging others to fight
- Destructive behavior to materials and/or school property
- Willful disrespect of lead guides and/or other school employees
- Intimidation, including but not limited to: threats, taunts, bullying, or name-calling and comments that would cause the disrespect and/or discomfort of another person
- Foul and/or abusive language, including but not limited to: derogatory comments about racial, religious or sexual/gender orientation, swearing, threats, and intention to embarrass or intimidate another
- Violent behavior, including but not limited to: hitting, biting, kicking, shoving, or throwing objects

Biting will not be tolerated. When a bite occurs, the biter is told that biting people is unacceptable behavior. If a student is biting in response to another's aggression, a measured negotiation between the children and classroom guide will ensue. If the biting continues and becomes a pattern of behavior, the guide will apply an appropriate consequence.

Thacher Montessori does not tolerate bullying behavior. Bullying is a behavior that goes beyond the normal bounds of children's play. Some amount of teasing or physical interaction is developmentally appropriate and expected among children of this age group; however, when one child repeatedly hurts another child verbally, emotionally or physically, this behavior is considered bullying behavior and is outside the acceptable norms for school behavior. When a guide is concerned that a child's behavior pattern may be considered bullying behavior or an egregious incident occurs, the teacher will apply appropriate consequences and be in contact with the parents.

Consequences

The guide encourages the development of self-discipline through the implementation of several techniques including: maintaining routine, clear defined limits, fair application of rules, consistency, encouragement of positive behavior and logical consequences.

Based upon the seriousness of the infraction and the child's behavioral history, the lead guide may implement one or more of the following consequences:

- Redirect into appropriate actions/work
- Talk to the child(ren) involved; work on a resolution with the child(ren)
- Child will remain with guide and or an assistant
- Child removed from a specific activity
- Guide contacts parents
- Guide and child meet with the assistant head or head of school

- Guide and parents meet with head of school
- Documentation of behavior placed in child's folder
- Evaluation by outside professional
- At the discretion of the head of school, the child may be asked to go home for the remainder of the day, a longer period of time, or the child may face suspension or expulsion.

Lower Elementary — The Second Plane of Development

Overview

The child emerging from the first plane of development (ages 0-6) has formed impressions of the world and has begun to recognize himself as an individual. This child constructed himself by exploration of his environment through the senses and gathered facts about his world through his absorbent mind. When this child enters the second plane of development (ages 6-12), he is capable and eager to explore with his imagination and reason. He builds on the foundation of the first plane through these newly acquired characteristics. The elementary child is now forming his identity as a member of society.

Curriculum

The elementary child wants to know the how and why of everything, so we need to find a way to make everything available to him. In Montessori elementary, this is achieved through a rich and diverse curriculum, presented through “key” lessons—ideas and skills that a child can use to open doors of further exploration (because we cannot and should not give him everything). With these keys, it is possible for a child to fulfill his insatiable desire for information about the universe in which he lives, helping the child find his place within society and the universe.

A Montessori elementary educational environment includes both the school as well as the outside community. The child must be shown how and then be left free to find answers to his questions through resources in the school as well as by “going out” into the larger community. Through this practical life activity, not only does the child find answers, he learns how to negotiate and navigate the world in which he lives.

Psychological Characteristics

The child in the second plane is guided by certain psychological characteristics to fulfill the human tendencies for exploration, orientation, communication, order, work, and repetition. The psychological characteristics of the second plane child include a desire to be self-sufficient as he strives to attain a higher level of independence. The elementary child is more adventurous and daring—willing to take risks to find out about the society in which he lives. He has an increase in physical strength, which allows him to work for longer periods of time. During the second plane, the child seeks independence from close family bonds and simultaneously strives to become a member of a peer group. Through his interactions within society, he develops a sense of morality as well as a sense of right and wrong. He is able to explore the whole universe and participate in creation by means of his imagination and reasoning mind.

Freedom and Responsibility

The formation of the child in the second plane is achieved within an environment where there is a healthy balance of freedom and responsibility. The child is free to choose his work, and he is free to work in groups, which involves discussion, disagreement, and compromise. At the same time, his work should be productive, demonstrate high quality, and be completed. The child is free to talk as long as such communication is used as a constructive tool to accomplish his work. He is free to move about and participate in classroom activities while abiding by the law and order established by the society (rules created with student participation at the beginning of the school year) that govern and maintain harmony in the environment. The child is encouraged to pursue his interests, yet his choices are balanced by the three tools of responsibility: The child must keep a record book of his work activities, meet periodically with his teacher to complete a cooperative evaluation of his use of work time, and be responsible for key curriculum requirements.

Program and Routine

Child/Parent Events

At least twice a year, children give a formal presentation to family and friends. A presentation could be a class play, sharing research, or a concert of song. Children prepare for these presentations in school, guided by a lead guide and, if requested, with help from home. These presentations are an extension of the children's ongoing development of oral speaking and presentation skills in the classroom.

Homework

Traditional homework is not a part of our curriculum at Thacher. When children come to school, they spend each day receiving lessons and working. At the end of the school day, children will sometimes bring work home because they are inspired by the work and wish to continue it at home. Other times, children leave and are ready to participate in other activities. Playing with friends, family or alone and helping with chores around the house are essential to their healthy development. Children also benefit considerably from applying the knowledge they have learned at school to real-life situations such as reading a recipe and measuring ingredients (reading comprehension and math), constructing a birdhouse (math, geometry, and visual-spatial), or reading a map (visual-spatial and geography). Your child's classroom teacher can give you an extensive list of possibilities to apply school learning to real-life situations. Occasionally, if a child is not using his/her class time efficiently or if your child is struggling with some area of the curriculum, your child's teacher may send work home with your child to do for homework. The teachers do expect children to read daily (which can include reading to your child, because you can read at an "instructional" level, helping to increase your child's vocabulary). Other specific homework information may come from your child's teacher.

Camping

One of the main objectives of a Montessori education is to guide children to independence—to develop inner direction and motivation, achieve a state of self-confidence, and establish strong interpersonal skills. Another objective is to nurture children's natural tendency to understand and have compassion for all living beings. Both of these objectives are further cultivated when we bring the children overnight camping. Camping

provides a unique opportunity for the children to apply and expand their skills to larger physical spaces, exploration of nature, new environments, new people, and new situations.

Dress Guidelines

See the Section V: Policy and Procedures.

Testing

Innate in the Montessori philosophy is that each child works and is challenged according to his/her ability. Consequently, we do not give traditional tests; rather, we give lessons, observe children's work, and respond to their individual needs. Student progress is evaluated daily by the quantity and quality of children's work as well as their ability to answer and generate meaningful questions. When children leave the Montessori environment, they most likely will be confronted with standardized tests. To prepare children for this situation, Thacher administers one national standardized test each spring to children starting in third grade. This experience is a practical life lesson about reading instructions, how to approach multiple-choice questions, and learning strategies for successfully recording answers on a bubble sheet.

Behavior and Discipline

In the elementary levels, our approach is to guide the children towards taking responsibility for their own behavior and to help them understand the impact their behavior has on others. Children are active participants in class meetings where they use brainstorming to come up with a set of rules for their classroom that will ensure everyone feels physically and emotionally safe. They also learn how to handle behaviors that cause disruption or danger and when to seek adult help. Some meetings are used as a forum to discuss problems and brainstorm solutions in a non-judgmental way.

In addition, our environment promotes peace and sharing through the careful arrangement and presentation of materials, and by the expectation that children will work together in a cooperative and supportive way. Each child is assigned a specific job in caring for the classroom at the end of the day.

Behaviors that disrupt the peace and safety of our community:

- Encouraging others to break rules
- Aggressive role-playing, including pretend gun play
- Poor sportsmanship, including excessive complaining, bragging or tantrums
- Excessive roughness when playing
- Intentional disregard for instructions, rules
- Interrupting others who are working

Consequences may include the following:

- Guide will talk to child/children involved and help to resolve issue
- Time out as needed
- Written apology by child
- Parents informed at discretion of guide

Serious Disciplinary Behavior

- Violent behavior such as hitting, biting, kicking, shoving or throwing objects at another
- Repeated conversations or comments about fighting or instigating others to fight
- Repeated failure to follow instructions or rules with the intention of disrespect to adults or other children
- Disrespect of property including theft, defacement or destruction of materials, supplies or the belongings of others
- Bullying behaviors such as threats, taunts, or derogatory comments about racial, religious or sexual/gender orientation made with the intention of intimidating or embarrassing another.

Based upon the infraction and the child's behavioral history, consequences may include:

- Guide speaks to child/children involved
- Guide informs parents
- Student meets with head of school
- Head of school speaks with parents
- Student spends time away from classmates
- Letter of apology written to offended party
- Written consequence is placed in child's file
- Meeting held with parents, guide and head of school
- Child is sent home
- Re-entry conference with child, guide, parents and head of school
- At discretion of head of school, the child may face a longer suspension or expulsion.

Thacher Montessori School does not tolerate bullying behavior. Bullying is a behavior that goes beyond the normal bounds of children's play. Some amount of teasing or physical interaction is developmentally appropriate and expected among children of this age group; however, when one child repeatedly hurts another child verbally, emotionally, or physically, in an effort to demean, disrespect or gain power over that student, this behavior is considered bullying and is outside the acceptable norms for school behavior. When a school employee is concerned that a child's behavior pattern may be considered to be bullying behavior or an egregious incident occurs, the guide will apply appropriate consequences and be in contact with the parents. Please see Appendix 1: Bullying Prevention and Intervention for more information.

Upper Elementary - The Second Plane of Development

Overview

The Upper Elementary child is still in the Second Plane of Development that began in Lower Elementary. When entering the second plane of development (ages 6-12), the child is capable and eager to explore with his imagination and reason. He builds on the foundation of the first plane through these newly acquired characteristics. The elementary child is now forming his identity as a member of society. The Montessori elementary curriculum is a continuum designed to meet the needs of children throughout the second plane of development (6-12). During the upper elementary years, the child continues to form his identity as a member

of society. These later elementary years are characterized by greater independence, more involvement in peer relationships and group dynamics, and an increasing facility to move from concrete to abstract intellectual reasoning.

Curriculum

The elementary child wants to know the how and why of everything, so we need to find a way to make everything available to him. In Montessori elementary, this is achieved through a rich and diverse curriculum, presented through “key” lessons—ideas and skills that a child can use to open doors of further exploration (because we cannot and should not give him everything). With these keys, it is possible for a child to fulfill his insatiable desire for information about the universe in which he lives, helping the child find his place within society and the universe.

A Montessori elementary educational environment includes both the school as well as the outside community. The child must be shown how and then be left free to find answers to his questions through resources in the school as well as by “going out” into the larger community. Through this practical life activity, not only does the child find answers, he learns how to negotiate and navigate the world in which he lives.

Psychological Characteristics

The child in the second plane is guided by certain psychological characteristics to fulfill the human tendencies for exploration, orientation, communication, order, work, and repetition. The psychological characteristics of the second plane child include a desire to be self-sufficient as he strives to attain a higher level of independence. The elementary child is more adventurous and daring—willing to take risks to find out about the society in which he lives. He has an increase in physical strength, which allows him to work for longer periods of time. During the second plane, the child seeks independence from close family bonds and simultaneously strives to become a member of a peer group. Through his interactions within society, he develops a sense of morality as well as a sense of right and wrong. He is able to explore the whole universe and participate in creation by means of his imagination and reasoning mind.

Freedom and Responsibility

The formation of the child in the second plane is achieved within an environment where there is a healthy balance of freedom and responsibility. The child is free to choose his work, and he is free to work in groups, which involves discussion, disagreement, and compromise. At the same time, his work should be productive, demonstrate high quality, and be completed. The child is free to talk as long as such communication is used as a constructive tool to accomplish his work. He is free to move about and participate in classroom activities while abiding by the law and order established by the society (rules created with student participation at the beginning of the school year) that govern and maintain harmony in the environment. The child is encouraged to pursue his interests, yet his choices are balanced by the three tools of responsibility: The child must keep a record book of his work activities, meet periodically with his teacher to complete a cooperative evaluation of his use of work time, and be responsible for key curriculum requirements.

Program and Routine

Child/Parent Events

At least twice a year, children give a formal presentation to family and friends. A presentation could be a class play, sharing research, or a concert of song. Children prepare for these presentations in school, guided by a lead guide and, if requested, with help from home. These presentations are an extension of the children's ongoing development of oral speaking and presentation skills in the classroom.

Homework

Traditional homework is not part of our Montessori curriculum at Thacher. When children come to school, they spend each day receiving lessons and working. At the end of the school day, children will sometimes bring work home because they are inspired by the work and wish to continue it at home. Other times, children leave and are ready to participate in other activities. Playing with friends, family or alone and helping with chores around the house are essential to their healthy development. Children also benefit considerably from applying the knowledge they have learned at school to real-life situations such as reading a recipe and measuring ingredients (reading comprehension and math), constructing a birdhouse (math, geometry, and visual-spatial), or reading a map (visual-spatial and geography). Your child's classroom teacher can give you an extensive list of possibilities to apply school learning to real-life situations. Occasionally, if a child is not using his/her class time efficiently or if your child is struggling with some area of the curriculum, your child's teacher may send work home with your child to do for homework. The teachers do expect children to read daily (which can include reading to your child, because you can read at an "instructional" level, helping to increase your child's vocabulary). Other specific homework information may come from your child's teacher.

Camping

One of the main objectives of a Montessori education is to guide children to independence—to develop inner direction and motivation, achieve a state of self-confidence, and establish strong interpersonal skills. Another objective is to nurture children's natural tendency to understand and have compassion for all living beings. Both of these objectives are further cultivated when we bring the children overnight camping. Camping provides a unique opportunity for the children to apply and expand their skills to larger physical spaces, new environments, new people, and new situations.

Camping involves pushing personal boundaries to achieve something the students have never accomplished before. This may be a physical boundary (i.e. building a structure for balance), social boundary (i.e. working in a group and supporting each other), and/or emotional boundary (i.e. spending nights away from family). Personal boundaries are also expanded through the opportunity in a new environment to observe and sharpen awareness, utilize critical thinking skills and make decisions that will have direct consequences on oneself and others.

Dress Guidelines

See the Section V: Policy and Procedures.

Testing

Innate in the Montessori philosophy is that each child works and is challenged according to his/her ability. Consequently, we do not give traditional tests; rather, we give lessons, observe children's work, and respond to their individual needs. Student progress is evaluated daily by the quantity and quality of children's work as well as their ability to answer and generate meaningful questions. When children leave the Montessori environment, they most likely will be confronted with standardized tests. Upper Elementary students continue to take one national standardized test each spring to prepare for testing after Thacher. This experience is a practical life lesson about reading instructions, how to approach multiple-choice questions, and learning strategies for successfully recording answers on a bubble sheet.

Internet Use Policy for Students

At the beginning of the school year, students and parents at the Upper Elementary and Adolescent Program levels will be asked to sign a user agreement. Please see Section V: Policies and Procedures for information on the school's Internet Use Policy.

Going Out Trips

Going out trips are excursions into the community planned by a small group of children to get materials for a project, gain knowledge about a topic they have been researching, or to do community service. Elementary children are ready to explore the world using their reasoning minds and imagination. They want to learn about everything, and they use these tools to pursue a broad spectrum of knowledge. Although the imagination allows children to explore beyond the classroom, we want them to be able to experience as much as they can directly. Going out trips provide children such opportunities. In addition, elementary children have established a sense of security about their relationships with family and school community (peers, teachers and staff). They are now ready to learn about their place in the larger community. These trips afford them the opportunity to enlarge their sense of independence and relations with other people.

Fundraising

Students in upper elementary may be involved with fundraising activities to raise money for camping or other events. Students are instructed about the parameters of fundraising and their consequent involvement includes brainstorming an event to raise funds, gathering the information and materials needed, organizing tasks, communicating with the public (typically Thacher parents), collecting and calculating funds, and distributing goods. This is a practical life activity that helps students gain awareness of supply and demand as well as profit and loss.

Science Fair

In Upper Elementary students start to participate in Thacher's annual science fair organized by the science teacher. Students are provided the foundation for completing a science fair project during science classes. They learn about setting up and recording science experiments in a traditional format: purpose, procedure, materials, hypothesis, observations and results. Prior to the science fair, students are given specific guidelines

about choosing their project and how it should be presented to the judges. Science fair projects are evaluated for quality, but are not graded in elementary.

Parent Notification Policy

In order to maintain alignment with the Massachusetts General Laws regarding Human Sexuality Education, Thacher provides notification regarding curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality education or human sexuality issues. This notification allows parents or guardians to exempt their child/children from any and all portions of said curriculum through written notification to the head of school. Program materials will be made reasonably accessible to parents, guardians, and others, to the extent practicable, in advance of any lessons.

No exempted child shall be penalized in any fashion. The child will be given the opportunity to continue working on his/her classroom studies in an alternate location while his/her peers participate in such lessons.

Behavior and Discipline

Grace and courtesy are part of the curriculum at Thacher Montessori School. All members of our community are expected to respect one another, use manners with adults and peers, care for their space, and care for the environment. Children at Thacher learn to resolve their conflicts with one another and to seek the help of an adult if necessary to aid them in peacefully solving problems.

Behaviors that Disrupt the Peace and Safety of our Community

- Poor sportsmanship, including but not limited to excessive complaining, bragging, or tantrums
- Excessive roughness while playing, including pretend gun play
- Intentional disregard for instructions and/or rules
- Intentional and/or repeated interruption of others during the work period
- Encouraging others to break rules

Serious Disciplinary Behaviors

- Violent behavior, including but not limited to: hitting, biting, kicking, shoving, or throwing objects
- Repeated comments about fighting or instigating others to fight
- Willful disrespect of lead guides and/or other school employees
- Disrespect of property including but not limited to: theft, defacement or destruction of school materials, supplies and the belongings of others
- Foul and/or abusive language, including but not limited to: derogatory comments about racial, religious or sexual/gender orientation, swearing, threats, and intention to embarrass or intimidate another
- Overt or covert threatening, taunting, or bullying behaviors.

Thacher Montessori School does not tolerate bullying behavior. Bullying is a behavior that goes beyond the normal bounds of children's play. Some amount of teasing or physical interaction is developmentally appropriate and expected among children of this age group; however, when one child repeatedly hurts another child verbally, emotionally, or physically, in an effort to demean, disrespect or gain power over that

student, this behavior is considered bullying and is outside the acceptable norms for school behavior. When a school employee is concerned that a child's behavior pattern may be considered to be bullying behavior or an egregious incident occurs, the guide will apply appropriate consequences and be in contact with the parents. Please see Appendix 1: Bullying Prevention and Intervention for more information

Consequences

Based on the seriousness of the infraction and the child's behavioral history, the lead guide may implement one or more of the following consequences:

- Guide speaks to the student(s) involved
- Guide informs parents
- Guide and parents meet with student present
- Student meets with head of school or assistant head
- Head of school or assistant head communicates with parents
- Guide and parents meet with head of school
- Student removed from a specified activity
- Student writes a letter pertaining to the offense
- Documentation of behavior placed in child's file
- Student sent home
- Re-entry conference with guide, parents, head of school, and student
- At head of school's discretion, there may be a longer suspension/expulsion

The Adolescent Program

"All work is noble. Education should therefore include the two forms of work, manual and intellectual...and thus make it understood by practical experience that these two kinds complete each other and are essential to a civilized existence."

Maria Montessori, From Childhood to Adolescence

Overview

Maria Montessori described the 12 to 15-year-old as similar to the very young child in that adolescence is a time of explosive physical, mental, and emotional growth and change. It is a powerful time of transition, struggle, and self-discovery for every child. Although a time of great turmoil, it is also a time of tremendous opportunity if adolescents are given the proper physical and emotional environment. Young adolescents, in the proper environment, are capable of engaged and focused learning as they mature into adulthood. They are capable of hard physical work and work with joy if that work is necessary to their community. They are capable of a passage to honor as they integrate with their society and uncover their inner identities.

Thacher's Adolescent Program provides a middle school program based on this vision of Maria Montessori. This model starts with respect for the adolescents' need to connect with the earth and to participate in the larger community of adults, both of which are viewed as unique educational resources. The program consists

of science and math, self-expression, character development, and a strong integrated humanities curriculum. The program also strives to work within the Massachusetts State Curriculum Frameworks in the major subject areas. The program is designed so that within the classroom and within the wider boundaries of land and neighborhood, each student is exposed to and becomes well versed in academic skills common in more traditional middle school programs. When students graduate from the eighth grade, they will find themselves well prepared for high school.

Vision and Goals

The Thacher Adolescent Program is founded on the belief that adolescence is a powerful age, an age of explosive growth and change on physical, social, emotional, and educational levels. Maria Montessori's vision of adolescence, which presents the developmental characteristics and needs of this age, guides our work. We are also guided by the following goals:

1. To create a supportive community where adolescents feel respected and loved; where they can struggle, work hard, be responsible, challenge themselves, and discover their best selves.
2. To provide an environment where each of the students' voices can be heard. We provide opportunities for students to take responsibility for the community and for their own education. We value resolution of conflicts through community meetings and peer mediation.
3. To provide a project-based education that prepares adolescents to think deeply and critically, to be intellectually independent, and to value the viewpoints of others. We encourage questions and honest, open discussions that connect students to the world of ideas. Expectations are for students to challenge themselves and work to their highest intellectual and creative potential.
4. To provide an atmosphere of freedom, which allows the adolescents to express themselves in visual and performing arts.
5. To create an extended experience out of the classroom at the Wakefield Trust property, rooted in Montessori's vision for the adolescent that provides meaningful, authentic work as well as authentic economic experiences. We create opportunities for students to accept the challenge of hard work, both physical and intellectual. Meaningful manual labor teaches skills, self-reliance, and fosters respect for the work of the hand.
6. To provide opportunities for out-of-classroom experiences such as High Ropes, skiing, hiking, and Native American drum-making and vision questing as the adolescents strive to know their whole selves.

Virtues and Principles

Central to the creation of community is the articulation of the virtues and principles held in common in the Adolescent Program. It is important to provide language and clear expectations around community values. The following virtues and principles are referred to often and held up as touchstones for behavior and interaction in the Adolescent Program.

Civility

We assume that all students in the Adolescent Program will be respectful to each other, the adults they work with, the environment, and the members of the larger school community. The virtue of civility also implies a

self-respect that curbs the impulse toward crudeness, cruelty, or insensitivity towards others and to the environment.

Creating Community

Creating a healthy community is the responsibility of every person in the Adolescent Program. It is a goal that must be consciously worked towards and the students often hear that the person least like them may have the most to offer them. The issue of learning to live well together is essential to the adolescent because it is so easy to slip into exclusive friendships, “cliques,” that are hurtful to others and limiting to the people in them. Being inclusive and working consciously to create a good community, in which everybody is proud to be a member, are central values.

Being a Good Neighbor

This simple virtue is a reminder to offer a helping hand when it is needed, to be aware of others, to be kind and sensitive, and to take time to be a good neighbor.

Human Heartedness

Human heartedness speaks to the core of what makes us human and asks each student to be generous to others, to see the best in each person, and to remain open and accessible to others in the community.

Philanthropy

Thinking of others and being generous with our resources—time, talent, and treasure—is central to the development of moral responsibility. Commitment to some aspect of community service is expected of every student.

Small and Large Acts of Leadership

As the oldest children in the school, Adolescent Program students have a responsibility to model good behavior and to assume responsibility for younger children when necessary. We ask students to be aware of the power of small acts of leadership and to realize and accept that they are powerful role models for others. We also ask them to accept large leadership roles in the Adolescent Program and in the school as a whole. The opportunities for leadership include being an active participant in their group, assuming responsibilities for organizing activities and the student run businesses, speaking up in class meetings, being proactive addressing community concerns, and initiating community service activities.

Developmental Tasks of Adolescence

Professor Robert Havighurst of the University of Chicago proposed that stages in human development can best be thought of in terms of developmental tasks that are part of the normal transition from childhood to adulthood. These tasks are listed below, (in italics). Montessori’s vision of adolescence appears in the center column.

Havighurst	Maria Montessori	Thacher Adolescent Program
<i>1. The adolescent must adjust to new intellectual abilities.</i>	1. "The general program of studies must...supply that which we consider to be the creative elements necessary for the physical being of [humans] in general and must put the adolescent into relation with present civilization by bringing him general culture."	1. Academic program, study skill development, community service.
<i>2. The adolescent must adopt a personal value system.</i>	2. "It is at this age that the 'sensitive period' that ought to develop feelings of justice and personal dignity occurs."	2. Creation of community, Adolescent Program Agreement, Vision questing, exploring values through academic program, especially the Humanities
<i>3. The adolescent must develop a personal sense of identity.</i>	3. "Success depends on self- confidence, on the awareness of one's own talents and of the many possibilities of their adaptation."	3. Writing, Art, Drama, Music, community meetings, special programs and events, Philosophy, working with adults, out of school experiences, vision questing, personal reflection.
<i>4. The adolescent must develop expanded verbal skills.</i>	4. "The general program of studies must...open the way to the possibilities of personal expression."	4. Writing, public speaking, performing, conversational skills, community meetings, seminars
<i>5. The adolescent must adjust to a new physical sense of self.</i>	5. "The period of life during which the body attains maturity is, in fact, a delicate one: the organism is transformed; its development is rapid."	5. Sports/PE, dress expectations, health, outdoor challenge activities, work at the Wakefield Trust property
<i>6. The adolescent must develop increased impulse control and behavioral maturity.</i>	6. "Respect for young people is essential."	6. Policies and procedures, Adolescent Program Agreement, community service and meetings, study skills development, out of class experiences.

<p>7. <i>The adolescent must develop stable and productive peer relationships.</i></p>	<p>7. “During the difficult period of adolescence it is desirable to have the child live outside his habitual surroundings, outside the family, in the country, in a peaceful place, in the bosom of nature...This form of work introduces the children to the heart of social life by experience and study.”</p>	<p>7. Social activities, camping trips, Odyssey, Adolescent Program Agreement, Wakefield Trust property and excursions</p>
<p>8. <i>The adolescent must establish emotional and psychological independence from his or her parents.</i></p>	<p>8. “The feeling of independence that results [from the awareness of one’s own usefulness] must be born from the ability to be sufficient to oneself and not from a vague liberty due to the benevolent and gratuitous help of adults.”</p>	<p>8. Out of school experiences, camping, Odyssey, apprenticeships</p>
<p>9. <i>The adolescent must establish adult vocational goals.</i></p>	<p>9. “If from the physical point of view, puberty is the transition between childhood and adulthood, it is, from the psychological point of view, a transition between the mentality of the child – who lives in the family – and that of the [adult] who lives in society.”</p>	<p>9. Odyssey, school store, Thacher Coffee Company, community service, apprenticeship, Chicken Egg Initiative, Wakefield Trust property</p>
<p>10. <i>The adolescent must learn how to handle her or his sexuality.</i></p>		<p>10. Health Education, social activities, parent-school partnership, personal reflection</p>

Daily Life

Dress Guidelines

See the Section V: Policies and Procedures for information on the dress code.

Student Businesses

The Adolescent Program students run businesses to raise money to sustain their educational activities. Each business has an eighth grade manager and a team who assist in the daily running of the company. The students independently run these businesses and are responsible for purchasing supplies (through catalogs and at local stores), taking orders, counting money, keeping the books, making deposits, and serving their customers. These businesses provide adolescent students valuable experience in sales and customer relations, opportunities that highlight the usefulness of knowledge and skills they have been acquiring through school.

- The Pizza Business is the adolescents' major source of revenue for the year-end Odyssey. Each Wednesday, students distribute the pre-ordered pizza to the rest of the community and oversee the cleanup of pizza boxes and recyclables. They manage the orders and go to the bank periodically to deposit money.
- AP students raise and care for chickens at the neighboring Wakefield Trust property. Each week, they collect eggs to distribute at Friday's dismissal to interested families. The Adolescent Program requests a contribution from recipient families to help sustain this initiative.

Homework

Students are given assignments regularly, which they are expected to complete within a certain time period. Students are individually responsible for organizing their time to complete these assignments. Consequently, students may get most of their work done at school, or they may choose to bring work home. Adolescents periodically are assigned large projects that require extra time, which can only be completed by doing some of the work at home, thus becoming an official homework assignment.

Parents are asked to support their adolescent by providing a family schedule that allows time and space each evening for schoolwork. For concentrated learning to occur, students should study without the distraction of television, telephones, or the Internet.

Camping

One of the main objectives of a Montessori education is to guide children to independence—to develop inner direction and motivation, achieve a state of self-confidence, and establish strong interpersonal skills. Another objective is to nurture children's natural tendency to understand and have compassion for all living beings. Both of these objectives are further cultivated when we bring the children overnight camping. Camping provides a unique opportunity for the children to apply and expand their skills to larger physical spaces, new environments, new people, and new situations.

Camping involves pushing personal boundaries to achieve something the students have never accomplished before. This may be a physical boundary (such as a high ropes course, a "challenge by choice," or canoeing), social boundary (such as helping a peer achieve a goal), and/or emotional boundary (such as confronting a fear of nature). Personal boundaries are also expanded through the opportunity in a new environment to observe and sharpen awareness, utilize critical thinking skills and make decisions that will have direct consequences on oneself and others.

Testing

AP students receive quizzes and tests throughout the year as part of their learning experience. Percentages are marked on student papers to prepare adolescent students for the style of evaluation they will encounter when they move on to high school. Each spring Thacher administers a national standardized test to all AP students. In addition, Thacher offers an optional after school SSAT/ISEE preparation course to students who wish to sign up for this supplementary program.

Science Fair

Building on their experience in Upper Elementary, AP students present science projects at an annual science fair organized by the science teacher. Students are provided the foundation for completing a science fair project during science classes. They learn about setting up and recording science experiments in a traditional format: purpose, procedure, materials, hypothesis, observations and results. Prior to the science fair, students are given specific guidelines about choosing their project and how it should be presented to the judges. Adolescent science fair projects are evaluated and graded for quality.

Theatrical Performance

The culmination of the Drama Intensive is an evening theatrical performance for families and friends of Thacher. From setting and costumes to rehearsal and performance, adolescent students are engaged as productive and responsible members of the acting ensemble, demonstrating personal responsibility, and commitment to a collaborative process.

Human Sexuality Education

In order to maintain alignment with the Massachusetts General Laws regarding Human Sexuality Education, Thacher provides notification regarding curriculum that primarily involves human sexuality education or human sexuality issues. This notification allows parents or guardians to exempt their child/children from any and all portions of said curriculum through written notification to the head of school. Program materials will be made reasonably accessible to parents, guardians, and others, to the extent practicable, in advance of any lessons. No exempted child shall be penalized in any fashion. The child will be given the opportunity to continue working on his/her classroom studies in an alternate location while his/her peers participate in such lessons.

Electronics and Cell Phones

Student possession of cell phones during school is a distraction to the student as well as the entire classroom. Consequently, we strongly discourage families from allowing students to bring cell phones to Thacher. Any student who brings a cell phone to the school must turn it into their lead guide each morning prior to the start of class. All phones will be kept safe in the AP office until the end of the day, when they are returned to students. Should an emergency arise and a student need to use their cell phone during the school day, they can request it from the lead guide. Any violation of this policy or repeat offenses will lead to the loss of the privilege of having the phone on campus. Other electronic devices of an educational nature (laptop computers and tablets/iPads) are acceptable with the lead guide's approval. When field trips or other travelling experiences are planned, the lead guide will inform students when it is appropriate to bring along electronic devices (e.g., iPods, games, etc.) for long trips.

Behavior and Discipline

Grace and courtesy are part of the curriculum at Thacher Montessori School. All members of our community are expected to respect one another, use manners with adults and peers, care for their space, and care for the environment. Children at Thacher learn to resolve their conflicts with one another and to seek the help of an adult if necessary to aid them in peacefully solving problems.

Behaviors that Disrupt the Peace and Safety of our Community

- Poor sportsmanship, including but not limited to: excessive complaining, bragging, or tantrums
- Excessive roughness while playing, including pretend gun play
- Intentional disregard for instructions and/or rules
- Intentional and/or repeated interruption of others during the work period
- Encouraging others to break rules

Serious Disciplinary Behaviors

- Violent behavior, including but not limited to: hitting, biting, kicking, shoving, or throwing objects
- Repeated conversations or comments about fighting or instigating others to fight
- Willful disrespect of lead guides and/or other school employees
- Disrespect of property including but not limited to: theft, defacement or destruction of school materials, supplies and the belongings of others
- Foul and/or abusive language, including but not limited to: derogatory comments about racial, religious or sexual/gender orientation, swearing, threats, and intention to embarrass or intimidate another
- Overt or covert threatening, taunting, or bullying behaviors.

Thacher Montessori School does not tolerate bullying behavior. Bullying is a behavior that goes beyond the normal bounds of children's play. Some amount of teasing or physical interaction is developmentally appropriate and expected among children of this age group; however, when one child repeatedly hurts another child verbally, emotionally, or physically, in an effort to demean, disrespect or gain power over that student, this behavior is considered bullying behavior and is outside the acceptable norms for school behavior. When a school employee is concerned that a child's behavior pattern may be considered to be bullying behavior or an egregious incident occurs, the guide will apply appropriate consequences and be in contact with the parents.

Consequences

Based upon the seriousness of the infraction and the child's behavioral history, the lead guide may implement one or more of the following consequences:

- Guide speaks to the student(s) involved
- Guide informs parents
- Guide and parents meet with student present
- Student meets with head of school or assistant head of school
- Head of school or level coordinator communicates with parents
- Guide and parents meet with head of school
- Student removed from a specified activity
- Student writes a letter pertaining to the offense
- Documentation of behavior placed in child's file
- Student sent home
- Re-entry conference with guide, parents, head of school, and student
- At discretion of head of school, the child may face a longer suspension or expulsion

Internet Use Policy for Students

Please see section V: Policies and Procedures for information on the school's Internet Use Policy.

All Internet access done through Thacher Montessori School must be consistent with and in support of the School's curricular guidelines and educational objectives. At the beginning of the school year, students and parents in the Adolescent Program will be asked to sign a user agreement.

Appendix 1: Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan

I. INTRODUCTION

A. Purpose

Thacher Montessori School ("Thacher Montessori") is committed to providing a physically and emotionally safe environment, free from all forms of bullying, for all students, staff and other constituents. Bullying affects not only those who are subjected to bullying ("targets") but also those who participate in and/or witness such behavior. Because acts of bullying detract from the peace and security that are necessary for a healthy community and environment for learning, Thacher Montessori will not tolerate such acts.

Thacher Montessori prohibits all forms of bullying based on race, color, religion, national origin, ethnicity, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, age or disability. The civil rights of all community members are guaranteed by law. Those rights are of utmost importance and their protection is a priority for Thacher Montessori. The school also prohibits bullying of any members of the Thacher community for reasons unrelated to the above-mentioned civil rights. Thacher Montessori will not tolerate retaliation against persons who take action in violation of this policy.

B. What is Bullying?

Bullying: Bullying is the repeated use by one or more students, or any member of the school staff, of a written, verbal or electronic expression or a physical act or gesture or any combination thereof, directed at a target that:

- (i) causes physical or emotional harm to the target or damage to the target's property;
- (ii) places the target in reasonable fear of harm to him- or herself or of damage to his or her property;
- (iii) creates a hostile environment at school for the target;
- (iv) infringes on the rights of the target at school; or
- (v) materially and substantially disrupts the education process or the orderly operation of a school.

For purposes of this policy, school staff includes, but is not limited to, any and all educators, administrators, school nurses, custodians, bus drivers, athletic coaches, advisors to extracurricular activities, and paraprofessionals.

Cyber-bullying: Cyber-bullying is bullying through the use of technology or electronic devices such as telephones, cell phones, computers, and the Internet. It includes but is not limited to email, instant messages,

text messages, and Internet postings. Cyber-bullying can include (but is not limited to) bullying through the creation of a web page or blog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person, or knowingly impersonates another person as the author of posted content or messages and also includes bullying through the distribution of or posting on electronic media that may be accessed by others.

Retaliation: Retaliation is any form of intimidation, reprisal, or harassment directed against a student or staff member who reports bullying, provides information during an investigation of bullying, or witnesses or has reliable information about bullying.

C. Scope of Plan

Thacher Montessori will support the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan in all aspects of its activities, including its curricula, instructional programs, staff development, extracurricular activities and parental involvement.

The Plan applies to all sites and activities under the supervision and control of Thacher Montessori, or as required by law. Thacher prohibits bullying whether it takes place at school, at school-sponsored events, or on a school bus. The Plan applies to all students, school volunteers, visitors, parents and legal guardians of students whose conduct occurs on school premises or in school-related activities, including school-related transportation.

Bullying is also prohibited at any location, activity, function or program that is not school-related, or through the use of technology or an electronic device that is not owned, leased or used by Thacher Montessori, if the act or acts in question create a hostile environment at school for the target, infringe on the rights of the target at school, or materially and substantially disrupt the education process or the orderly operation of the school.

The Thacher Montessori Board of Trustees expects the Head of School to make clear to students and staff that bullying will not be tolerated and will be grounds for disciplinary action up to and including suspension and expulsion for students and termination for employees.

D. Plan's Development

The development of the Thacher Montessori Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan is a community effort. A task force of staff developed a plan after studying the plans recommendations from the Massachusetts Attorney General's office and other schools' tentative plans. After completing an initial draft in November of 2010, the Thacher Montessori staff and parent communities had an opportunity to review and add feedback to the plan before it was presented to the Thacher Montessori Board of Trustees for their review and approval. The Plan will be reviewed every two years.

E. Vulnerable Populations

Thacher Montessori School recognizes that certain students may be more vulnerable to become targets of bullying, harassment or teasing based on perceived characteristics, including race, color, religion, ancestry, national origin, sex, socioeconomic status, homelessness, academic status, gender identity or expression, physical disability, sensory disability, or by association with a person who has or is perceived to have one or more of these characteristics. The School will identify specific steps it will take to create a safe, supportive

environment for vulnerable populations in the school community, and provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies to prevent or respond to bullying, harassment or teasing.

The School shall take the following specific steps to support vulnerable students and to provide all students with the skills, knowledge, and strategies needed to prevent or respond to bullying or harassment.

1. Our Montessori curriculum places an emphasis on practicing and teaching respect, conflict resolution, and appreciation and honoring of differences.
2. When placing students in classrooms we take care to avoid isolating vulnerable children.
3. We are committed to being a consciously diverse community.
 - a. Our admissions staff is intentional about enrolling children from diverse backgrounds and family structure.
 - b. Multiage classrooms with children working at all levels are maintained to normalize diversity.
 - c. Families of vulnerable groups are encouraged to come in and share their family cultures.
4. Adults at Thacher consciously work to prevent bullying.
 - a. Adults model cooperation and tolerance.
 - b. Adults respond to issues with a respectful learning approach rather than a punitive approach.
 - c. Our guides are trained observers who proactively recognize and address behavior that is inappropriate.
 - d. Adults are attentive to social interactions on the playground and address potential issues directly with the children involved.
 - e. Our individualized approach allows adults to bring conflict to the fore to be addressed for each and every child.
 - f. We address issues promptly and include parents in discussions early to make sure the awareness of problems extends beyond the classroom.
 - g. We teach 3-6 year olds to greet, have a dialogue, ask for help, and use words to avoid conflict. We give them appropriate vocabulary so they can successfully interact with others.
 - h. Elementary and adolescent students use role-playing activities and/or community meetings to learn about conflict resolution.
 - i. Elementary students work together to write their classroom code of conduct at the start of each year.

Before fully investigating the allegations of bullying or retaliation, the appropriate staff member shall take all necessary steps to restore the target and/or community's sense of safety as necessary and/or to protect the alleged target from possible further incidents.

Target Interview & Support - In responding to a report or other evidence of bullying or retaliation, staff members should follow the following steps:

- a) Interview the target first, then the alleged aggressor.
- b) The staff member conducting the interview should not meet with the target, or ask to meet with the target, in the alleged aggressor's presence. The staff member should emphasize that the target will not be mentioned to the aggressor and will not be part of the discipline.

- c) Dealing with the alleged aggressor(s) is the role of the adult, not the target.
- d) Mediation should not be used for resolving bullying situations.

When interviewing a target involved with an incident, staff members should:

- a) affirm the target's feelings:
Example: "I can see/hear that you are feeling..."
- b) affirm the target took the right action by reporting his or her side of the story;
Example: "I'm glad you told me. It is very helpful to know your side of the story."
- c) ask the target what s/he has already attempted to do to stop the aggression;
- d) make it clear that the aggression was not his/her fault;
- e) think carefully before giving advice, as often times the targets have already tried and failed to stop this aggression by the strategies staff members usually suggest (e.g., walk away or tell aggressor to stop);
- f) remind the target to always report aggression;
- g) brainstorm solution with him/her after identifying what has and has not worked in the past. (Note: Even solutions that seem obvious to adults may not be apparent to children, such as merely avoiding the bully); and
- h) recruit targets' peers to befriend isolated targets. Do this carefully and deliberately (that is, approach the target's peers who will be sympathetic and ask them directly to befriend the target; even temporarily, this can be a big help).

Witness Interview & Support - When interviewing students who are witnesses to bullying, staff members should:

- a) affirm the witness took the right action by reporting all information he/she has about the situation;
Example: "I'm glad you told me. This information may help us find a solution."
- b) ask the witness if something has already been attempted to stop this situation;
- c) gain an understanding of the witness's feelings;
Example: Does the witness feel fear, empathy, or any other emotions?
- d) if appropriate, brainstorm with the witnesses ways to make him or her feel safe;
- e) remind the witness or informant to always report aggression; and
- f) let the witness know you will do everything you can to help solve the problem.

Accused Interview & Support - When interviewing the student who is accused of bullying, staff members should:

- a) Identify the problem and diffuse reporting responsibility;
Example: "I have been hearing that..." or "I have an Incident Report that states..."). Alternatively, own reporting responsibility or attribute it to another adult (example: "I am disturbed by what I have been seeing..." or "Ms. X saw you...")
- b) Focus more generally on the alleged aggressor's behavior rather than on the particular incident;
Example: "I have a report here that you are calling kids names," rather than "I have a report that you called Susie Smith a bad name."
- c) Provide incentives for honesty;
Example: If the alleged aggressor denies any wrongdoing, tell him that if he tells the truth about the incident, you can mention his honesty when calling his parents.

- d) Proceed differently depending on whether or not the student who is accused of being the aggressor admits any wrongdoing.
- (1) If the student denies any wrongdoing, consider the following tactics:
- i. Tell the student if there is any corroborating evidence or witnesses, but do not mention the target or the witnesses by name (unless they are adults), if possible.
 - ii. If there is NO corroboration and the student continues to deny the allegations, tell the student that you hope he or she is right. Explain that you and the other adults in school will be keeping a close eye on the situation. *The critical element here is that the children know there will be a response to the report even if there appears to be no immediate disciplinary action.*
 - iii. If the student denies the allegation, regardless of whether or not there is corroboration, conduct an investigation. Staff should tell the alleged aggressor that you will talk to him/her some more about this matter, but do not mention that you may be talking to other students, as this may result in the alleged aggressor threatening them as well.
- (2) If the student admits the behavior but minimizes his or her actions, respond by firmly asserting that s/he may feel it is “no big deal” but that the school and the community think that such behaviors are indeed a big deal.
- (3) If the child finally admits wrongdoing after initially denying it, acknowledge the difficulty out of denial.

Disciplinary Measures & Counseling - While allegations of bullying, harassment, or retaliation may be made anonymously, no disciplinary action shall be taken against the accused solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Once it is deemed that the alleged action is considered “bullying,” Thacher Montessori will respond in a manner appropriate to the aggressor’s age and/or developmental awareness, including but not limited to taking any of the following actions:

- immediate removal from other students;
- development with aggressor’s parents (and possibly with aggressor) of a plan of action to help the child modify his/her behavior and protect the safety of others;
- suspension;
- expulsion; and/or
- report to the local police.¹

Any student who knowingly makes a false accusation of bullying or retaliation shall be disciplined.

Counseling, or referrals to appropriate services, may be provided to students who have been bullied, or who have perpetrated bullying, and their family members.

¹ The Head of School will notify the local law enforcement agency if at any point after receiving a report of bullying or retaliation, including after an investigation, there is reasonable basis to believe that criminal charges may be pursued against the alleged aggressor.

Prompt Notification to Parents and School - The Head of School will promptly notify the parents of both the target and the alleged aggressor in a manner consistent with state and federal law, and inform the parents of any action taken to prevent further bullying or retaliation.

Thacher Montessori recognizes that sharing the outcome of incidents of bullying and/or retaliation is critical to maintaining a school climate where students and parents/guardians feel able to report such behaviors. Thacher Montessori will strive to provide sufficient information to the Thacher Montessori community after an incident of bullying to ensure that the matter is being appropriately handled.

Safety and Security - Thacher Montessori cares about the safety and security of its students. In the event that bullying takes place, the staff will closely monitor the behaviors of the alleged aggressor to ensure the target's safety, including if necessary moving the aggressor to another classroom and ensuring that the aggressor and target do not have recess at the same time. A designated staff member will have responsibility to assess the situation regularly and report to the Head of School on a weekly basis. These actions are in addition to the steps listed above under *Disciplinary Measures and Counseling*.

II. REPORTING BULLYING, RESPONSES TO BULLYING & DISCIPLINARY MEASURES

Students, staff, parents, guardians, and others are encouraged to report bullying or retaliation to any Thacher Montessori lead guide, specialist, or administrator. Reports of bullying may be made anonymously. No disciplinary action shall be taken against a student solely on the basis of an anonymous report.

Any members of the school staff must immediately report any instance of bullying or retaliation that he or she has witnessed, or of which he or she becomes aware, to the Head of School, including by completing the Bully/Peer Aggression Report Form (attached hereto [1]) and submitting it to the Head of School.

The Head of School will be responsible for handling all complaints by students alleging bullying or retaliation. The Head of School will promptly and reasonably investigate all allegations of bullying or retaliation. Retaliation against a person who reports bullying, who provides information during an investigation of bullying, or who is a witness to or has reliable information about bullying, is prohibited.

II. EDUCATION ON BULLYING

A. Staff

Thacher Montessori shall provide annual professional development to all school staff members to build skills to prevent, identify, and respond to bullying and to implement the bullying prevention and intervention plan. The content of such professional development shall include, but not be limited to:

1. developmentally appropriate strategies to prevent bullying incidents;
2. developmentally appropriate strategies for immediate, effective interventions to stop bullying incidents;
3. information regarding the complex interactions and power differential that can take place between and among the target, aggressor and any witness;
4. research findings on bullying;
5. information on the incidence and nature of cyber-bullying; and
6. internet safety issues as they relate to cyberbullying.

The school staff shall receive annual written notice of the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan in the staff handbook.

B. Parents/Guardians

Thacher Montessori is more than a school; it is a community. As such, it is the policy of Thacher Montessori to encourage and expect parents and guardians to share information with the school that could be useful to identify, better understand and/or address any types of bullying or retaliatory behavior that may impact any part of the school community. Collaboration with parents and guardians increases the school's capacity to prevent and respond to bullying.

Thacher Montessori shall provide information to parents on the school's philosophy and the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan at various times throughout the year, including during the first tour of the school, at annual fall orientation meetings, in the Family Handbook, and at parent education seminars. Parents will also receive written or oral notice from teachers if their child is involved in any behavior that is not consistent with expected behavior as outlined in the Family Handbook. Such information will reinforce the curriculum at home and support the School's Plan, the dynamics of bullying; and online safety and cyberbullying.

C. Students

Thacher Montessori recognizes that students may engage in bullying without understanding the effects of such behavior. Therefore, evidence-based, age-appropriate bullying prevention shall be included in the lessons and guidance students receive in each classroom.

At the beginning of each school year, students in every classroom shall participate in developing the classroom rules of behavior. Relevant sections of the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan shall be presented and discussed with students. Ongoing education on Bullying Prevention & Intervention and retaliation shall be provided thereafter as necessary.

D. Website

The Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan will be posted on the school's website.

III. RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PLAN

The Head of School of Thacher Montessori is responsible for implementation and oversight of the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan.

IV. PROCEDURES FOR ADOPTING AND REVIEWING BULLYING PREVENTION & INTERVENTION PLAN

Prior to the adoption of the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan, Thacher Montessori will consult with teachers, school staff, administrators, students, parents and guardians. All families of Thacher Montessori will receive notice of and an opportunity to comment on the Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan. The Bullying Prevention & Intervention Plan will be reviewed every two years.

Thacher Montessori School reserves the right to respond to each instance of bullying on a case-by-case basis that is consistent with the Plan.

[1]
Thacher Montessori School
Bully/Peer Aggression Report Form

Reporter:	
Date and time of incident:	
Location of incident:	
Who reported incident:	
Children involved:	
Witnesses:	
Describe incident or concerns in detail. Be sure to include: What happened? What action was taken? What was the outcome? Any further information or concerns	
To your knowledge has this occurred before?	YES NO
Were there immediate safety or transportation needs?	Needs: Action taken:
Parent (of target) contacted	Date: Phone #:
Parent (of accused) contacted	Date: Phone #:
Head of school signature	

Please submit completed form to the head of school immediately