



## Family Handbook

### Mission Statement

We nurture and challenge students to develop the skills and courage they need to unleash their full potential.

### Vision Statement

To provide the best personalized and hands-on educational experience for our students — one that empowers them to positively impact the world.

**Family Handbook**  
**Greensboro Montessori School**

**Nondiscrimination Statement**

Greensboro Montessori School is a nonsectarian, independent school established to provide the best education for youth in programs for toddlers to teens without regard to race, color, religion, sexual orientation or identity, national origin, socioeconomic status or disability (to the extent that reasonable accommodations are possible).

**Privacy Statement and Restriction on Use of Information**

The information contained in this Family Handbook (“Handbook”) and Greensboro Montessori School’s Family Directory (“Directory”) is strictly for Greensboro Montessori School families. None of the information in either documents, including names, street addresses, email addresses, or phone numbers, may be used for non-school-related purposes or shared with outside parties. This information is published as a convenience to Greensboro Montessori School families and is not intended for circulation outside of the school community, either orally or in writing, by any other person or organization.

Thank you for your understanding in respecting this policy. If you have questions regarding the appropriate use of the information contained in the Handbook and Directory, please contact Greensboro Montessori School. This Handbook is designed to provide families with general information relative to the day-to-day operations of and philosophy of Greensboro Montessori School.

Welcome to Greensboro Montessori School.

Whether you are a new family to Greensboro Montessori School or a long-time community member, the information within this Family Handbook is designed to help your family know how Greensboro Montessori School operates and how we can partner together to best support your child/ren.

Information contained in this Handbook is a general description of our policies and procedures currently in place. This document is reviewed each summer by administration. It is designed as a resource and reference for you. However, within the complex social reality of a school, we cannot cover every single detail of school life. Whenever you have a question, please do not hesitate to check in with us. We are always here to help and to be your partner. You can reach out to any team member and they will help connect with you with the appropriate teammate.

Thank you for choosing Greensboro Montessori School for your family.

We are happy you are with us.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Kevin Navarro".

Dr. Kevin Navarro  
Head of School

## Campus Map



## **Contact Information**

2856 Horse Pen Creek Road

Greensboro, NC 27410

Phone: 336-668-0119

Fax: 336-665-9531

## **Administration**

Dr. Kevin Navarro, head of school, [kevin.navarro@gms.org](mailto:kevin.navarro@gms.org)

Nancy Hofer, associate head of school, [nancy.hofer@gms.org](mailto:nancy.hofer@gms.org)

Amy Wagoner, director of finance, [amy.wagoner@gms.org](mailto:amy.wagoner@gms.org)

Andi Bogan, family relations coordinator, [andi.bogan@gms.org](mailto:andi.bogan@gms.org)

YoungDoo Carey, communications coordinator, [youngdoo.carey@gms.org](mailto:youngdoo.carey@gms.org)

Jillian Crone, director of marketing & development, [jillian.crone@gms.org](mailto:jillian.crone@gms.org)

Sophia Dubrovsky, bookkeeper, [sophia.dubrovsky@gms.org](mailto:sophia.dubrovsky@gms.org)

Rhea Egbert, director of admission, [rhea.egbert@gms.org](mailto:rhea.egbert@gms.org)

Heather Goggin, director of human resources, [heather.goggin@gms.org](mailto:heather.goggin@gms.org)

Brandon Johnson, director of information technology, [brandon.johnson@gms.org](mailto:brandon.johnson@gms.org)

Brooke Juneau, director of CASA, [brooke.juneau@gms.org](mailto:brooke.juneau@gms.org)

Sidney McGinnis, learning support services coordinator, [sidney.mcginnis@gms.org](mailto:sidney.mcginnis@gms.org)

Ben Payne, director of upper school, [ben.payne@gms.org](mailto:ben.payne@gms.org)

Heather Sparks, director of facilities, [heather.sparks@gms.org](mailto:heather.sparks@gms.org)

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## Section 1: A Montessori School — Philosophy & Foundations

### Origins of the Montessori Method

Dr. Maria Montessori, the founder of the Montessori method, was born in the town of Chiaravalle, Italy on August 31, 1870. At the time of her birth, Italy was experiencing a period of social reform, and its impact would be shown in the later life of this infant who became Italy's first woman doctor and one of the 20th century's foremost educational reformists.

Maria entered school at the age of three, getting the conventional education of the day. In 1876, when Maria was twelve, her parents moved from Ancona to Rome, and a better education became available to her. She attended an all-boys technical school, showing an interest in mathematics and the natural sciences. Maria became an outstanding student in high school with qualifications which ensured a swift transition to the Engineering Department of the University of Rome. It was an impressive feat to be admitted to a discipline which was traditionally only open to men.

Maria's interest soon changed, and she pronounced her intention to become a doctor. Maria won academic awards and scholarships year after year, continuing to find success in the historically-male-dominated field. Upon graduation, she won the coveted prize as head of the class. She became the first woman to receive the degree of Doctor of Medicine from the University of Rome.

Maria had a variety of interests in medicine. She had done her internship in pediatrics, but now after graduation she opened a private practice treating children and adults. She was a caring and dutiful physician, working with the poor and rich alike, catering to the whole person and not just the symptoms of disease. At the age of 27 Maria joined the Psychiatric clinic at the University and began a work that would have a profound impact of her future. She was sent out to various institutions to work with mentally handicapped children. With the same academic curiosity she had applied to other subjects, she began to study the works of famous educators of the day and implement their ideas and methods with her handicapped charges, gaining remarkable results. Her experiments led her to the conclusion that the best approach for these children was pedagogical, not medical. Before long her "defective" students were exceeding all expectations, and several passed the State Examinations in reading and writing. The notoriety of this only led her to question what the others were missing. She reflected, "While everyone was admiring the progress of my defectives, I was thinking of the reasons that might have reduced the healthy, happy pupils of the ordinary schools to a level so low that it could be reached in tests of intelligence by my unhappy pupils."

Nationwide interest was created by a report on her experiments presented to the Pedagogical Congress in Turin in 1898. Her results inspired the pioneering establishment of special schools for the mentally deficient in Italy and later other countries. She continued to advance her knowledge and experience in pedagogy, working with children and training teachers. In the ten years that followed her graduation Montessori both taught and published. Maria's unquenchable thirst for knowledge prompted her to study further. Although she was already a lecturer at the University, she also became a student. She studied philosophy and psychology, as well as anthropology. It must be noted that anthropology in that day differed greatly from now, for it focused on the individual as the instrument of social change. This affirmed Montessori's beliefs in reform and led her closer to seeing the child as the constructor of society and an instrument for social change.

All these experiences led to the experiment which brought her international renown and launched the so called “Montessori Method.” There existed in Rome at the time a slum quarter known as San Lorenzo. Maria was approached by a reputable banking institution, Institutio Romano dei Beni Stabili, which had built a number of tenement buildings in the slum quarter with the hope of bringing about change for the poor and destitute. She was asked to take charge of the young, who were idle and unoccupied, and who posed a threat to the success of the project as well as the upkeep of the buildings. She was given a room with minimal furnishings and an untrained assistant. It is this humble project that led Montessori to abandon her practice and University chairs. One must marvel at the foresight of the woman who was willing to step down from the peak of professional success and become a “baby-sitter.”

On January 6, 1907, the first Casa dei Bambini was opened. Her own words explain better than any her motives: “I had a strange feeling that made me announce emphatically at the opening that here was a ‘grandiose’ undertaking of which the whole world would one day speak.” Indeed, Montessori applied her energy and knowledge to this new project with results that exceeded even her high expectations.

Little by little, through scientific observation and the background acquired by study, she created a school whose materials and methods were truly revolutionary. The child-sized furniture, the exercises of practical life, the sensory training material all had roots in the work of great educators of the time, but Montessori, the great eclectic, synthesized them into a whole. This casa de bambini, or in English, “House of Children” or “Children’s House,” began to attract attention, and the achievements of the children astonished many. A second Children’s House was established in the project, with similar benefits to the children. Educators and nobility sought it out and went away with the highest of praise. The social reform that had been the talk of Italy for years was finally being established in these little schools. The news went international, drawing attention and visits by educators from all over the world.

This growing interest was met by Montessori’s first book, written in 1909, titled “The Method of Scientific Pedagogy as Applied to Infant Education and the Children’s Houses.” This work, and subsequent other, promoted the method of Dr. Montessori and helped to get it established in Europe, Australia, Asia, and America. Training institutions were also created, and Dr. Montessori traveled the world, training teachers and starting schools. From 1909 until she died in 1952, Dr. Montessori continued to add to her work, expanding it into the elementary and secondary schools. By the time she died, a philosophy of an “education for life” had taken form and meaning in schools all over the world.

Modern education owes a great debt to Montessori, although as the years have gone by, many of her revolutionary ideas have been integrated into mainstream education and their origins forgotten. The method that began at the turn of the 20th century is now more popular than ever before, and many of its component qualities are being used to reform the existing system. In over 5,000 private and 200 public schools in the United States today the Montessori method flourishes. This, in itself, is a testament to Dr. Montessori’s work, which will continue for many generations to come.

### **An Education for Life**

Dr. Montessori applied a scientific technique to the observation of natural development in young children and concluded that there are a number of important concepts concerning childhood growth and development:

- *The mind and the body grow in different ways.* Dr. Montessori observed that the mind actually is a psychic organ which develops differently from the body.
- *Optimum growth is affected by the environment.* Dr. Montessori observed that growth can be enhanced by the environment which the child grows up in.
- *Growth occurs in spurts.* Dr. Montessori observed that growth occurs in stages which have peaks and valleys. She called these stages “planes of development.”
- *Childhood has distinct characteristics.* Dr. Montessori observed that children are not “little adults”, that the process of growth during childhood is unique and like no other time during the human lifespan.
- *Intelligence increases with experience.* Dr. Montessori observed that intelligence grows with experience and the key to developing the intellect was to promote the constructive activity of the child.
- *Each child has a unique potential.* Dr. Montessori observed that the child did not come as a clean slate and then became a product of their cultural experiences. She believed that the child had innate tendencies to become human with a vast potentiality that was largely wasted in conventional education.
- *Education was needed to serve the child and not just the needs of society.* Dr. Montessori observed that education must place its greatest energies towards serving the child for the betterment of society and the evolution of humankind as a species.
- *Children love to learn.* Given an optimal environment with adults sympathetic to the true needs of the developing child, Dr. Montessori observed that children pursued knowledge with vigor and enthusiasm. The classic method of rewards and punishment were obstacles to the child’s healthy growth and interest in learning.
- *Education for development.* Dr. Montessori developed pedagogical structures to meet the developmental needs of the growing child without preconceived curricula or a directive approach. This she called an education for life.

## Planes of Development

Through scientific observation spanning 50 years, Dr. Montessori developed a model for human development. She described each phase as a “plane.” In each plane of development, the child goes through what Dr. Montessori described as a “rebirth.” Each plane has identifiable psychological characteristics associated with that stage of growth. The environment, educational considerations, and teacher training are different for each plane. In this way education takes the form of an “aid to life.”

### ***The First Plane of Development (0 to 6 Years Old)***

In the first plane of development, the child is guided to promote self-construction of the individual’s personality. At Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”), this plane spans the Toddler and the Primary programs.

The first two years were often marked by Dr. Montessori by an “explosion” or “flame” of growth. It is a period of great transformation and change. For this reason, the adult serves the child by creating a safe and structured environment. This ensures that the child helps themselves but is sheltered from harm during this sensitive phase.

The physical characteristics of the child are distinct in the first plane of development. The body is chubby and soft. The limbs are short, and the proportion of the body is not fully formed. It is a time of rapid growth. The child is often sick, as they build up resistance to illness that comes from increased social contacts. It is a period of great physical achievement, with mastery of control and coordination of movement being the prime focus. In the first plane of development

the child refines their senses while their growing perceptual abilities provide the means by which they absorb new experiences.

Intellectual development is guided by the “absorbent mind,” the special capacity the child has to take in the whole as well as all of the details of the world around her. Images are stored in a special kind of subconscious memory, forming engrams of knowledge that await the emergence of the conscious mind. Through the absorbing quality of the mind the child is able to take in and inculcate the culture that they grow up in, truly becoming a full member of their community. The growing number of constructive experiences the child has prompts the will and conscious mind to emerge.

During this period, the child is urged by inner guides to be active and inquisitive. She explores the environment with their senses, latching on to the physical, tangible and concrete. Dr. Montessori believed that this is a time of reality-based education, and that the imagination has not yet emerged.

The child has a strong sensitivity to order, which helps her to relate experiences and discover relationships between things. The young child responds dramatically to events or routines which are changed or are not done in the way the child is used to. This is because the child's experiences help her to get a grip on reality. Without consistency and order the child will struggle in understanding key relationships that are fundamental to their growth.

The first plane of development is a time of repetition for mastery, with brief but intense periods of concentration on specific activities which are self-constructive. Sensitive periods are evidence of the guiding inner inclinations the child has to acquiring human traits. Of key importance are the sensitivities to order, human speech, and the development of the conscious will that allows the child to exercise freedom of choice.

Moral development during this plane takes the form of a developing sense of obedience, first to inner urges, and later to adult direction which builds awareness of what is good and bad. The child questions little, but strongly follows inner directives.

Social development takes the form of ego-centric behavior in which the child's social awareness builds only with their mental growth. Their real focus is on developing their individuality. Loose friendships are created often marked by emerging parallel play and work, and the child prefers to work alone or in small groups

### ***The Second Plane of Development (6 to 12 Years Old)***

In the second plane of development the child has a special set of psychological characteristics unique to the period of 6 to 12 years old. At GMS, this plane of development spans the Lower Elementary and the Upper Elementary programs.

The knowledge of this plane and its particularities promote a specially prepared environment to serve the needs of the child.

The key transformation that takes place in the second plane of development is the birth of the social personality, the transformation of the child from an ego centric individual to the emergence of a new child who becomes a social participant. This awakening of social tendencies takes place when the intellect emerges fully, and the self will of the child's actions

determines their rate of development. The following are the psychological characteristics of the second plane:

- *Separation from the Family:* During this stage, the child gains their full capabilities in caring for themselves and develops emotional independence. This is a necessary step in growth where the child broadens their base of reference and follows their peers. They have a strong need to identify with children of their own age and in these experiences, they gain a heartiness of character.
- *Physical Stamina:* This is a period in the child's life when they are the healthiest, they will ever be, and their energy and endurance know no bounds. They have a "can-do" attitude when it comes to physical challenges and their achievements promote their sense of self-worth and independence.
- *Herd Instinct:* The child at this age feels an identity and attraction to their peers which creates a unique social bonding. The so-called herd instinct is manifest in the child as a special social closeness and affection for others. What fascinated the young child in physical details now is directed towards relationships and social awareness is keen.
- *Moral Development:* There is a strong urge in this plane for the clarification of values and an intelligent understanding of the rules which must be conformed to. There is much questioning and emotional involvement in this process, the child actively engages in social interaction with the same enthusiasm they did in the Children's House with physical objects.
- *Developing Imagination:* At this stage of development the child finds the most useful tool to enter into society is the use of their imagination. Given a rich and varied perceptual experience in the first plane, the child now capitalizes on their wealth of memory and relates these basic concepts to the wider world. The educational method for this plane stimulates the imagination and allows it to actualize the child's mental prowess.
- *Hero Worship:* The child at this stage focuses in on key personalities and engages them with a fervor which has been called hero worship. In fact, the child is adopting models for social behavior and their social development is enriched by these experiences. These relationships are a healthy sign of natural growth.
- *Developing Intellect and the Powers of Abstraction:* The key characteristic of the second-plane child is the high level of independent thinking and the rapid growth of their powers to reason and go beyond their own reactions. This vast power of the intellect makes them able to be especially receptive to intellectual learning and abstract thought. The powers of logic develop as they relate their imagination beyond the relationship of things and predicates outcomes without physical evidence. The final abstraction of their cognitive skills is evidenced in their mastery of language and especially communication. Through reading and writing, they learn the way to preserve and communicate their thoughts for history, and this strikes a chord and engages their intellect.
- *Great Work:* Due to the unique powers of the intellect and the vigor of health the child in the second plane of development engages in tireless work of enormous proportions. It is the quality of BIG that they like, and they are called to activity that develops into greatness. The child gives their maximum exertion and effort to these formative activities.
- *Developing a Sense of Responsible Independence:* A fundamental challenge of the second plane is to gain control and coordination of the personality so that the child may fit in to the social conditions they encounter. To do this, the child explores the emotional and spiritual values of their peers and heroes, gaining valuable insight which promotes healthy personality growth. Their actions must now be responsible not only to themselves but must also contribute to the larger group they live with. They discover interdependency and seek to fulfill their social potential with a constructive contribution.

### ***The Third Plane of Development (12 to 18 Years Old)***

Dr. Montessori regarded the third plane of development as a period of great change and transformation. At GMS, this plane includes the Junior High program (seventh through ninth grades).

The transformation of puberty creates the adult from the child. It is an epoch of inner revelations and social sensibilities. The adolescent strives to discover both self and society, in order to take their place in the adult world as a contributing member. Towards understanding how adults may aid the emerging adult in this formation Montessori's focus is on responding to the identifiable developmental characteristics of the young adolescent:

- *Physiological*: This is a time of rapid physical growth matched only by that in infancy. Hormonal changes bring about sexual maturity, the development of secondary sexual characteristics, and the capacity to reproduce. There is a wide variation in the rate of maturation and growth among individuals of same age.
- *Social and Emotional*: It is an age of camaraderie and intensely emotional peer relationships. Adolescents need to identify with a group ("clubhouse") and to "belong." It is an intense time of high highs and low lows, when the adolescent is both self-conscious and insecure.
- *Intellectual*: During the adolescent years, the thinking of the intellect and feelings of emotions seem to blend. This has a profound effect on the learning process. These young people are more interested in the application of knowledge, and less in the acquisition of new knowledge. A key component of their learning style at this age is their need to object, argue, and analyze.
- *Maturational (Becoming an Adult)*: Young people in this stage of development need to test the roles of adulthood in a safe and age-appropriate environment. This process of constructing the social self urges them to a higher level of independence from their family and aids them as they join the wider community. It is a key period for adopting their own attitudes, mores, and values by questioning societal attitudes and the status quo.

### **Montessori's View of the Growing Child**

Dr. Montessori proposed a method of education to teach children the skills of living. She departed from conventional curricula and based her method upon the observation of the natural inclinations of young children. A revelation to her was the hidden psychic organ which prompted the child towards a constructive activity which not only helped her to grow physically and mentally, but whose experience formed the basis of the personality. Especially during childhood, where the greatest degree of personality formation takes place, Montessori sought a new method that would aid the child in their task of self-construction.

She realized that each child follows a universal pattern of growth which could not be trained but only promoted through removing obstacles to the child's natural activity and preparing an environment conducive for this purpose. Through interaction in a specially prepared environment enhanced mental growth took place. Astonishing results in the development of active and peaceful children drew attention to her method, although much of her theory pointed to the child as the indicator of this new educational method.

She wanted people to realize that the child had revealed to her a complex inner work taking place, without conscious volition the child followed dictates and exercised enormous powers uncharacteristic to adulthood.

These characteristics included psychic processes that once identified had significant implications for education. Dr. Montessori realized that the final achievement in childhood is made possible by potentialities, and the workings of the psychic development of the child was crucial to observe and follow in charting a course for education.

### **Educational Environments Created to Meet Developmental Needs**

In our Montessori school, we have organized our three-year divisions along the developmental planes and sensitive periods Dr. Montessori identified. Each of these divisions represents and reflects the developmental needs of its students. We have our:

- Toddler division (ages 18 months to 3 years old)
- Primary division (ages 3 to 6 years old)
- Lower Elementary division (ages 6 to 9 years old, or grades 1 to 3)
- Upper Elementary division (ages 9 to 12, or grades 4 to 6)
- Junior High division (ages 12 to 15, or grades 7 to 9).

#### ***Toddler***

Toddler serves students who are comfortably walking in a small and intimate group of 13 students and two faculty members. It has three program options: half day, academic day, and all day. The environment conforms to the physical needs of the children, both in the size of the furnishings and in the opportunities for motor development. There is an observation area for adults, minimal furniture, tiled floors, maximum natural light, selected art placed low on the walls, toilets sized for very small children, and defined spaces to challenge coordination of movement. The Toddler Community has three distinct areas:

The movement area includes stairs and a platform; movement mat; push cart; wall bars; materials for eye-hand coordination such as threading, bead stringing, cubes on pegs, spheres on horizontal pegs, puzzles, gluing, folding; and various practical life exercises.

The practical life area includes materials necessary for preparing and serving a snack, setting and clearing the table, sweeping, caring for plants and animals, dish washing, clothes washing, ironing, polishing, hand washing, window cleaning, flower arranging, and so on.

The language area includes miniature objects, language nomenclature cards (parts of the body, family members, pets, components of a neighborhood, a school, and the home), books (fiction, poetry, nonfiction), spoken vocabulary enrichment exercises, and other activities including art and music experiences.

#### ***Primary***

Although the work of the Primary is oriented towards the individual, the prepared environment accommodates a wide scope of diverse ages, family backgrounds and both genders. This community of diversity promotes social situations where the child can develop naturally and spontaneously.

As the child's social awareness unfolds, they discover that a group is made up of different individuals. In "To Educate the Human Potential," Dr. Montessori speaks on the development of awareness of society in the first plane, "Society is an organization of human beings each feeling [their] responsibility in relation to the collective order." A collective discipline prevails as each individual exercises their freedom in an atmosphere of order and security.

The children also absorb the order given to activity by work. They learn to work once they have clear presentations. Each child accepts a degree of responsibility in relation to their stage of development. The presentations develop respect for the materials and the means for constructive activity. Respect for others in their activities is also presented. The more attention given to preparing a suitable environment, the less need there is for limitations.

The fundamental key to establishing a prepared environment for Primary students is the prevailing order in the classroom. This order includes a neat and tidy work area, along with proper display of materials, but goes beyond to social conditions and the acceptance of constructive activity as the means for development. Respect of these aspects of order aid the children in satisfying their developmental needs.

In the Primary classroom, a patient unfolding of the individual is allowed, and they are not rushed into group work before they can cope socially.

### ***Lower and Upper Elementary***

The Elementary educational environment is oriented both towards the individual and the group. The prepared environment accommodates a wide scope of diverse ages, family backgrounds and both genders. This community of diversity promotes social situations where the child can develop naturally and spontaneously.

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The children also absorb the order given to activity by work. They learn to work independently once they have clear presentations. Each child accepts a degree of responsibility in relation to their stage of development. The presentations develop respect for the materials and the means for constructive activity. Respect for others in their activities is also presented. The more attention given to preparing a suitable environment, the less need there is for limitations.

The fundamental key to establishing a prepared environment for both Lower and Upper Elementary is the prevailing order in the classroom. This order includes a neat and tidy work area, along with proper display of materials, but goes beyond to social conditions and the acceptance of constructive activity as the means for development. Respect of these aspects of order aid the children in satisfying their developmental needs.

In the Elementary the children want to know the "why's," "how's," "when's," and "wherefores" in all the things they do. This occurs not only in relation to knowledge but also in relation to society. The age of morals is upon them, and they want to explore the possibilities and understand the rules governing society. The interests of the older children extend beyond themselves and into the community around them.

For this reason, they are inclined by nature to working in groups. They have hopefully developed independence in the preceding stage and are ready for the group and its collective needs. For these reasons, the elementary class offers the freedom to associate with others and to work in a constructive way.

The constructive guides we provide link the children with freedoms and their related responsibilities. Accepting these allows for the children to pursue their own interests. The elementary age is characterized by intellectual sensitivity and power of the imagination.

A sense of true justice develops in the second plane, a justice according to the needs of self in relations to others, not as a response to control and punishment. Guidance in grace and courtesy, social relations, and cooperation in planning are the areas in which the teacher can aid the child in developing a sense of justice and balance of freedom and responsibility.

### ***Junior High***

Unlike adults who work to change their environments, adolescents use the environment to change themselves. It is for this reason that Dr. Montessori speaks of an Adolescent Center for Study and Work where the transformation to adulthood can be fulfilled, a Center which authentically embodies:

- A community where young people learn how to live as a productive society
- An ethic which speaks to the virtues which reflect human heartedness, respect, and trust
- Meaningful roles which relate to the work at hand and which impact the functioning of the group
- Clear parameters of behavior which guard the human rights of all
- A genuine balance of freedom and responsibility as young people engage in independent and group studies

All these broad elements are balanced with work on the land. Dr. Montessori speaks of the need for young people to work not only with their heads but also with their hands. She sees the importance of students taking on meaningful roles which may arise from the cycle of “real work” in the context of caring for a space, be it a farm, a wooded and natural area of land, or a “shop” where goods are sold. Work of this nature has a normalizing effect upon the young person and will invite them to related academic investigations. This “real work” can form a small community providing a microcosm of society. This work is organized in a Project Based Learning framework which allows the academic and social-emotional disciplines to come together in an integrated and meaningful way. Work is designed to be meaningful, and the child’s motivation is intrinsically guided in their quest for excellence in their work. This type of learning is most effective for the adolescent child. The young adolescent comes to see themselves as a viable member of this society and social group, embracing responsibilities and challenges as a confident, respectful citizen.

Dr. Montessori reminded us all that, “Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual and is acquired not by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.” She called for places that were scientifically planned and methodically created to meet developmental needs and characteristics. She called for “prepared environments,” in which children would have materials that acted as keys for exploration, opening avenues that would unlock possibilities rather than define purposes. These “Prepared Environments” would invite constructive activity without demanding conformity. Dr. Montessori realized that these keys would link the child to the real world, academic, social and ecological.

Given these opportunities in specially designed prepared environments, the child will acquire the characteristics of a healthy normal human who is at peace with the world around her. In this way education is an aid to life, serving the children and nourishing their inner needs. If we allow children to do productive work that meets their needs and interests then satisfaction is created,

and energy flows for more productive work. In a sense, this is our cosmic task, to work. The psychic nourishment we need comes through work, and this becomes the means of development, and the true work of self-construction.

### **A Trio of Teachers**

Dr. Montessori crafted a unique educational approach that stresses cooperative learning with an integrated and interdisciplinary curriculum. This Montessori approach provides a blueprint for the implementation of what Swiss educational reformer Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi and American philosopher John Dewey had posed only as theory: that education should be based on the implementation of a universal educational method which corresponds to the natural development of each individual child. Created before American public schools chose, in the 1920's, the Henry Ford factory assembly line as a model (a model which persists in many schools to this day), Montessori schools believe that educational environments should neither feel nor look like factories. Montessori schools are created to look more like a home than an institution and stress a community-based approach to learning.

To achieve this goal the Montessori approach uses a “trio of teachers.” The trio includes (#1) the community of children in a mixed-age grouping, (#2) the Montessori learning environment equipped with hands-on materials, and (#3) the Montessori teacher guide. Each part of this trio is as important as the other.

#### ***The Community of Children (#1)***

At GMS, classrooms consist of multiage, cross-grade groupings in three-year developmental cycles. The Primary community consists of 3- to 6-year-old students, with the last year designated as “Kindergarten.” Students in their second year of Primary are ready for the full academic day from 8:30 a.m. to 3 p.m. This schedule provides them with a full afternoon work cycle which allows them to begin to prepare the language and math skills necessary for Lower Elementary.

In these multiage groupings, students internalize what they have learned by teaching the younger children and by being mentors and role models. The children are encouraged to show mutual respect and empathy for others by working together towards common goals. This is the spirit of the community. The mixed age community creates conditions that foster individual differences as strengths and promotes groupings of mixed abilities. These ongoing experiences develop social skills as a response to conditions, rather than through direct teaching intervention.

Each environment at our School is organized in three-year developmental cycles with multiage, cross-grade groupings within which a guide follows a child for three years. Thus, the academic program is a carefully-developed continuum that, at the very least, should not be broken before a three-year developmental cycle is completed. That is, kindergarten, third grade, sixth grade, and ninth grade represent the completion year of each three-year cycle, years during which students should be the oldest in a sequence, not the youngest in a new program marked by transition, instability, and diminished expectations.

#### ***The Montessori Learning Environment (#2)***

The Montessori learning environment is thoughtfully conceived and painstakingly prepared. The classrooms are refreshingly sensible in their approach to educating children. The learning environment is executed with elegance, simplicity, and good common sense.

Maria Montessori wrote, "Only practical experience and work lead to maturity.... Those children who have been able to work with their hands make headway in their development and reach a strength of character which is conspicuous."

We provide specially designed, concrete materials that engage the children constantly in their own learning, allowing each to learn — and to understand — by doing. There is time for process, and the fixing of one's attention on a key experience that engages a unique concentration and promotes the necessary repetition to imprint the experience within the intellect. In this way knowledge is learned with enthusiasm and guided through hands-on experience. Inspiration and motivation are intrinsic in the educational process.

The School implements a well-developed, clearly-defined interdisciplinary curriculum which knows, understands, and responds to the needs of each child in a developmentally appropriate way. Highly structured, (each child possesses a "lesson plan" daily), it is the very structure of each environment that allows for the intellectual freedom and exploration which characterizes the Montessori classroom. We encourage our students to work in small groups, to read from a variety of books in the library, to keep journals, and to learn scientific and mathematical concepts by solving concrete problems.

The Montessori approach allows each student to acquire knowledge and experience through carefully chosen work, both relevant and important activity. The Montessori scope and sequence offers content for the older children in which they gain an admiration towards their culture. Through an emphasis on the humanities they are inspired with pride and a sense of privilege in belonging to humanity. This sentiment is aroused in the child by showing her the interrelatedness of all things in nature, but especially in the world of man.

The fundamental characteristic of the Montessori environment is the prevailing order in the classroom. This order includes a neat and tidy work area, along with proper display of materials, but goes beyond to social conditions and the acceptance of constructive activity as the means for development.

### ***The Montessori Teacher Guide (#3)***

In a Montessori classroom, the teacher is an observer, follower, and guide who brings wisdom, consideration, and experience to the child's academic, social, and intellectual exploration. This approach demands special professionals confident and skilled enough to allow the child to be an active participant in their learning. It also means that all school decisions are driven by what is best for the children.

Each classroom is prepared specially for children and the adult has a greater responsibility that goes beyond just teaching. Always thoughtful and observant, the adult in this community acts as a dynamic link between the child and the specially designed materials and presentations that meet their needs and interests at just the right moment. This new role, different than the conventional teacher's, requires the aid and support of a structured approach to observe and evaluate the learning process. Instead of actively directing the learning process, the adult is trained to be responsive at the optimum moment and have the patience to observe and protect the child while they are engaged in self-directed learning. In a Montessori classroom, the adult is careful to time and guide their intervention with respect to individual needs and interests.

The adults at our School are quick to affirm and slow to criticize. The role of the adult is to guide the child to activity that is within their ability, and that approach engenders a growing confidence

that is based on a series of successes. No rewards or punishments are used to motivate the child. Genuine pride that comes from self-accomplishment is enough. The adult sets a positive tone, and always strives to be confident, firm, fair, consistent, and friendly. Expectations are clearly established and community guidelines that are reasonable, well defined, and clearly understood are consistently and fairly enforced.

"Teachers" serve as "guides" to the students. This grows from the firm belief that each child possesses special gifts and an "absorbent mind" that, during the first six years of life, soaks up information from the rich environment that surrounds them, and which draws them to discovery under the watchful eye and skilled tutelage of the teacher in each child-centered environment.

Our teachers are experienced, certified professionals, many of whom have had rigorous Montessori training beyond undergraduate or graduate school. Faculty are carefully selected on the basis of background, experience, training, and skills. Every classroom has at least one Montessori-trained and certified faculty member. Montessori trained teachers are specifically certified for the ages they teach, and as such there are separate diploma courses for early childhood, elementary, and adolescent Montessori education. These trainings are intense, last multiple years, and near the level of work for a masters degree.

In responding with a different attitude towards learning where the adult's role is not central and the environment and child share common importance, we see that the term "teacher," as commonly understood, does not work. In fact, "teacher" suggests that the adult leads, and the child follows. This is erroneous. The adult's role in the learning of the child is not the cause of their moral and mental development. The adult does not mold the child's mind, character or behavior. Rather than being central to imparting knowledge, learning for the child is an interplay of dynamic forces, not a matter of instruction alone. Through aligning the child with their social network, the child normalizes in love and experience. We are careful not to manage the child too closely, and thereby stifling the natural process of learning.

The role of the adult is to be a partner in the learning process, acting as a model for constructive habits. This pertains to the work, order and interest of the child as well as to the moral development of values and attitudes. The adult links the child with the realm of human spirituality, the source of the child's social consciousness.

The adult is the dynamic link between the child and specially designed experiences in the classroom that meet individual needs and interests. The means by which the adult connects the child with the learning experience is not through direct instruction, but rather as a help to the child learning independently. The guiding principle of Montessori education is "help me to do it myself." This is done by the teacher, whose interventions are based upon the observations and interpretations of each individual. To guide is to connect the child with ways to express themselves and channel their energies constructively. As obstacles arise the adult guides the child in overcoming difficulties by steering them into purposeful work.

The adult maintains an order in the classroom by providing sensible limits and necessary control when the children need it. The environment itself, in its preparation, limits and guides the child. The material has built-in controls and guiding purposes which free the adult from having to intervene constantly. In this way, the adult may avoid the pitfalls of criticism in the learning process, and errors become a part of discovery. In the elementary classroom, the adult leads the child to self-control by exposure and experience with moral issues. This is done by the adult modeling sensible values, explaining reasons for constructive behavior, and building awareness of societal standards.

The physical environment aids both the child and the teacher. The adult prepares and maintains this environment of construction. This task includes setting up the classroom, procuring material for development, setting guidelines and freeing the child from the confines of a schedule that interrupts the natural learning process. The adult is a member of a social unit, the humanness of which the child uses for self-construction. The child experiences a social environment which is concerned with the well-being of others. Through mutual respect and kind understanding, the child connects to their fellows. The individual learns to respect the meeting of individual needs, balanced with the needs of others, knowing that each member has their task. The task of the child is to construct their own unique personality through spontaneous activity, and the teacher helps the process through planned, contemplated actions.

### **A Community-Based Approach to Education**

We hold that the highest form of education must be based on the principle of community. This community is built upon respect for oneself, for peers and for the community at large. In this community values are lived, grace and courtesy are routine, and a common spirit of love and sharing, hospitality, cooperation, help, and assistance binds the community in noble work.

In this educational approach, the child understands that each one of us is dependent on others and each must contribute for the betterment of all. Participation in this ideal learning community enables the child to eventually adapt to society, knowing that each individual's adaptation takes the highest form by the special contribution they can make to their fellow humans. In this way, the child learns the concept of citizenship. Through living and working daily in a collaborative approach to learning, the child finds community membership can be both personally satisfying and socially rewarding. This membership is both personally satisfying and socially rewarding. The ultimate educational outcome guides the child to their vocation, the place where the world's needs and their talents intersect.

This is an educational community for children in which each child has the time, means, and scope of activity to fully develop and realize their potential.

In this community, the necessary time is dictated by the child's need for exactness and repetition. There is time for process, and the fixing of one's attention on a key experience that engages a unique concentration and promotes the necessary repetition to imprint the experience within the personality. In this way knowledge is learned with enthusiasm and guided through hands-on experience. Inspiration and motivation are intrinsic in the experience.

In this community, the means the individual uses to acquire knowledge and experience comes in special work, or relevant and important activity, where the personality is nourished and allowed to develop without constant adult imposition. In the youngest, human nature guides the individual to do those things that are naturally good for the self. Respect is given to the child's unconscious prompts or urges, eventually encouraging the development of the individual will and self-discipline. The special Montessori content for the older children in this educational community is the means by which they gain an admiration towards their culture. They are inspired with pride and a sense of privilege in belonging to humanity. This sentiment is aroused in the child by showing her the interrelatedness of all things in nature, but especially in the world of man.

This community has breadth of content that ensures the child has the richness of scope and understanding to interrelate and apply knowledge. In this way, the students learn quickly and

with such enthusiasm that new knowledge sparks and renews the learning process, creating the “touchstone effect.” Content and process merge, interrelationships become clear, and sensibilities are solidified. Mutual respect allows for a freedom of activity that develops responsible independence and encourages diversity. This aids the child to look beyond their own needs and see those of others and the world around them. The child ponders the wondrous nature of all things with enough imagination to explore their part in the universal order. They discover that knowledge unlocks the keys to the universe and their mind expands. They learn to respect and admire the achievements of others, both around them and in history. All of this leads to a naturally well-developed child attuned to their culture and the ecology of life.

In this community prepared specially for children the adult has a greater responsibility that goes beyond just teaching. Always thoughtful and observant, the adult in this community acts as a dynamic link between the child and the specially designed materials and presentations that meet their needs and interests at just the right moment. This new role, different than the conventional teacher's, requires the aid and support of a structured approach to observe and evaluate the learning process. Instead of actively directing the learning process, the adult must have the skills to be responsive at the optimum moment and have the patience to observe and protect the child while they are engaged in self-directed learning. In this community, the adult is careful to time and guide her intervention with respect to individual needs and interests.

Adult guidance begins with the bond of affection and trust that gives the child the security and self-esteem necessary to be motivated to accept responsibility for their own behavior. Through this respect for the child and their potential the child is released from the shackles of external controls and liberated to use internal controls in a community where they feel both accepted and needed. This is the first step to purposeful activity that develops self-discipline while contributing to the formation of character. Linking the child with meaningful work develops an eager and positive attitude towards useful tasks. The adult aids the child with guidance knowing that the self-disciplined child is one who has often enjoyed the satisfaction of being needed and enjoyed a difficult task that has brought recognition for their accomplishments.

At every juncture, the adult exhibits unconditional positive regard for each child. The adults guiding the community accept each child as a person of worth and dignity, regardless of their behavior. The children are encouraged to show mutual respect and empathy for others by working together towards common goals. This is the spirit of the community. The mixed age community creates conditions that foster individual differences as strengths and promotes groupings of mixed abilities. These ongoing experiences develop social skills as a response to conditions, rather than through direct teaching intervention.

This educational community recognizes that from the home come the basic instincts of love, caring, nurturing, empathy, appreciation, service, and cooperation. The families in this community are nurturing the human potential of their children to love, trust and to bind themselves to human partnerships in a lifetime of relationships. These are the fundamental values that start in the home and are reinforced in the educational community. This community shows the deepest regard for the family and its foremost role in the education of the child. The educational community is both the school and the home that join to create a psychic environment that aids the child in their development. There is a partnership between the school and the family in the collaborative effort that guides the child to be motivated by the wonder of life and the satisfaction of self-improvement.

From this awareness of families as first and foremost educators comes the concept of partnership in education. The school is separate, and the home is separate, but they are both in

the service of the child. Education becomes a joint partnership in which the child forms the center and the community and family form the nurturing outer circle.

One of the first and fundamental lessons in Nature is that the plant grows from the root, and it is the root that supports and provides the path for nourishment. The natural root of the child's development is the family, from whom the child grows outward, but who throughout the child's life supports and provides for nourishing development. In this way, the family forms the roots and sustaining support from which the community grows.

## **Section 2: Greensboro Montessori School Community & Beliefs**

A Montessori school is much like an extended family. Parent(s)/guardian(s) and other family members are welcome and are involved in many aspects of supporting the community. Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) is a place where families, not just students, will grow, learn, and have fun together. It is our sincere hope that the School will be a comfortable home for you as well as for your child/ren.

There are over 8,000 Montessori schools worldwide, with over 6,000 Montessori schools in North America. Montessori approaches are implemented in private, public, charter, and magnet schools across the country. Most Montessori schools began as grassroots efforts, fueled by the passion of families who value the Montessori approach to education and child development.

### **History**

In 1974, three Greensboro mothers, seeking an environment of educational self-discovery for their preschool children, formed a cooperative nursery with one teacher. The school took the name of the Greensboro Language Center, and the following year, became incorporated as a nonprofit Montessori school. In 1978, the directors approved a merger with the Friendly Avenue Montessori School and changed its name to Greensboro Montessori School. Prior to moving to its current location in 1989, the School rented facilities at the First Moravian Church and later, a small building behind Guilford Middle School. Since its inception in 1974, the School has grown from one 3- to 6-year old primary classroom of 12 students to more than 250 students and 60 staff.

### **School Beliefs**

GMS is committed to Montessori philosophy and practice. For over 100 years, Montessorians' have presented a rigorous academic education tailored to prepare students for success in their various cultures. Yet, academic learning is only one part of the curriculum. Maria Montessori believed that children should be nurtured to develop according to their individual needs and timetables for growth. She also believed if children were guided as they explored awareness of themselves, their communities, and the natural world, they would develop into peaceful, fully productive adults who could benefit and steward the world with unprecedented success. The following list describes the beliefs that underlie our School's practice of Dr. Montessori's observations and methods.

1. Children are born with the natural desire to learn.
2. Learning is a lifelong process.
3. Learning best occurs when the curriculum reflects that the developmental stages of children are fleeting, delicate, irreplaceable, and age-sensitive.
4. Learning takes place when children feel safe enough to take risks with new ideas and concepts.
5. The primary role of the teacher is to prepare the environment, observe the students, and guide them according to their developmental needs.
6. With teachers as role models, students achieve their highest potential when they are trusted, allowed to be responsible, and given opportunities to make appropriate choices.
7. Children develop toward their own potential at their own pace and deserve a learning environment that nurtures and respects their individual strengths and interests.
8. Children learn by doing and from their peers. Hands on experiences and multi-age groupings have a significant impact by making the learning process relevant to their lives.

9. All children deserve an education that respects them as people and allows them to learn by experience.
10. Children learn best when academic subject areas are integrated in a way that reflects the broader world.
11. Challenging academic work is critically important to the growth of all children.
12. Academic development is integrated with the rest of a child's development, including social, emotional, spiritual, and physical development.
13. Technology is a tool that connects people, strengthens communications, and its use is essential to prepare students to meet current and future demands.
14. Being conversant in more than one language will be vital to our children's personal and professional success.
15. Creativity and self-expression are a valuable part of a strong academic program.
16. Learning is an indoor and outdoor activity. It is vital for children to have plenty of opportunities to work and play outdoors.
17. Through service to the community, children learn the value and responsibility of being productive members of society
18. Outdoor and environmental education are important for children to learn how to steward the environment.
19. Students who are involved in governing the classroom and finding peaceful resolutions to conflicts from an early age are likely to develop self-discipline.
20. Welcoming people of different cultures, religions, ethnic origins, family constellations, sexual orientations, economic status, customs, languages, and heritages creates an atmosphere of awareness, understanding, respect, and peace.
21. When a family understands and supports Montessori philosophy, the child's educational experience is enhanced.
22. The School must maintain open and ongoing communication with families in order to best meet the academic, social, and emotional needs of the students.
23. Students, teachers, families, administrators, and trustees must work together to ensure student success, to enhance the quality of education, to preserve the School's mission, and to build the School's future.
24. The commitment to maintaining Montessori philosophy and continuing school improvements ensures that our students have the greatest opportunity to become confident, self-directed, life-long learners in a rapidly changing world.
25. Sharing the Montessori philosophy can benefit the greater community.

### **Goals and Objectives for Students Attending GMS**

The main objective of GMS is to provide a carefully planned, stimulating environment which enables children to develop within themselves habits, skills, attitudes, and ideas which are essential for a lifetime of creative thinking and learning.

Dr. Montessori recognized that the only valid impulse to learning is the self-motivation of the child. Children move themselves toward learning. The teacher prepares the classroom, directs activity, and offers stimulation, but it is the child who learns. The School has identified the following four desired goals for learning for all students at GMS:

- *Love of Learning:* Students actively seek knowledge, pursue and develop their own interests, share ideas and interests with others inside and outside the learning environment, demonstrate the desire to create quality work and strive for their full potential.
- *Independent Learner:* Students engage in constructive learning, build on acquired skills to pursue knowledge, use effective time management skills in daily activities, utilize

critical thinking and problem-solving techniques, are creative in generating new ideas and challenging themselves in a variety of experiences.

- *Communication Skills:* Students verbally express physical, emotional, social, and intellectual needs, coherently express ideas and concepts at the appropriate level in a variety of communication forms, recognize, organize, and integrate information from a variety of communication sources.
- *Responsible Global Citizen:* Students display self-awareness and introspection, and take responsibility for personal actions, demonstrate the ability to empathize with other people's perspectives, life experiences, and beliefs, work non-violently to prevent and resolve conflict, act as responsible members of the greater community (family, class, school, neighborhood, city, country, world).

### **Portrait of a Graduate**

At GMS, families, teachers, and students work together in a collaborative partnership to help each student realize the qualities embodied in our portrait of a graduate. In addition to the four goals and objectives above, our graduates understand and demonstrate:

- An on-going and self-motivated love of learning
- Critical thinking and problem-solving skills
- Confidence
- Willingness to question
- Creativity
- Ability of express themselves to different audiences
- Capacity to manage challenging academic work
- Stewardship of the environment
- Compassion and empathy
- Role as a peacemaker
- Respect for all persons
- Cultural awareness
- Working use of Spanish

With that image of our graduate in mind, we're happy you have chosen an authentic Montessori school for your child/ren.

## Section 3: School Structure and Organization

### Accreditation, Affiliations, and Memberships

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) is accredited by The American Montessori Society (AMS), the Southern Association of Independent Schools (SAIS) and the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools (SACS), now known as AdvancEd. The School subscribes to the North America Montessori Teacher Association, is recognized by the North Carolina Division of Non-Public Education, and is also a member of North Carolina Association of Independent Schools (NCAIS). Due to our compliance with stringent accreditation standards and assessment, the School is exempt from licensure from the North Carolina Division of Child Development.

### Organizational Structure

Our School is organized as a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation that is governed by a board of trustees who serve without remuneration. The purpose of the corporation is entirely educational: to operate a Montessori school for families and to provide opportunities for the academic development of its participants.

The daily operation of GMS is the responsibility of the head of school. The head of school sets the pedagogical direction and implements board policies. A community of administrators manage the day-to-day business needs of the School, while faculty lead the work in the classrooms.

### The Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees (the “Board”) is made up of 11-15 parents and community members who are dedicated to the long-term well-being of the School. Either the full Board or the various board committees meet monthly to fulfill their primary responsibilities, which include:

- *Governance:* The ultimate responsibility for the governance of the School resides with the Board. The members of the self-perpetuating Board bring a diversity of talent and broad practical and professional experience to the work of assuring the School’s present stability, its development, and its perpetuation. The Board is responsible for formulating policy and for establishing and maintaining the sound financial condition of the School. The Board appoints the head of school, who, as chief executive officer, directs all day-to-day activities and operations toward accomplishment of the School’s mission. The head of school’s responsibilities include supervision and development of the academic programs, the appointment of all faculty and staff, maintenance of educational and behavioral standards, and administration of the operating budget.
- *Finances and Fundraising:* As is true in most independent schools, tuition alone does not provide sufficient revenues for the actual total cost of operations. Therefore, supplemental funds must necessarily be sought both from within the School’s internal and external communities. The Board, in its fiduciary role, has the essential responsibility of ensuring that the School is financially stable, and its income, its facilities, and its other assets remain sufficient to achieve its purpose of educational excellence.
- *Planning for the Future:* The Board is also responsible for the vision and future direction of the School. The Board forms committees that determine how to raise funds and how to allocate the resources garnered through additional fundraising activities, and the Board determines specific details for how these funds contribute to the great work of the School.
- *Head of School Support:* The Board is responsible for hiring and supporting the head of school, so the head of school is empowered and supported to successfully execute the

day-to-day operations of the School. The head of school is responsible to the Board for the management of the daily operations of the School in accordance with the mission and philosophy of the School. The principle duties of the head of school are to ensure that the School's philosophy and objectives are met through an excellent educational program, a talented and dedicated faculty and staff, sound fiscal operations, and a sound physical plant. The head of school serves as an ex-officio member of the Board and as a member of all board committees.

*What the Board does:*

- Communicate and represent the School's mission, values, and vision to the school community
- Work with the head of school to develop long range and strategic planning goals
- Review and approve the annual operating budget and set tuition
- Monitor and develop policy that defines how the head of school may and may not operate the organization
- Monitor fiscal management through the review of monthly financial statements provided by the director of finance
- Evaluate the head of school annually

*What the Board does not do:*

- Involve itself in the School's day-to-day operations
- Hire, evaluate, or fire any faculty or staff other than the head of school
- Direct the work of any faculty or staff other than the head of school
- As individuals or committees, issue instructions that represent changes in fiscal, personnel, or program policies without formal action or approval of the full Board

**Grievance with a School Decision**

The Board is responsible for establishing the purposes and policies of the School. The head of school is the administrative and chief operating officer of the School, empowered with complete authority and charged with complete responsibility for the execution of the Board's purposes and policies in the daily management of the School. This authority and responsibility pertain to all matters, including curriculum, admissions, enrollment decisions, faculty and staff employment, student discipline, and finances.

Families should direct concerns or grievances first to their classroom teacher and then eventually to the head of school if appropriate and if concerns are not resolved at the teacher or associate head of school level. When the concern or grievance is with a head of school decision, families may contact the president of the Board. While the Board does not oversee or manage day-to-day operations of the School, the president and executive committee can convene to hear a grievance or concern from a family about a head of school decision. The executive committee will primarily be interested in assuring that there is no evidence of discrimination or disregard for proper procedures or policies in the head of school's handling of the matter.

Granted by the Board's bylaws, the head of school has the right to bar or dismiss parents, legal guardians, and/or students from participating in certain or any events or activities, including their enrollment at GMS, for any reason, including, but not limited to, unsatisfactory adjustment or failure of the parents, legal guardians or student to accept school policies or procedures, failure to pay tuition and fees on a timely basis, or lack of fulfillment of the other terms contained in the tuition contract.

## Section 4: Admission and Enrollment

### Admission Policy

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) seeks to enroll students from the toddler years through the ninth grade. We welcome and embrace diversity by providing a safe and supportive environment that is open and inclusive. Our community includes and is enhanced by people from many different cultures, races, nationalities, faiths, learning and physical abilities, sexual orientations and identities, ages, socioeconomic backgrounds, and family constellations.

Families interested in enrollment information should contact the director of admission to schedule a tour. Tours include an information session, full campus tour, and classroom observation. After applications are submitted, families should schedule a personal meeting with the director of admission and a classroom visit for children ages 3 and older.

Elementary-aged children also need to submit transcripts and may be asked to complete an academic assessment as part of their student visit.

Students currently enrolled at GMS, siblings of currently enrolled students, children of GMS alumni, and Montessori transfer students are given preference in enrollment. Admission decisions will be based upon the teacher interviews, class compositions, behavior complimentary to the Montessori philosophy, past and present recommendations from other school/nursery situations, and familial support and understanding of our Montessori program. If there are more applicants than we can accommodate, those applications will remain active for up to one year in a wait pool. In the event unexpected openings arise, we will draw from our wait pool of active applications.

### Admission Procedures

The application process begins with attending a tour or open house meeting. These brief presentations are designed to acquaint families of prospective candidates with the mission of the School, the Montessori philosophy, and its implementation in the classroom through the Montessori method. During a weekly tour, families will have the opportunity to observe students in all program levels. Individuals who wish additional visits should contact the director of admission for availability.

Interested families should complete, sign, and return the application with the processing fee to the school. All application materials are available on the School’s website and from the director of admission.

After the application is returned, applicants should call the director of admission to schedule a family interview appointment. An interview is required of all new applicant families. It is designed to help us get to know each family as well as answer questions about GMS and the admission process. A brief campus tour and classroom observation will be included. The appointment will take approximately one hour.

All applicants (3 years old and older) will be asked to join us for a Student Visit. Your child may be asked to visit the classroom more than once so that we may observe her or her participating in a variety of different activities. Please check with the Admission Office to schedule a visit and make drop-off and pick-up arrangements. Many classrooms have observation windows where families are welcome to observe quietly.

For all students under age 5, families are asked to complete an age appropriate Child Development Form (there are separate forms for Toddlers, and Primary applicants). For all applicants, enrolled in kindergarten and older, families are requested to give the Teacher Information Form to two teachers of your choice (one if applying for entrance as a kindergarten student.) Teachers should know your child and be able to evaluate their character and academic performance.

For applicants enrolled in kindergarten and older, families are asked to deliver the Request for Information Form to the appropriate official at the student's current school. Please ask to have any standardized test scores and psychological and/or educational evaluation results included with the records. Original records will not be requested until the student is admitted and enrolled at GMS.

All applicants may be asked to participate in an in-class evaluation. Applicants are evaluated by the appropriate age level teachers to determine the student's level of academic and social development as it applies to the Montessori classroom. These are standard evaluations designed to reflect the level of expectation for GMS programs.

Disabled applicants or family members of applicants requiring any type of accommodation during the application process or otherwise are encouraged to identify themselves and indicate what type of accommodation is needed.

*\*\* Siblings of current students must also complete an application and participate in a student interview. Families are encouraged to submit applications for siblings beginning in November prior to the school year in which they wish to be enrolled.*

### **Continuous Enrollment for Current Students**

It is always our hope that every student admitted to GMS will graduate from the School. Enrollment of the student becomes effective upon execution of the Enrollment Agreement ("Agreement") and the student is automatically reenrolled for each successive year until graduation as per the terms of the Agreement.

For families who do not plan for their child to attend GMS for the subsequent academic year, families should refer to their Agreement for responsibilities and deadlines regarding withdrawal. For currently enrolled students, a tuition deposit for the subsequent school year is due and payable to GMS by March 15. (Note: For families applying for financial assistance, please consult the Agreement for additional information.)

Even with all the care and support that we attempt to give to every student, we recognize that there are times when a student needs a different educational setting. We sometimes find that even after receiving the benefit of educational support services and intervention strategies, a student may continue to exhibit either a lack of academic progress or a pattern of situationally inappropriate behavior that disrupts the student's own learning or the learning of others. In these cases, the School may need to meet with the child's family to discuss educational options other than GMS. If the School and family decide GMS is not an appropriate placement for the student, whenever reasonably possible, we will work with the student's family to explore alternate appropriate placements.

### **Placement According to Developmental Readiness**

Since Montessori values each child's uniqueness, Montessori schools may place students according to readiness, not age, at the discretion of the teachers and director of admission. The relative free-flow between age groupings helps to build a seamless developmental continuum and is the basis for the student's being responsible for their own preparation for the next stage. We urge families not to equate readiness and intelligence. The aim of this approach is to place each student in the most appropriate environment.

### **Requesting Specific Classroom Assignments**

Families who want to request a specific classroom for their child must do so in writing to the director of admission.

While the School does accept requests from families, we do not promise that requests will be honored. Several important factors are considered when placing a student in a particular classroom: ratio of girls to boys, balance of age levels, volume of diverse learning needs served by a classroom, social dynamics between individual students, etc.

Official class assignments are released to families in early August before school starts. Students will remain with the same classroom while enrolled in a single division (Toddler, Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, Junior High). Families seeking to change classrooms while their child is still enrolled in the same division must make an appointment with the head of school and the director of admission, in addition to submitting a request in writing. In the event that classroom teaching partners change from one school year to the next, families with children returning to that particular classroom will be notified.

## Section 5: Tuition Information

### Tuition

Tuition is the primary revenue source which funds the operations of Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”), including faculty salaries and benefits. Tuition is reviewed and set by the board of trustees (the “Board) annually and shared with families during reenrollment season in early February. The Board seeks to keep the price of the tuition as affordable as possible, while also assuring the School can provide the best Montessori program possible.

### Tuition Refund Plan

GMS participates in a Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) operated through Dewar Insurance Services. TRP is an insurance plan that assists families with tuition obligations in case a student must withdraw for medical or other reasons. The TRP annual premium is due with the annual tuition deposit and is calculated as a percentage of tuition. *Participating in TRP is recommended for all families, but it is required for families who choose to pay tuition via quarterly or monthly installments.* Please refer to the TRP brochure, available at the Office, or on our website, for additional information.

### Tuition Payments

GMS offers multiple tuition payment options to meet the varying needs of our families. The School offers a full-payment option in addition to quarterly or monthly installment payments. All families choosing installment payments are required to use the Smart Tuition management program to make quarterly or monthly payments, and to participate in TRP.

Families are billed the full year’s tuition in June (less the nonrefundable tuition deposit) and may elect one of three payment plans:

- **Plan A – Full Payment:** Full payment due on June 1. If payment is not received by June 1, a \$150 finance charge and the applicable TRP insurance premium will automatically be charged, and the account will be converted to Plan C.
- **Plan B – Quarterly Payments:** Four quarterly installments due in June, September, December and March. There is a \$50 annual finance charge per family for this service. Plan B also requires enrollment in the Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) and payment of applicable annual insurance premiums for each child enrolled.
- **Plan C – 12 Monthly Payments:** Twelve (12) installments due monthly from June through May. There is a \$150 annual finance charge per family for this service. Plan C also requires enrollment in the Tuition Refund Plan (TRP) and payment of applicable annual insurance premiums for each child enrolled.

For families who enroll for the upcoming school year after June 1, or for families who want to bundle annual tuition with other program fees (such as summer program fees and CASA fees), we also build custom payment schedules outside our published payment plans.

### Other Expenses Outside of Tuition

Other expenses outside of tuition may include field trips in all programs; snack week in Toddler and Primary; and school supplies and sports in Elementary and Junior High.

### Financial Assistance Program

The School’s financial assistance program is a need-based program, which makes financial assistance available to families who cannot otherwise afford our tuition. Financial assistance is

reviewed and granted on an annual basis and is only available to students enrolling in Kindergarten or older. Additionally, the School bases awards on a family's ability to afford tuition only. Before- and after-school care expenses (All-Inclusive, Early-Bird, and After-School CASA fees) are not included.

Many factors are considered in the financial assistance program, including family income and expenses; assets and indebtedness; family size; extenuating circumstances resulting in family hardship; number of children attending tuition-charging schools; and a history of tuition assistance received from extended family and other sources.

Families interested in being considered for financial assistance for the following school year should complete, sign, and return the Notice of Application for Financial Assistance form by February 28. Next, they must complete an online application through Financial Aid for School Tuition (FAST) by March 15 and provide supporting tax documents to FAST by March 22. FAST is sponsored by Independent School Management ([www.isminc.com](http://www.isminc.com)), and there is a nominal application filing fee payable directly to FAST. FAST will use the information families provide to make a recommendation to the School for how much a family can afford to contribute for education. The School will consider the recommendation from FAST and make final determinations based on the resources available in the School's general operating budget.

Financial assistance must be applied for annually, and returning families receive first consideration as the School determines how to allocate assistance.

## **Section 6: Development and Fundraising**

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) is a nonprofit organization charged with protecting and improving our financial position for the benefit of students and families. As part of our organizational accountability to our past, current, and future student population, we openly seek nontuition-based forms of funding and are tremendously grateful for contributions of time, talent, and monetary gifts.

### **The Fund for GMS**

The Fund for GMS is our annual fundraiser. The Fund for GMS raises money for expenditures outside the normal operating budget. These expenditures are targeted to enhance and augment our authentic Montessori program for our students while also helping the School attract and retain new families to ensuring the long-term health of the School. Funds raised are not used to support operational expenditures.

The board of trustees (the “Board”) reviews the prioritized fundraising effort of The Fund for GMS each fall when the full school budget is approved. The Fund for GMS is orchestrated by the director of marketing & development, with support from the Board’s advancement committee.

70 to 80 percent of the funds raised are spent on capital expenditures as determined by the head of school in accordance with these guidelines. 20 to 30 percent are directed to projects requested by faculty through an annual classroom grant process, which includes teachers, students, and administration.

### ***Why Does GMS Have The Fund for GMS?***

No independent school could charge the full cost of educating its students without pricing itself out of the market. That’s why ALL independent schools have some sort of annual fundraising effort. Additionally, tuition is not tax deductible, while gifts to The Fund for GMS are tax deductible to the extent allowed by the law. Additionally, some individuals work for companies with matching gift programs, through which all or part of an employee’s gift is “matched” by the company. The School has benefited from matching gift funds in past years, and we encourage their use whenever available.

### ***Are There Other Fundraising Activities At GMS?***

Yes. In addition to asking families, alumni, faculty, administration, and trustees to annually contribute to The Fund for GMS, we have several events and ongoing projects each year which raise significant funds for various causes. For instance, we have an annual gala and auction, also known as the Green & White Bash. The scholastic book fair supports the GMSCA, and the Upper Elementary lunch program directly supports the Upper Elementary field trips. There are also student-led fundraisers to support various division-specific initiatives. All fundraising efforts are coordinated through the director of marketing & development.

Families can also support the GMSCA through other organizations’ charitable programs such as Amazon Smile, General Mills’ Box Tops for Education, and Harris Teeter’s Together in Education.

### ***Why Is Participation Important?***

The School’s financial strength is dependent upon the enthusiastic participation of all members of its various constituencies. Your participation generates momentum and encourages others to

join you in supporting the School. Participation percentage among families, employees, and trustees is also an important indicator to foundation and corporate donors from which we solicit grants and other funding.

### ***Who Supports The Fund For GMS?***

Every segment of the school community supports The Fund for GMS. We receive support from current families, grandparents, alumni families, friends of the School, faculty and staff, trustees, businesses, foundations, vendors, and community partners.

### **Endowment Funds**

The Board is committed to the long-term, diversified financial stability of GMS. As a result, they have established the Future Fund, which is made up of a portfolio of investments. The interest from these investments helps provide long-term financial stability for the School. We have also established an endowment at the Community Foundation of Greater Greensboro. An endowment is important to the School because it provides a strong long-term financial plan, so interest generated by the fund can be used as operating income which, in turn, can support the School's budget. Lastly, the School has two named endowments in support of specific causes on campus.

The Scott W. Patterson Memorial Endowment Fund was established in 2005 by Scott Patterson's parents for the purpose of providing scholarships for students. Scholarships are typically awarded to eligible Junior High students and follow the recipients through graduation. When a scholarship recipient graduates, the scholarship is awarded to another eligible student as chosen by the head of school, director of admission, and Upper Elementary faculty.

The Margaret Dutton Stevens Environmental Education Endowment was established in 2010 by the Stevens family. The Endowment seeks to ensure and enhance funding for the School's environmental programs: permaculture gardening on the main campus in Greensboro and The Land program on the second campus in Oak Ridge. From the first day walking on The Land, Bill and Margaret Stevens felt called to cherish, share, and preserve the 37-acre forest. The Land program takes up this vision, and the Endowment ensures its future.

## Section 7: Academics and Student Records

### Curriculum

The curriculum at Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) is based on the enduring work of Dr. Maria Montessori. While the curriculum includes the academics of math, language arts, science, geography, social studies, technology, geometry, and creative arts, it also importantly offers life skills at every age. Imbedded in the day to day work with the students are Dr. Montessori’s “grace and courtesy” curriculum. She believed that if children were treated with respect and taught to respect others and their environment, there could be peace in the world.

The strength of the curriculum lies in its ability to follow each child’s developmental readiness for each new skill or concept. Montessori trained teachers assemble reference albums of lessons that are organized in sequential order according to the next developmental step. For families who want to explore the curriculum in depth, the School has a scope and sequence of topics covered in each divisional level that families could peruse, or a family member could even take a look at the reference albums which are available in our library. Each September curriculum meetings are held in each division of the School to give families an overview of the topics covered in the span of three years and to present examples of how the didactic materials are used by the students.

### Work of the Home vs. Homework

The School’s obligation to its students includes providing them with opportunities to develop effective independent work habits, to practice skills and concepts initiated in class, to prepare for class discussions, and to gain a sense of their own responsibility, competency, and independence. Traditional “homework” is not assigned for Toddler, Primary, and Lower Elementary students. At the Upper Elementary and Junior High levels, students are routinely assigned school work to be accomplished on their own time at home. The duration and difficulty of homework will vary from an occasional requirement of about twenty minutes to as much as two hours or more in the Junior High. The main responsibility of families in the matter of homework is to provide a place and regular time for its accomplishment. A quiet room where other people in the family are also reading or studying is ideal. The teacher will deal with the product of the student’s efforts. If homework is missing or incomplete on consecutive days, it is often a sign of some difficulty that may not be merely scholastic. In such cases, the respective family will be notified so that the problem might be clarified and with their help, an effective remedy might be found. At the Junior High level, if an assignment isn’t finished the day that it is due, the student will call their family. The family and student together will decide if the student will take a zero score or stay for after school study hall until 5 p.m. that day to complete the work. As a matter of general policy, missing assignments must always be made up. Since homework is a student’s individual responsibility, as well as a reflection of the student’s understanding of the work, families should limit their assistance to advice only.

### Progress Reports

For all students, progress reports are written and sent to families three times per year, at the end of each trimester as identified on the school calendar. The progress report is designed to provide you a clear understanding the areas of study for that trimester, as well as providing the personalized comments that convey the very special understanding your child’s teacher has of your child and their learning. Through daily observations, each child is assessed in a manner that allows for different rates and styles of learning responsive to the individual. The classroom staff track the progress of your child through the scope and sequence of curriculum, to ensure

each child is progressing at a rate typical for their developmental age. Yet there is more to these assessments than curriculum achievements, they also detail your child's social growth and developing work habits. They reflect the growing sense of community, the character development of individuals, and the social responsibility that comes from being an active member of our multi-age groupings. For some of us, the more conventional grading system of testing is our only knowledge of techniques for educational assessment and evaluation. We hope you will find your child's assessment far more personal and revealing of your child's growth, strengths, and next steps.

### **Parent-Teacher Conferences**

Parent-Teacher Conferences are held three times per year; Aug/Sept, November, and March; exact dates are always listed on the school calendar. Families are encouraged to arrange appointments for additional conferences whenever this is a reason to discuss student work or progress. Parent-Teacher Conferences are essential to our partnership with you. It's a wonderful opportunity to sit down with you, one-on-one, to review your child's progress and make a plan for success moving forward.

The format of Toddler and Primary conferences does not include students. For Lower Elementary, students are sometimes involved in showing their work. For the older age levels, conferences with Upper Elementary and Junior High students are included, unless families prefer a private conference. The older students, especially Junior High, are in a better position developmentally to participate in adult conversations about their own learning and their school performance.

### **Student Records and Transcripts**

GMS maintains student records in strict privacy. Requests for release of student records are processed through the director of human relations or director of admission. Requests for release of records, whether to a family or a third party, must be made in writing and should include:

- the student's complete name and birth date
- the reason for the request
- the specific information or categories of documents requested
- if to a third party, the name and address of the recipient

GMS will release records to a third party when families directly ask GMS to do so or when they authorize another school to do so. An Authorization to Release Records Form is available at the Office.

Authorization forms and requests for release of records should be directed to the director of human relations. Requests for release may be emailed. Please allow at least 48 hours for processing. Transcripts, report cards, and other nonmedical records will be released only if all of the family's obligations to GMS (financial and otherwise) are met. Changing family situations may affect the procedures required for release of student records.

### **Classroom Observation**

Montessori philosophy emphasizes "learning through doing." Most of the classroom materials are manipulative and the students explore concepts and practice skills through "hands on" lessons. Most young children do not embrace abstract thinking that they represent in written assignments until ages of six and seven. Therefore, direct observation is often the best way to monitor progress, and it is a key component in our assessment system.

Families are invited and even urged to observe their children at work in their classroom. Please contact the Office if you would like to visit the School and observe your child/ren's class(es). A great deal can be learned by guided observation. All of our Toddler and Primary classrooms have observation windows through which visitors cannot be seen. In the observation areas, please keep conversations to a minimum because your voice(s) will carry into the classroom. There may be times when the Primary Pod is not available for observation, as it is used on occasion for quiet reading or a small group lesson.

If your child is older, please contact your child's teacher ahead of time to set up an appointment to observe inside the classroom. Plan to stay for at least 30 minutes, and enter and exit only one time.

During the first sensitive weeks of the school year, students (especially younger children) are familiarizing themselves with a new routine and environment. For this reason, we ask families, grandparents, and all visitors to avoid observation during the first four weeks of school.

If you are not observing through the windows, we ask that you sit quietly in your chair thus not drawing attention. The students will be naturally curious about you, but they are used to having visitors. If they persist in chatting with you, politely ask if they have any work to do. Encourage students to keep working so you can continue to observe.

***Points to look for when you observe:***

- Observe how the students interact with each other and with the teachers.
- Observe how the teachers respond to the students and interact with each other.
- Are the students engaged in the work? Does the classroom have a busy "hum" of activity?
- If possible, observe students working alone, with a friend, and in group lessons. What do you notice about the way a teacher delivers a lesson? Do the students show concentration?
- Focus on the materials. What concepts and skills does each isolate?
- Follow one child. How does the child approach the work? What does he/she do when the task is finished?
- Do the students seem happy? Do they work with enthusiasm? Cooperation? Do they seem comfortable interacting with the teachers?
- How is discipline handled?
- Is the environment attractive? Are the students able to access work independently? How do students use the various areas of the classroom?
- What makes the environment conducive to learning?
- Is this a typical day? (Please ask.)
- If you are observing more than one class, what differences/similarities do you notice at different levels?

**Assessing Student Progress**

Sometimes confusingly, the words "assessment, testing, and psycho-educational evaluation" are often used interchangeably — and differently — by educators, schools, the media, and families. The following is an overview of our assessment and evaluation as they are used and defined at GMS; it is designed to help families better understand what assessment and evaluation are, and how, why, and when they are done in Montessori environments that have no "grades."

## **Assessment**

Assessment is the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress. Early in their educational career at GMS, students are taught — and materials are designed to allow — self-assessment and self-correction. As students will not have a teacher, mentor, or guide looking over their shoulder following their schooling, self-assessment and self-correction are important lifelong skills that are acquired from the earliest years in a Montessori environment.

Additionally, students learn from their earliest years that their learning is a partnership with their lead teachers. From kindergarten forward, daily and, eventually, weekly goals are established, and agreed upon. Teachers maintain written records of works presented and mastered, and each kindergarten and older child has a daily “lesson plan” that their progress is measured against as they move through the day and week.

A Montessori teacher thus knows at any given instant precisely where a child is academically, developmentally, socially, and emotionally. With frequent one-on-one work and constant individual, personalized assessment of student work by the teacher, issues or concerns emerge and are addressed quickly, with constant fine tuning and periodic adjustment to maximize academic, social, and emotional progress and to assure intellectual engagement for each child.

Families are alerted quickly to any concerns rather than waiting for “report card periods” or “term-end grades.” Examples of student work are sent home regularly for assessment of student progress. Open Houses and Information Nights inform families of curriculum sequence and materials, and formal conferences three times a year assure the regular communication of information regarding a student’s progress at school. In this manner, performance and progress, not grades, become the focus of assessment and the heart of any discussion about the child.

## **Evaluation**

Families often ask how students are "evaluated" — and how progress is mapped — without grades, tests and quizzes, and report cards. Each student’s progress is monitored daily both by the student and the teacher, and each teacher knows precisely at any given moment which work has been presented and mastered. Evaluation is both constant and cumulative, as is feedback (much of it self-correcting) to the student. In addition to Parent-Teacher Conferences, a student’s progress is communicated to families at regularly scheduled intervals with written narrative and skills-based assessments.

If and when families and the education professionals who work with the students consistently note issues of concern — lagging social development, declining interest in school, diminished achievement, inappropriate behavior, high distractibility and poor concentration — GMS will conference with families, and on occasion, seek advice from outside professionals to identify and begin to articulate issues, observations, and concerns.

In such situations, it is often the case that GMS, our health professionals, and the family have more questions than answers. As the School begins to seek answers that will lead to effective, successful strategies for school, home, and child, GMS may recommend or require a full psycho-educational evaluation by a child psychologist or psychiatrist.

## **Testing**

Beginning in the third year of Lower Elementary, students take a nationally standardized achievement test appropriate to their age and grade level every spring. Administering such tests

accomplishes several things: (1) it helps students become familiar with test taking; whatever your thoughts are on standardized testing, it will be a skill most likely needed in students' future educational careers; (2) it sometimes provides useful information on a student's performance in relation to national school norms; (3) it can help in the constant work of curriculum development. Test results will be sent to families. Families whose children are taking the tests for the first time are encouraged to make an appointment to discuss the results with the associate head of school and learning support services coordinator.

## **Section 8: Learning Support Services**

### **Serving Students with Various Learning Profiles**

The curriculum at Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) is designed to serve students ranging from average academic achievers to the academically gifted. The School does not specialize in dealing with specific learning differences but can often address the needs of students with such conditions on a case-by-case basis. GMS has a Learning Support Services (“LSS”) department which supports our teachers in helping them serve all students, particularly those who might have difficulty in class for a variety of reasons. One important part of this support is helping teachers understand the nature of learning differences, diagnosed learning disorders, and adaptations which can be made to accommodate for those differences.

### **Learning Support Services**

In addition to working with faculty and the entire student population in general terms, LSS works more closely with individual students who have learning differences documented through formal evaluation by a health care professional, including a licensed psychologist, psychiatrist, occupational therapist, speech/language pathologist, and audiologist, among others. The services provided by LSS are not intended to constitute a separate program for students who learn differently, but rather are intended to assist students who are able to succeed in the School’s regular educational program with special adaptations, through consultation, or with occasional supplemental instruction one-on-one with specialists or in a small-group setting. If the level of support a child needs to find success with our curriculum exceeds the School’s resources, we will encourage a family to seek outside assistance for the child, such as private tutoring. In such cases, LSS will work with family, faculty, tutors, and other outside service providers to coordinate the outside work with the School’s curriculum. LSS may also provide suggestions for students without a documented diagnosis who are having difficulties being successful in the classroom environment.

### **Tutoring and Other Outside Service Providers**

Since our goal is to have every child be able to work within the regular program, LSS staff need to have regular contact with tutors and other outside providers. Ideally, we hope to provide space on our campus for specialists to serve our students. For that reason, any specialists who schedule tutoring with students during the school day will need to do so through the LSS coordinator. In order to facilitate a team approach, tutors and specialists working with students are asked to provide regular updates to LSS through attending meetings and/or providing periodic documentation.

### **Partnership with Families**

In trying to meet the needs of students who may have learning differences, the School needs partnership with families. Families who know or suspect their child may need special resource assistance are encouraged to discuss with the LSS coordinator whether a formal evaluation by an outside health professional is appropriate. Once a student has been identified by an appropriate professional as needing special resource assistance, the family should meet with the LSS coordinator, the student’s teacher(s) and other school representatives, as appropriate, to discuss the best way of meeting the student’s needs, which may include addressing issues such as the types and levels of services needed and the establishment and implementation of appropriate goals. In this regard, families who share formal evaluation results with a child’s teacher(s) must be willing for the teacher(s) to share that information with other appropriate school representatives, in an effort best to meet the child’s needs and to utilize the School’s resources for the benefit of the child.

LSS staff can make recommendations to families for tutors, specialists, and other outside service providers who have worked successfully with GMS in the past. In some cases, LSS staff may be able to assist families in finding resources through local agencies.

At GMS, our emphasis always is on helping all students to learn effectively. However, the adjustments which the School can provide are limited. Modifications can only be made when the remedies fall within our existing resources, policies, and facilities, and when they do not fundamentally alter the nature of the School's services or cause an undue hardship on the School, its faculty, or its students.

In the spring of each year, the School will conduct an annual review of each student's growth to determine if we can continue to meet the student's needs and will discuss the situation with respective families, as appropriate.

It is always our hope that every child admitted to GMS will graduate from the School, but even with all the care and support we attempt to give to every student, this is not always possible. We sometimes find that, even after receiving the benefit of educational support services and intervention strategies as described above, a student may continue to exhibit either a lack of academic progress or a pattern of situationally inappropriate behavior that disrupts the student's own learning or the learning of others. In these cases, the School may need to meet with the student's family to discuss educational options other than GMS. If it is decided that GMS is not an appropriate placement for the student, whenever reasonably possible, we will work with the student's family to explore alternate appropriate placements.

## Section 9: Arrival and Dismissal

### Arrival and Dismissal Process

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) has a carefully orchestrated arrival and dismissal system that prioritizes student’s safety and an efficient process. The system is also based on students doing “their work” of coming into the classroom by themselves when they are greeted at the door by their teachers; this also ends up being a convenient service to families who remain in cars during car line arrival and dismissal. To make the system efficient and effective, we require family’s active partnership (e.g., driving cautiously, arriving promptly within designated times and locations, and not being on phone or tablet devices in car line when students are present. etc.).

The safety and security of the students during this busy time must be our highest priority. We must thus ask families not to conference with their teachers at this time. Simply call to arrange a time other than pick-up to talk or to conference. The students demand and deserve the faculty’s undivided attention during this time.

### Designated Arrival and Dismissal Times

These times reflect the classroom schedules for each of our divisions. If your family needs extended care before or after school, please review Section 10, which details information about our CASA Program.

- **Toddler:**
  - Half-Day: Arrival is between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. Dismissal is 12 p.m.
  - Academic-Day: Arrival is between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. Dismissal is 3 p.m.
  - All-Day: Arrival is between 7:30 and 8:30 a.m. Dismissal is between 3 and 6 p.m.
- **Primary:** Arrival is between 8:15 and 8:30 a.m. Dismissal for half-day students is 12 p.m. Dismissal for academic-day students is 3 p.m.
- **Lower Elementary:** Arrival is between 8 and 8:15 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 8:15 a.m. and dismissal is at 3:15 p.m.
- **Upper Elementary:** Arrival is between 8 and 8:15 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 8:15 a.m. and dismissal is at 3:30 p.m.
- **Junior High:** Arrival is between 8 and 8:15 a.m. Classes begin promptly at 8:15 a.m. and dismissal is at 3:30 p.m.

### Families with Children in More Than One Division

As a convenience, we make special arrangements for families with children in more than one division (other than Toddlers and Half-Day students) with varied arrival and dismissal times. More specifically, we will provide appropriate classroom supervision during drop-off and pick-up times and families with children in multiple divisions will not be charged a CASA fee for these brief periods. We ask families with children in different divisions to drop off children as close to the common drop-off time as possible. At dismissal, younger children (except Toddlers) will be taken to the pick-up location of their older sibling(s) to be picked up by families. Families with Toddlers must still personally pick up their toddler(s) from their respective Toddler classroom(s).

### Staggered Dismissal and Early Release Times

In the afternoon, the School has purposefully staggered dismissal times in order to ease traffic flow. The staggered dismissal schedule for early release days is 12 p.m. for all Half-Day and Academic-Day Toddler and Primary; 12:15 p.m. for Lower Elementary; and 12:30 p.m. for Upper Elementary Junior High. Please do not park in any loading zone until five minutes prior

your designated pick-up time. You will be asked to move your vehicle if you are blocking the flow of traffic to prevent safety hazards.

### **Promptness**

Please be prompt in both arrival and dismissal. Only students who are registered for Early Bird Casa should arrive before their designated arrival times. When students arrive late, they miss a vital part of the class day when new materials are introduced and demonstrated and may interrupt these lessons for others. Students who arrive after their designated arrival times go to the Office to obtain a permit to enter class. Students who are chronically tardy or absent should expect to meet with the associate head of school or the head of school and the student's family to determine a plan of action to eliminate tardiness.

### **Late Pick-up Policy**

Please be prompt in picking up your child. If you are running late for your afternoon car-line, please call the Office and let the School know so that we can alert the classroom teachers. If you will be late for your designated car-line, we will have your child join the after-school CASA group so that they can be properly supervised and enjoy that time with their friends. A Drop-in CASA fee will be assessed. We are not able to accommodate late pick-ups in the Office.

Students must be picked up from CASA by 6 p.m. If you realize that you will be late picking up your child, please call the Office in advance. Students picked up after 6 p.m. will be billed at a rate of \$5.25 per child for every 15 minutes past 6 p.m.

### **Pick-up Permission**

Students are only released to the adults designated in the respective student's emergency and health documentation listed in Magnus Health. In the event of a changing family situation in which one parent/guardian has custody of the child, GMS will continue to release the child to all parent/guardians unless and until the School has received a copy of a legal court order indicating custody arrangements and visiting rights. Classroom teachers and CASA faculty should be made aware of these arrangements. If at any time and in the best judgment of a GMS employee, a parent/guardian or approved person picking up a child is acting in an unsafe and irresponsible manner, the GMS employee will delay that person until another parent/guardian or approved person can be called.

### **Car Seats**

Acting on the demands of our insurance carrier, we are not able to buckle students into their car seats: it is the responsibility of the driver. We are aware of the delay this may cause during car pool time, and we appreciate your patience. In the morning, though, we are able to unbuckle students from their seats, which will help with the flow of morning car line.

We expect that families follow state and best practice guidelines about what type of booster or car seat your particular child uses. We also insist that anytime you are on our campus that your child/ren are secured in their booster or car seat – this is particularly true when cars are in car line in the morning or the afternoon. Students need to stay secured in their booster or car seat until the teacher removes them from the car for car line or until the car is securely parked.

### **Attendance**

Regular attendance is critical to success at school. Thus, students should attend school every day unless they are sick or have a valid and reasonable excuse for being absent. When a student is going to be absent, the family should call the School to let us know they are aware of

the absence. While we understand that students must occasionally miss school for an appointment, please make every effort to schedule appointments for after-school hours. Please contact us (in advance if possible) when your child is (or will be) absent so we can coordinate make-up schoolwork.

We also ask that GMS families adhere to our school calendar when scheduling vacations. If multiple days of school must be missed due to a family situation, we ask that you coordinate with teachers ahead of time. This allows arrangements to be made for students to do work in advance, take work with them, and plan for make-up work. Protracted absences should be kept to a minimum. Attendance and tardiness are part of a student's permanent record.

Students who are absent more than seven days a trimester (without prior arrangements with the School or without a doctor's note) will be put on attendance probation. Probations will include a conference with the teachers, the parent(s)/guardian(s), and the associate head of school.

## Section 10: CASA Program

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) offers extended care through the Children’s After School Activities program, simply known as CASA, which means “home” in Italian. Additionally, Dr. Maria Montessori’s first program was called “Casa dei Bambini” which means “House of Children” or “Children’s House” in English. Like Dr. Montessori, we strive to create a home-like environment for students in our extended care programs.

CASA supports our families’ busy lives by providing an extension of the Montessori environment before and after our academic day. Subject to availability, CASA is open to all Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Junior High students on days in which they attend class and School is operating on a normal schedule.

Students participating in CASA are divided into age groups matching those of their Montessori classrooms. During CASA, students enjoy age-appropriate, enriching activities that inspire imaginative, creative, and cooperative play. This approach allows students to decompress after the rigorous academic day while still developing social, emotional, and cognitive skills in a safe, respectful environment. Last but not least, students enjoy a daily nutritious afternoon snack provided by the School.

### CASA Programming

There are multiple CASA offering to meet families’ unique needs:

- *All-Inclusive CASA*: All-Inclusive CASA is ideal for families who need care before and after school, five days a week. This bundled program also provides continuous care from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. on many days when the School is closed, such as teacher workdays, Parent-Teacher Conference days, and select holidays (as noted on the School’s academic calendar). Students enrolled in All-Inclusive CASA may participate in Early-Bird CASA beginning at 7:30 a.m. and enjoy After-School CASA until 6 p.m. The program is further enhanced by after-school enrichments (e.g., art, music, athletics, etc.) and an abundance of outdoor play, providing fun, safe, and physically engaging activities throughout the year.
- *Early-Bird CASA*: Early-Bird CASA is perfect for families who only need care in the morning before school starts (as early as 7:30 a.m.).
- *After-School CASA*: After-School CASA is the solution for families who need after-school care on certain days of the week. Contracts are available for one day or three days of After-School CASA per week. Please note, After-School CASA does not include care on days when the School is closed but All-Inclusive CASA is open, even if the day falls on one of a family’s contracted days of the week. Families with After-School CASA contracts must register in advance for our All-Day CASA service, which is subject to availability.
- *Drop-In CASA*: Subject to availability, Drop-In CASA enables families to use CASA on an hourly basis when the School is operating on a normal schedule or on early dismissal days. For the School to provide appropriate staffing, our Drop-In CASA service requires advance reservations made by telephone, email, or in person at the front desk.
- *All-Day CASA*: Subject to availability, All-Day CASA enables families to use CASA on days when the School is closed, but All-Inclusive CASA is open (e.g., teacher workdays, Parent-Teacher Conference days and select holidays). For the School to provide appropriate staffing, our All-Day CASA service requires reservations to be made at least one week in advance by telephone, email, or in person at the front desk.

*\*\* Note: Due to the unique needs of our toddler community, GMS does not offer CASA in the toddler division. Instead there is one dedicated All Day Toddler classroom, which operates from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m. with teachers overlapping in the middle of the day.*

### **CASA Fees and Registration**

CASA fees for enrolled students are calculated based on School calendar days. annual Fees for the upcoming school year are announced during the reenrollment season in early February. the school's offers a wide variety or payment options.

- Annually with total payment due September 1
- Quarterly with four payments due in June, September, December, and March (to be billed through smart tuition)
- Nine monthly payments beginning in September continuing through May (to be billed through smart tuition)
- Twelve monthly payments beginning in June continuing through May (to be billed through smart tuition)

### **Summer Camp Offerings**

Over summer months, we offer various programming and summer experiences, which are available only to GMS students. For currently enrolled families seeking summer programming, the School's various Summer Camps provide fun, safe, and age-appropriate experiences. While GMS faculty maintain our Montessori values and culture throughout summer, we do not offer a full Montessori curriculum or school-experience during summer months. Historically, summer-long programs have been offered for Toddler, Primary, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary students. One-and two-week programs have also been offered for Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Junior High students.

### **Cancellation or Changes**

Fees will not be adjusted or refunded for absences, early pick-ups, unanticipated calendar changes, closings due to inclement weather, or other situations. To change or cancel a CASA registration, families must submit their written request to the School at least thirty (30) days in advance of the date of desired change or cancellation.

### **Late Pick-up Policy**

Students must be picked up from CASA by 6 p.m. If you realize that you will be late picking up your child, please call the Office in advance. Students picked up after 6 p.m. will be billed at a rate of \$5.25 per child for every 15 minutes past 6 p.m.

## Section 11: Technology

### Introduction

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) embraces new collaborative, digital learning opportunities through emerging technologies. The importance of teachers, students, and families engaging, learning, and sharing in these environments is a part of 21st century educational experience. GMS encourages employees to utilize technologies to augment their educational practices and to participate in online social activities. In doing so, it is important to create an atmosphere of safety and individual accountability.

Creating that safe and accountable technology and social media environment is driven by two principles:

1. Any and all use of any GMS technology/social media must be professional, legal, and a positive representation of GMS.
2. Any and all use of GMS technology/social media does not come with any assumption of privacy; GMS has the right to have full access to any content communicated via GMS technologies.

As new forms of technology and social media tools are introduced, and challenges emerge, this document will evolve and adapt to the needs of the School.

Starting at young ages, we begin to train and educate students in age-appropriate ways how to be safe and effective consumers and creators of various technologies.

### Computer/Internet Responsible Use Policy

GMS uses computers to teach the skills, knowledge, and behaviors that students will need as successful and responsible members in the community, and as life-long learners. The School expects those who use the computers to do so in a way that is consistent with the GMS educational mission. Older students at GMS naturally have more exposure and use to various technological tools. However, students as young as our Lower Elementary grades use age-appropriate technology tools to further their learning, including word processing, safe online research, and basic coding skills.

Since electronic media change constantly and rapidly, as does the “netiquette” among users, this policy cannot lay down rules to cover every possible situation. Instead, this policy expresses the School’s philosophy and sets forth general guidelines to be applied to all users, whether they are students, GMS employees, volunteers, or other guests.

In both the real world and the virtual one, on campus and off, common principles apply. As a Montessori school, we advocate and require concern and respect for both persons and materials. At GMS, we value and teach the conscientious sharing of limited resources, respect for the work of peers and neighbors, and a careful balancing of society’s needs and rules with our personal freedoms and responsibilities. Whether on the computer or in person, our expectations are the same. Users need to demonstrate a sense of responsibility.

### No Expectation of Privacy

The School reserves the right to monitor, view, or access at any time the data stored in any given computer, including but not limited to: Internet activities, email activities and accounts, network activities and accounts, and all data and/or software stored on desktops, laptops, and

storage media. GMS does not expect to regularly monitor or inspect users' files and data but retains the right to do so at its sole discretion.

### **Using the Internet Requires Caution**

Students are trained to not transmit personal information (home address or telephone number, your age or personal interests, personal photographs) through email or nonsecure websites. They are also taught that emails should be written as if they were a public document that might be read by a third party. As part of these lessons, we discuss the implications of sending hurtful, vulgar or explicit messages, photos or video content. Our expectation is that all persons will report the transmission of inappropriate content immediately. Individuals have access to a rapidly increasing number of easy-to-use electronic communication tools, including the older students having GMS Gmail accounts. This poses opportunities and challenges for both families and schools. Misuse of these tools, regardless of where it occurs, can have serious effects on individuals as well as the school community, and will be treated via the Discipline Policy. Our advice for any member of the school community receiving such content—do not erase any messages: they may be needed to take action against the offender. Cyberbullying (electronically transmitted threats and insults intended to embarrass, harass, or terrify), and the electronic transmission of inappropriate content by a member of the GMS community will result in disciplinary action.

Student use of Internet chat or instant messaging software, social networking sites, online games, sites that promote hate or violence or any other questionable material is prohibited on all school computers, without exception. All Internet access at the School is password protected and students must ask permission for internet use in school.

### **Legal and Ethical Behavior is Expected**

Unacceptable uses of the School's network include, but are not limited to: tampering with the School's wiring, software, or hardware; trying to gain unauthorized access to the School's system by hacking, using another user's login information, or accessing the files of another user without that user's consent; using the network for commercial or political purposes; or purposely damaging the network.

Maintain a high standard of civility: no material containing offensive, profane, rude, inflammatory, threatening, violent, sexually explicit, harassing, abusive, or impolite language or images is to be created, viewed, or accessed. In the event that any such material is encountered accidentally, log off immediately and report the event to the classroom teacher and system administrator.

For helpful information on these issues and more, see the iSAFE web site at [www.isafe.org](http://www.isafe.org).

### **Use of Social Media**

Social media are powerful tools and have the potential to reach audiences far beyond our school community. This translates into a greater level of responsibility and accountability for everyone.

Interacting online with other community members is no different than interacting with these individuals or groups face-to-face; we are required to maintain dignity and respect.

Recognizing that social networking sites are increasingly interconnected in ways that may be largely outside the direct control of the users on any given site and social media activities may be publicly visible the following are key responsibilities:

- Serving as a role model is a critical aspect of being a member of the GMS community.
- Accordingly, you must exercise appropriate discretion when using social media when those communications can impact the our school community.
- How you represent yourself online is an extension of yourself. Do not misrepresent yourself by using someone else's identity.
- What you contribute leaves a digital footprint for all to see. Do not post anything you would not want friends, families, teachers, or future employers to see.
- Community members are discouraged from publishing on public media (e.g. YouTube, Facebook, Flickr, etc.) photos or videos of other students or community members without first obtaining the written permission of all those involved.

## **Section 12: Food on Campus**

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) seeks to have a campus and school experience that is academically, socially, psychologically, and physically positive. We require familial partnership in working together to ensure our students are eating foods and snacks that are healthy for their growing bodies, as well as safe for all community members (i.e. food allergies and we are a nut-free campus). For that purpose, we have these procedures and guidelines for food on our campus.

### **Nut-Free Campus: Peanuts, Tree Nuts, and Nut Oils**

Peanuts, tree nuts, and nut oils (nut products) present an exceptional circumstance because allergic reactions can be triggered not only by consumption, but also by surface exposure to or inhalation of the nuts or nut oils. Reactions can be particularly severe or even life-threatening, including the possibility that the student will go into anaphylactic shock. There can be reactions to students with known allergies, as well as first-time reactions. As a result, after much consultation, GMS is a nut-free campus for all snacks, lunches, and food brought to campus. We appreciate families’ close attention to this policy.

### **Lunch and Snacks**

Families are encouraged to send food that incorporates the principles of sound nutrition. The students will receive lessons in the classroom on nutrition and should be encouraged to choose foods from each nutritional group. Often, children eat better when they are allowed a choice. Most children under 6 years old cannot eat whole portions of fruit or sandwiches. Therefore, it is preferable to send a half of an apple and a half of a sandwich in order to minimize waste. The purpose of small portions is to provide a nutritious and balanced meal. Many foods can be placed in small plastic containers and assembled during lunch. Egg or tuna salad can be spread on different crackers or bread. Besides giving the child an opportunity to practice fine motor skills, this will give them something to do while waiting for everyone to begin eating. It is the ‘doing’ that keeps the child’s attention. Milk, juice, soup, etc. can be sent in a thermos or other easy-to-open container. When provided with appropriate items and utensils, children are able to prepare their own lunches from an early age.

Please do not send foods or beverages in glass containers. While some classes are able, overall GMS cannot guarantee a means to heat food, so please send hot lunch items in an insulated thermos. A soft, reusable lunch bag of medium size is requested to meet storage limitations.

Prepared foods from fast food restaurants are not ideal. We also discourage families from sending Lunchables. While they may be convenient, they contain a high amount of sodium and sometimes fat. For desserts, we encourage fruit and natural foods. Foods with a high sugar or salt content can affect the metabolism of the child making them overly sleepy or overactive. No gum or candy may be sent in the lunch bag.

Finally, we ask that lunches do not contain candy or sugary dessert snacks.

### **Providing Snacks for the Classroom**

If your child is a Toddler or Primary student, you will be asked to provide snack for the classroom for a week or more. Due to the dangerous nature of some children’s food allergies, please consult your child’s teacher to discuss whether certain foods should not be brought to

school. *Additionally, we are a nut-free campus.* Here are some general guidelines for providing snack.

- Please provide snacks from 2 food groups: example - either protein or carbohydrate, with a fruit.
- We only serve water at snack. Families do not need to provide a beverage for snack times.
- For Toddlers - Students under the age of 3 are not allowed to have raisins, popcorn or raw carrots because they can so easily choke on them. Also, please cut grapes in half.
- Due to our caution regarding food allergies, if you bring home-made baked foods, please provide an ingredient list.

Following is a list of suggestions for nutritious classroom snacks:

- Breads: Loaf of whole grain bread, crackers, bagels, snack mix (low sodium), muffins, rice cakes, unsalted pretzels
- Fruit: Apples, bananas, oranges, pears, pineapple, grapes, berries, plums, kiwi, figs
- Vegetables: Cucumbers, broccoli, carrots, celery
- Dairy/Protein: Cream cheese, string cheese, yogurt, cheese (cheddar, Swiss, etc.)

Elementary and Junior High students are asked to pack their own nutritious snack in their lunch bags, which they will retrieve at various times throughout the morning.

### **Lunch Time**

Some divisions eat lunch directly in their classrooms, while other divisions eat in the School's gym space which our older students transform into a dining room each lunch period. Dining should be an enjoyable social event for everyone. We hope to provide support for such an experience by encouraging choices of nutritious, interesting foods, and by creating a relaxed courteous atmosphere.

In some divisions, there are lunch options provided from time to time. For example, the Junior High microeconomy prepares and sells a farm-to-fork lunch to Junior High students. Upper Elementary students sometimes do a pizza or sandwich lunch option for Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Junior High students.

## Section 13: Discipline

### Safe Schools Policy

Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) has a comprehensive Safe Schools Policy which governs harassment, abuse, discrimination, and mandated reporting.

The Safe Schools policy is based on our belief that it is the collective responsibility of the entire GMS community, including faculty, staff, students, and families, to foster an environment of mutual respect and dignity. The purpose of these Safe School policies is to protect all GMS students and School personnel. GMS seeks to foster a safe environment that is free of threat or harm and is conducive to learning. The Safe Schools policies detail how the School responds to situations. Students, GMS employees, and family members who violate these policies will be subjected to appropriate disciplinary action, up to and including dismissal from the School.

### Discipline Policy

Children will challenge authority and ground rules from time to time, yet the School, through its faculty and administration, firmly believes discipline is as much an inner process for children as an external one. We want students to believe that their lives have meaning and purpose and are contributing members of the school community. We want our students to believe that they can influence what they do in life and are accountable for their actions and choices. We want students to manage their personal emotions through self-assessment, self-control, and self-discipline. We also believe that every student has the right to learn in a supportive environment free from bullying. The administration and faculty at GMS believe a discipline policy should be based upon moral and ethical principles, wisdom and understanding, and believe that through such a policy the students will come to respond to the limits and consequences of everyday life with responsibility, adaptability, flexibility, and integrity.

From time to time, however, some students do not act respectfully, nor do they always remember to use words instead of action. To that end, the we follow our Discipline Policy.

GMS serves the educational and developmental needs of children ages 18 months to 15 years old (ninth grade). Given the range of ages, it is incumbent upon the School to treat infractions in various ways and on an individual basis. As a general rule, teachers are expected to deal with infractions on a teacher-to-student basis, but the School’s response may expand to include the family in a conversation to determine how best to deal with an individual child, and what action will best address the infraction. Disciplinary responses may be a reminder to the child of their responsibilities and the consequences of further violations of conduct or behavior, detention during or after school hours, in-school or out-of-school suspension, or dismissal from School.

Students in the Upper Elementary and Junior High are held to a higher level of expectation with regard to personal behavior. We expect them to be role models for the rest of the School, and most often they live up to our expectations. In light of the School’s expectations of the students in Upper Elementary and Junior High, the faculty in those divisions hold regular forums to help their students understand the nature of personal interactions and how negative interactions effect the students, the faculty, and the School as a whole. Such forums are a way to be proactive with regard to avoiding serious conflicts among students and to help all of the students learn respect for each other and the faculty.

The forums and discussions help students develop a willingness to assist versus hinder their peers, and further help students learn how to care for the environment, each other, and the

faculty of the School. Inherent in these meetings is the teaching of responsibility for students' actions within the entire GMS community. It is also the desire of the faculty to help the older students foster the same attributes in the younger students in the School.

The lower division classes hold similar discussions during their community meetings or circle times.

The following is a sample, but not exhaustive, list of inappropriate personal behavior or misconduct that are subject to disciplinary action.

1. Students or adults may not physically or mentally abuse another person in any way.
2. Students may not be disrespectful of faculty or staff, nor disobey directives.
3. Students may not cause physical or emotional harm or physically or emotionally intimidate other students or engage in any other similar bullying behaviors.
4. Students and adults may not intentionally damage the School's property or equipment.
5. Firearms or other dangerous weapons, either toy or real, are not permitted at GMS or at School functions. Toys will be confiscated, but students found with real weapons will be immediately removed from the School and may face stronger disciplinary or legal action.
6. Harassment of a sexual nature by or of students, school employees, or any other person having business with the School is strictly prohibited and should be reported immediately to the appropriate school administrator. Sexual harassment is defined to include unwelcome sexual advances, requests for sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct that is in any way intimidating or offensive.
7. Harassment regarding race, ethnicity, religion, or sexual orientation by demeaning or derogatory remarks or physical action is not tolerated and should be reported to the proper school administrator or faculty member immediately. This applies to comments or behavior directed at students, employees of the School, or other third parties having business with the School.
8. Smoking or use of other tobacco products at the School or at School functions is prohibited.
9. Students or others may not engage in gambling activities at the School or at school functions.
10. Absences from any school function or obligations due to reasons other than illness must be cleared in advance with either the faculty or administration; a physician must document any illness that lasts over three days.
11. The use, sale, or possession of alcohol or other mind-altering drugs is prohibited by students at GMS, whether on campus or at school sponsored events.
12. Finally, behavior that is disorderly, disruptive, or otherwise inappropriate for a specific occasion or age will not be tolerated.

GMS relies upon several levels of discipline in order to give the School the flexibility it may need to deal effectively with inappropriate student personal conduct or behavior.

For minor infractions, a verbal warning may be all that is needed to correct behavior. By making most students aware of their misbehavior and why it is a problem, they change their way of acting. Often, students are given a choice of acceptable behaviors and there is immediate follow-through with whatever disciplinary action the teacher has discussed with the child, should the child continue to misbehave.

With younger students, distraction and redirection are common tools to use after a verbal warning is given. Separation or isolation from other students may also be an appropriate action

to take. The child is able to rejoin the group after a discussion of the reasons for their being separated and what positive alternatives to misbehavior may be a better choice.

If a student has a repeated problem of misbehavior, the teacher will notify the associate head of school and will call a conference with the family to discuss the problem. If the problem is not resolved after informal discussion, the family will be notified that suspension from School is a very real consequence for continued misbehavior.

Suspension from School, whether done in-school or out-of-school, carries with it the fact that all work must be made up immediately upon return from suspension or a zero will be imposed for all work not made up. The School expects that all suspended students are in an environment wherein a responsible adult is present.

In extreme cases, students may be dismissed from School. Granted by the bylaws of the board of trustees, the head of school has the right to bar parents, legal guardians, and/or students from participating in certain or any events or activities, whether ordinary or extraordinary in the operation of the school. Furthermore, the head of school may direct withdrawal of a child or children from enrollment at the Greensboro Montessori School for any reason, including, but not limited to, unsatisfactory adjustment or failure of the parents, legal guardians or student to accept school By-Laws, policies or procedures, failure to pay tuition and fees on a timely basis, or lack of fulfillment of the other terms contained in the tuition contract. The head of school at their discretion may decline to re-enroll a child for any school year.

The School reserves the right to vary from this procedure, including taking action up to and including suspension or immediate dismissal, when in the judgment of the head of school such action is necessary to protect or serve the best interests of the School and its students.

Each year, students in the Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary, and Junior High, develop a list of guidelines for behavior, beginning with "Be kind to one another." We anticipate that the practice of revisiting such guidelines often, and in all divisions, will go far in deterring misbehavior and will continue to make the school environment one that is nurturing and safe for all of the GMS community. Our intention through this discipline policy and our actions is always to help students grow into responsible, respectful, and contributing members of their various communities.

### **When Toddlers Bite**

Toddler-aged children are experimenting with and exploring their limits, expectations, and personal boundaries as they relate, in some cases for the first time, with children their own age. It is very common to see behaviors such as biting, hitting, throwing, and pushing as toddlers assert themselves and learn to share space and materials with others. Toddlers are only beginning to understand how their actions affect those around them. Therefore, these behaviors are not necessarily intentional acts of aggression, but can stem from a variety of reasons, including frustration and the inability to communicate verbally; sensory needs for biting and chewing; and cause and effect exploration.

While this type of behavior in toddlers is normal and expected, repeated hitting and biting can jeopardize our ability to maintain learning environments that are safe, both physically and emotionally, for all of our students. As such, we will call on your partnership to support both your child/ren and their classmates. When biting occurs, the families of both the biter and the child who is bitten will receive a written incident report and, if necessary, a phone call from the

teacher. Due to confidentiality requirements, we do not share the names of the other students involved in these incidents.

Because toddlers bite or hit for different reasons at different stages of development, we adapt our responses according to the needs and motivations of each individual student. Some of our interventions may include:

- Offering the student an alternative item, such as a teether, to bite
- Responding with firm, consistent language ("Stop," "Biting hurts")
- Modeling language the student can use to express their needs instead of biting/hitting ("My work," "I don't like that")
- Briefly separating the student from the rest of the group to help them relax and regain self-control
- Shadowing the child who repeatedly bites, hits, or throws to prevent these behaviors

If these interventions are not effective in diminishing unsafe behaviors, we may move forward with additional measures:

- If a student bites or hits repeatedly over the course of the day, families may be asked to pick them up early from school to break the pattern of behavior, and ensure the safety of the student's classmates. In the event that you are called to pick up your child early, please know that we employ this measure only after many strategies have been utilized in the classroom, and without any association of shame or guilt.
- We may ask to meet with you, as well as members of administration and/or our learning support services team, to create strategies to respond consistently to these behaviors across home and school.
- In rare cases in which all of the aforementioned interventions and continued partnership with the family has proven unsuccessful in preventing unsafe behaviors, a student may be dismissed from the School.

## Section 14: Health Information

### Health Policy

At Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”), a student may not attend school until their emergency and health documentation is on file with the School through Magnus Health. According to North Carolina state law, families are required by law to submit a copy of their child’s immunization records by the first day of school and submit required medical forms no later than 30 days after the first day of school. The child’s physician must sign off on all health assessments.

Since GMS does not have an infirmary, home is the best place for a sick child. You may not send your child to GMS when they are ill. If a student is sent home with a fever, they should not return to our School until they are fever free for at least 24 hours without the use of any fever-reducing medicine. Returning to GMS after other illnesses should be at your doctor’s direction. Symptoms that would preclude your child attending school and which would prompt us to send the child home, include, but are not limited to:

- A fever of 100 or above
- Nausea and/or vomiting
- Diarrhea and/or abdominal cramps
- Wheezing, croupy cough, and/or cough producing green mucous (excluding asthma)
- Lice or scabies (until treated)
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye)
- A contagious rash
- Any infectious disease
- Your or our judgment that the student isn’t well

We will notify families to pick up students if they become too ill to work or if their health is jeopardizing the health of others. Please call the School if your child has developed a contagious illness or condition, e.g., chicken pox, influenza, lice, conjunctivitis, and so forth. If your child has a chronic health condition and/or special health needs, please meet with your child’s teacher to discuss the health issue and develop a health plan.

### Dispensing of Medicine

In order for GMS to administer any medication to a student, the following procedure must be followed:

1. Families must fill out a Permission to Administer Medicine form (available from the Office).
2. Medicine, both prescription and nonprescription, must be brought to the student’s teacher by the parent/guardian and locked away or refrigerated; medication should not be in a students’ possession (unless otherwise authorized by the School).
3. Prescription medicine must be contained in the original bottle with the patient’s name, dosage, frequency and duration of use.
4. Nonprescription medicine should also be in the original container with written instructions from the parent/guardian regarding dosage and frequency.
5. Medication will not be administered after any stated expiration date.

### Managing Student Special Health Needs

Each summer, parent(s)/guardian(s) are asked to complete or renew emergency and health documentation in Magnus Health. This documentation asks them to inform the School of important medical information. It is vital that all medical conditions, including allergies, and/or

medications be listed. Whenever possible, classroom teachers should work with families of students with special health needs prior to the beginning of each school year. This will allow teachers to familiarize themselves with the student's specific health needs and to develop a health plan as described below.

Once received, GMS teachers will review the students' emergency and health documentation for any information that may require the School to provide services to assist a student through the school day or on off-campus field trips. Should additional information be required regarding a student's medical needs, the teachers will contact the families to gather the information and, if necessary, set up a meeting to create a health plan (e.g. severe allergies, seizures, severe asthma, diabetes, etc.). This plan will inform teachers, with whom the student has contact, of the specific strategies and/or protocols the School is requested to follow.

If a student's medical needs change during the school year, families should notify the student's teacher immediately. Teachers will notify the associate head of school who will then work with the student's parent(s)/guardian(s) to create or update the plan, if necessary.

*The student's family should:*

1. Complete all medical information forms indicating all student health needs (medical conditions, allergies, medications, etc.)
2. Contact the associate head of school if your child's health need requires specific accommodations to be made during the school day.

*The classroom teacher should:*

1. Participate in meetings with parent(s)/guardian(s) to establish the plan.
2. Notify the associate head of school if a student's medical condition changes during the school year such that adaptations to the health plan are required.
3. Implement the health plan as designed. Discuss concerns as they arise with parent(s)/guardian(s) and the associate head of school. Inform appropriate parties when changes are made.
4. Maintain copies of any written communication sent out regarding the health needs of the student.
5. Meet with the receiving teacher prior to the transition of a student into the next division to develop a transition plan for the student.

*The associate head of school should:*

1. Review all medical information provided in Magnus Health and obtain the assistance of medical personnel to confirm the specific medical needs requiring the development of a health plan.
2. Notify the student's teachers to contact the parent(s)/guardian(s) to determine the necessary protocol to assist the student and develop a health plan.
3. With the information gained from teachers and family, develop a health plan if the student's medical condition requires interventions beyond that of the normal scope of a teacher's day. Any changes to the student's medical condition during the school year will be communicated to the student's teacher and the associate head of school at which time a revised plan will be implemented, if necessary.
4. Confirm the health plan includes all needed information: the health need, responses needed to the health need, student limitations or accommodations needed due to the health need, any impact on the classroom community or other students, and signed family consent.

5. Distribute copies of all health plans to classroom teachers and CASA faculty; notify needed parties of students with health plans.
6. Maintain information regarding the student's special health need in the student's permanent record.

### **Plan Regarding Allergies (Including Food Allergies)**

GMS strives to create an environment that is safe and comfortable for all of our students and that supports them in reaching their full potential. Like other members of the general population, some of our students suffer from environmental and food allergies.

Unfortunately, the reactions of some of these students to certain allergens can be serious or even life threatening. In a community as large as GMS, and in which many students have the freedom to use all or virtually all of the facilities, it is impossible to prohibit the presence of all food items or allergens in the environment to which any student is allergic. Likewise, the School cannot guarantee that a student will not be exposed to an allergen. However, in order to reduce the risk of exposure that could result in serious and even life-threatening reactions, GMS has adopted the following allergy plan.

This plan is directed primarily at allergies that can have serious harmful consequences, rather than those to which reactions involve more mild discomfort.

The key to the efficacy of the plan, and the starting point for the GMS staff is awareness of a student's allergies, the potential reactions, and the course of treatment. In this regard, GMS must rely upon parent(s)/guardian(s) to provide information regarding their children's allergies to school officials, including classroom teachers.

### **Procedure When a Student has a Known Allergy**

1. Parent(s)/guardian(s) should identify all known allergies on the student's emergency and health documentation in Magnus Health.
2. In the event that the student's likely reaction to the allergen is known to be serious or life threatening, parent(s)/guardian(s) should so indicate and should contact the student's classroom/home base teacher directly to discuss the scope of the allergy, the symptoms, and the proper course of treatment. Parent(s)/guardian(s) also should provide teachers with information regarding foods or other items that their child must avoid because of the allergy.
3. School personnel and the student's teacher(s) should review the student's emergency and health documentation to familiarize themselves with the allergies of students in their classroom environment. They also will review information provided by parent(s)/guardian(s) regarding their child's allergies.
4. In the event of an allergy that likely would result in a serious or life-threatening reaction, the parent(s)/guardian(s) and teacher(s), together with appropriate GMS staff, should develop a specific written plan for the student within the classroom environment. This may include such things as procedures for MINIMIZING RISK OF (preventing) exposure, and communication with other families and students in the child's class or division about the allergy and about GENERAL limitations or restrictions on classroom snacks, lunches, treats or activities RELATED TO (resulting from) the allergy. In developing the student's specific plan, families of children with allergies should understand the School's need to balance safety concerns regarding the student with the interests and dietary needs of other students. In the event the family and GMS are unable to agree, the decision of GMS shall be final.

5. Parent(s)/guardian(s) will be asked annually to provide a completed medical form to be signed by the student's physician and any necessary medical history.

### **Steps to Reduce Exposure**

- Involve the student with information, self-advocacy, and an empowered voice to help on the management of reducing exposure;
- Hand washing with soap and water before and after meals and snacks;
- Brushing off crumbs before entering school buildings and hand washing promptly upon arriving at school if food items containing known allergens (e.g. peanuts, nuts or peanut butter) were consumed by a student at home or on the way to school;
- Cleaning of eating surfaces prior to and immediately following lunch;
- Discouraging sharing of food by students, other than during communal snacks, meals, or celebrations.
- Families who provide food items for the class (for snacks or celebrations) should check with the classroom teacher in advance regarding food allergies in the classroom in order to coordinate appropriate and safe snacks.

### **Steps to Respond to Reaction**

- Each classroom teacher and administration should have access to liquid Benadryl or other appropriate anti-histamine.
- Parent(s)/guardian(s) of children with life-threatening allergies must provide to the School appropriate emergency medication for the student. Such medication shall be kept in the Office and in the first aid kit or other location accessible to the student's primary classroom or home base teacher, consistent with other legal requirements regarding storing medications. Junior High students also may carry such medication in their backpacks or keep it in their lockers, if the parent(s)/guardian(s) provide a written note to the teacher to that effect.
- A notice regarding the student's severe allergy and treatment protocol will be posted in appropriate areas.
- The GMS associate head of school or other appropriate personnel will educate faculty and staff early in every school year regarding recognition and emergency treatment of severe allergies.
- Teachers will discuss field trips with the family of the student who has a severe food allergy to decide appropriate strategies for managing the food allergy while off-campus.

### **Responding to Previously Unknown Allergens**

In 2015, the state of North Carolina passed a law that encourages schools to stock epinephrine auto injectors in order to treat allergic reactions to previously unknown allergens. Potential sources of first time reactions include, but are not limited to, foods and insect stings. We at GMS have taken the initiative to (1) obtain auto injectors to have on hand and (2) develop a protocol and train our staff on how to recognize and respond to anaphylaxis. The purpose of this medication is to treat our students and staff who may have an allergic reaction that could not have been predicted. If a child has a known allergy that puts them at risk for anaphylaxis, the parent(s)/guardian(s) will still be required to provide appropriate medications along with an individualized allergy action plan.

### **Nut-Free Campus: Peanuts, Tree Nuts, and Nut Oils**

Peanuts, tree nuts, and nut oils (nut products) present an exceptional circumstance because allergic reactions can be triggered not only by consumption, but also by surface exposure to or

inhalation of the nuts or nut oils. Reactions can be particularly severe or even life-threatening, including the possibility that the student will go into anaphylactic shock. As a result, after much consultation, GMS is a nut-free campus and has developed the following guidelines to address the presence and consumption of nut products on the campus.

In furtherance of this goal:

- GMS requests that families refrain from sending foods containing nut products to School.
- Because nut oils are easily spread and many other products are prepared in the presence of or on equipment also used for processing nuts, GMS requests that families pay attention to labels and be aware of products which contain any nut oils or which are labeled with the legends "may contain traces of peanuts or nuts" or "manufactured in a facility where nuts are processed." If a student brings such labeled products to school, the student should respect the need of their peers with severe nut allergies not to be exposed to those products. Students should be careful to limit the surfaces with which they come in contact while eating and should be sure to wash their hands and face and clean those surfaces carefully and thoroughly after eating.
- Because oils are easily transferred to other surfaces, we ask families and students to be especially diligent about washing their hands and faces if they have consumed nut products prior to entering the School or on school property.

GMS realizes and regrets the fact that this plan may pose an inconvenience for some families. The School also acknowledges that neither this plan nor any other action can guarantee that a student will not be exposed to an allergen or experience an allergic reaction. Nevertheless, GMS believes that this plan will substantially reduce the risk of EXPOSURE (severe allergic reactions). Therefore, in light of the severity of the potential harm to students who have certain allergies, and the fact that students use all parts of the School's facilities, GMS asks that all members of the GMS community follow this plan scrupulously.

## Section 15: School Closures & Emergency Procedures

### Severe Weather – School Closings/Delays

Safety of the Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) students and staff is the top priority of the School. In the event of inclement weather or another condition that causes the operation of GMS to be hazardous, the School will be closed, or the start of school may be delayed. Families should also use their judgment to determine whether transporting their children to and from school is safe. Families are always welcome to pick up their children early, if they deem the environmental conditions unsafe. Families need to sign their children out through the Office.

School closures apply to all school programs including our All-Inclusive CASA program and All-Day Toddler classroom.

If a delayed start for the school day is decided, all programs will start two hours later. There will be no early-morning CASA, and all drop-off times will be two hours later than their normal time. For example, Primary car line drop-off is normally 8:15 to 8:30 a.m., so on a delayed start, Primary car line drop-off would be 10:15 to 10:30 a.m..

In the event of a closing or delayed opening, the School will communicate the decision with families no later than 6:30 a.m. on the affected day. When possible, we do our best to let families know the evening before, but this is often not possible. The School will communicate the message in four ways (the same four ways will also be used for early dismissal announcements):

- Email: We will send an email using Constant Contact. This method of communication will always provide the most detailed information for closings, delays, and early dismissals (along with resulting changes to classroom schedules), so we highly encourage families to check their inboxes first whenever inclement weather is in the area.
- Facebook: We will post to our Facebook page.
- TV: We will notify the following local television stations:
  - ABC - WXLV ABC 45
  - CBS - WFMY News 2
  - FOX - WGHP FOX8
  - NBC - WXII 12
- Phone: We will update our Inclement Weather Hotline which can be reached at 336-907-3866.

If the School must close for a large amount of days during the year, additional school days may need to be added to the year.

### Campus Security

The safety, health, and well-being of each child is the School's first priority at all times. The School thus reserves the right to monitor and carefully control the presence of all persons on campus at all times of the day. Our vigilance as a school community to monitor and be aware is our foremost defense and best ongoing solution to preventing an incident of any type at school. We also maintain a locked campus, and all visitors must enter through the Office.

There are many ways our families can help us maintain the security on our campus:

- Please ensure that we are fully informed of any changes in individuals that pick up and drop off your child/ren by notifying the Office. Please tell babysitters, relatives, or friends

that are registered to pick-up to volunteer picture ID and welcome our scrutiny before entering the building. All visitors and families must sign in at the Office upon arrival at GMS and must obtain and wear a visitor's badge (except during regular drop-off and pick-up times.)

- While often pick-up and drop-off seem like ideal opportunities for a conference with faculty because everyone is there, please do not distract the faculty and staff responsible for supervision from doing their most important work of the day, making sure the students get to and from school safely.
- While you are coming and going from campus keep a lookout for anything strange or suspicious. We always must err on the side of caution. Do not hesitate to report to staff and teachers ANYTHING out of the ordinary that you see or hear.
- Do not let strangers into the building. If you are entering or going and there is not a GMS employee present, close the door behind you and politely tell the individual you will get a GMS employee to let them in.

In addition to the above, the School is constantly monitored by a set of closed circuit, recording cameras. The School will be directly in touch with the Greensboro Police Department in the case of an emergency. A complete Staff Safety Handbook details procedures for all instances of emergency responses for staff and faculty but is not available to the general public for reasons of security.

### **Weapons Free Campus**

GMS is a weapon-free campus. The possession, use, or brandishing of weapons, including firearms, knives as weapons, explosives, etc., on GMS property or in vehicles on GMS property is strictly forbidden. This specifically includes weapons covered by concealed carry permits. Any violation of this policy may result in immediate termination of employment or possible dismissal of a family from GMS. Unlawful or criminal activities of any kind involving weapons on GMS property or in vehicles on GMS property will be reported to law enforcement authorities and violators may be prosecuted.

Any law enforcement officer who is on campus and who is required to carry a sidearm weapon must visibly display their law enforcement badge at all times. They should also notify the Office when they will be on campus with their sidearm weapon and badge.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

GMS endeavors to minimize accidents through various safety programs, facility inspections, and routine maintenance. However, should an accident occur, we request your understanding and cooperation. The following outlines our procedures:

1. *First Aid:* In the event of an emergency medical situation, School personnel who have been trained in first aid may administer emergency medical attention.
2. *Emergency Medical Care:* Written permission from the parent(s)/guardian(s) to call the family physician or refer the child for medical care in case of accident or emergency shall be on file in the Office. When a child needs immediate professional care, EMS (911) will be called. If it is necessary for the child to be taken to the hospital, the School will take the child to Moses Cone Hospital unless another hospital preference is submitted in writing by parent(s)/guardian(s) to the family relations coordinator. The child's teacher, the associate head of school, or the head of school will notify the parent(s)/guardian(s) promptly. All emergency forms must be on file when the school year begins.
3. *Treatment of Minor Injuries:* Many children react unexpectedly even to simple medical compounds such as hydrogen peroxide or calamine lotion. Therefore, we do not apply

medication to a wound other than soap and water and, if necessary, a Band-Aid. An ice pack will be applied to any minor bump or swelling. Sometimes sting swabs will be applied if needed.

4. *Administering Benadryl or Epinephrine:* By completing the designated section of the Signed Authorization Form for Enrolled Students, parent(s)/guardian(s) can authorize the School to administer one dose of liquid dye-free Benadryl in the event their child experiences a severe allergic reaction while on school property. In accordance with North Carolina law (§ 115C-375.2A.), we also stock epinephrine auto injectors and have developed a protocol to use them in order to treat allergic reactions to previously unknown allergens.

Your child's safety is important to us. Therefore, it is imperative that you keep the emergency information up to date in Magnus Health.

### **Emergency Drills**

Fire drills and tornado drills are conducted at regular intervals during the year. In the case of a fire drill, students are to leave classrooms quietly and immediately in a single file line. Each classroom has its own exit direction which is posted near the classroom door. In the case of a tornado drill, students are directed to designated locations within the buildings and remain in these locations until notified that the drill is over. Faculty carry emergency bags during any emergency or emergency drill. From time to time faculty and staff will practice lockdown and intruder drills; these drills do not involve any students.

### **Evacuations**

In the unlikely event that a campus evacuation is instructed by local law enforcement officers, students will initially be escorted to Carolyn Allen Park on Drawbridge Parkway. Once attendance is confirmed, the students will most likely be relocated to John Kernodle Middle School on Drawbridge Parkway, Tanner Woods (adjacent condominium neighborhood), or Caldwell Academy on Horse Pen Creek Road. The police and fire departments may make alternate evacuation decisions and will be in charge of any such emergency situation, including when and how families would pick up your child/ren. Families should monitor their devices for communication from the School once the plan is made.

### **Notice regarding AHERA compliance**

This is to serve as written notification, as required by the Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act (AHERA), to parent(s)/guardian(s), families, teachers, employees, and trustees, that GMS is in compliance with the AHERA. The management plan is available on file in the Office of the School. No asbestos was used as a building material in our School's buildings.

## Section 16: School Communication

Transparent, effective, and regular communication from both Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) and your classroom teachers helps us build and sustain a healthy home-school partnership. We have multiple communication channels in place to ensure you have easy access to our team and the information you and your family need.

### Contacting GMS

Families can contact us in a wide variety of ways.

- **In Person.** Our address is 2856 Horse Pen Creek Road, Greensboro, NC 27410. Families and visitors are always welcome to stop by the School. Regular business hours are Monday through Friday from 7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m., and someone is always in the Office to personally greet you.
- **By Telephone.** The School’s telephone number is 336-668-0119, which is a direct line to the Office.
- **By Email.** The School’s email address is [gms@gms.org](mailto:gms@gms.org). Additionally, faculty and administration have personal email addresses which follow this naming convention: [firstname.lastname@gms.org](mailto:firstname.lastname@gms.org).
- **By Fax.** The School’s fax number is 336-665-9531, which sends faxes to the Office.

### School-wide Communications

GMS leverages variety of communication channels to share official School news with its constituents.

- **Digital Newsletters and Announcements** – GMS uses Constant Contact to send weekly newsletters and other school-wide announcements via email. We automatically sign up all parent(s)/guardian(s) to receive these emails and welcome grandparents and close family friends to subscribe to our mailing lists. Our digital newsletter, called The Pinwheel, and other email announcements are the most accurate and efficient way the School can communicate effectively with the entire school community at one time, and information about events, inclement weather, classroom activities, parenting tips, etc. live in these communications.
- **Social Media** – The School has an official presence with five social media channels: Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and YouTube.
- **Magnus Health** – GMS has partnered with Magnus Health to help us better maintain student health records (SHR). Magnus Health is a leading provider of cloud-based SHR software for independent schools and is HIPPA compliant. To ensure privacy, the company also maintains TRUSTe privacy certification, PCI compliance, and SSL certificates on their site. Our partnership with Magnus Health allows families to complete, electronically sign, and digitally submit forms to the School, avoiding the endless paperwork often associated with back-to-school forms and field trip permission slips. On behalf of GMS, Magnus Health will email families letting them know when a form needs to be signed and submitted.
- **Website** – The School’s website is [www.gms.org](http://www.gms.org) and is primarily designed to introduce our School to new families who are complete online research. However, there are four pages dedicated to enhancing our relationship with current families:
  - Blog ([www.gms.org/gms-news/](http://www.gms.org/gms-news/)): This is the homepage for the School’s blogs and related articles. We most often link to these articles from issues of The Pinwheel and through social media.

- Current Parents ([www.gms.org/community/current-parents/](http://www.gms.org/community/current-parents/)): This is the destination for pertinent forms, PDF versions of the academic calendar, and other relevant information to our families.
- Calendar ([www.gms.org/calendar/](http://www.gms.org/calendar/)): This is our online calendar. Families can easily subscribe to our calendar to have events automatically pushed to the personal calendars. Families can use the categories to easily see and subscribe to all school events or filter by division for a more custom view and subscription.

### **Parent and Teacher Communications**

Teachers not only work with your child in the classroom, they also serve students' best interests throughout the School, in all of its many activities. Each student has special gifts, and growth occurs by identifying them and building upon them. Teachers also serve as your primary contact with the School. Questions or concerns about your child should be taken to the classroom teachers first. They are in the best position to help, and their purpose is to work with you as partners. If the teachers are unable to answer your questions, you may contact the associate head of school or the head of school.

In general, there are five primary ways our teachers communicate with families and vice-versa.

- ***Through Impromptu Face-to-Face Conversations.*** Teachers enjoy visiting with families through daily life at school such as drop-off, pick-up, and volunteering in the classroom. Please remember these interactions are best kept brief and casual as the teachers' main priority during these times is caring for the students.
- ***During Parent-Teacher Conferences.*** Parent-Teacher Conferences can be scheduled anytime, and we specifically set aside time three times a year for these important meetings. We kick off every school year with Hopes, Dreams, and Concerns meetings designed specifically for parent(s)/guardian(s) to connect with their child/ren's classroom teachers after the long summer. We also offer Parent-Teacher Conferences at the end of the first and second trimesters.
- ***By Email.*** All teachers have personal email addresses which following this naming convention: `firstname.lastname@gms.org`. Please note our faculty do not regularly check email while teaching in the classroom ensuring their focus remains on the students. Most faculty read and respond to email either immediately before or after their teaching schedule. Hence, if you have an urgent message, please call the Office, who can immediately deliver the message directly to the teacher.
- ***By Phone.*** Teachers will often schedule calls with parent(s)/guardian(s) to discuss a wide variety of topics. Teacher also call parent(s)/guardian(s) when they have an urgent, private, or sensitive topic to share.
- ***Through Digital Classroom Newsletters.*** GMS uses Constant Contact to send monthly classroom newsletters via email.

## Section 17: Miscellaneous Policies & Procedures

### **Birthdays**

Birthdays are celebrated in the Toddler and Primary classrooms from an educational perspective. Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) teachers follow a Montessori ceremony that prepares the child for understanding cycles of time, months of the year, and seasons. More importantly, the ceremony gives the child an appreciation of their place in history and an appreciation for the gift of life.

Toddler families are asked to prepare and bring a poster to class that represents in pictures the birthday child’s life from birth to present.

Primary students follow a more formal ceremony during which the birthday child carries the earth around the sun represented by a candle and circles the sun for each year of their life. As the child walks, families and teachers tell anecdotes about each year of the child’s life. Families are requested to send in pictures, mementos and information about the child several days before the event. Families are invited to attend the celebration.

Acknowledgement or celebration of birthdays in divisions above Primary vary according to the discretion of the teacher(s).

Snack may be scheduled to coincide with the student’s birthday ceremonies. Please continue to bring the requested fresh fruit and carbohydrates (such as muffins), and do not send sugary treats or any snacks with any nuts. We would like to focus on the life of the child.

### **Clothing**

Students throughout the School polish, paint, wash, and dance. They also play and work outside in all kinds of weather; all of these activities require the wearing of appropriate clothing. Our younger students tend to get especially dirty and messy in their learning and work. *Be sure to label every piece of clothing, including shoes and books, with your child’s name.* Each Toddler and Primary student are required to have a complete change of clothing including underwear and socks. Please pack it in a cloth bag and label it with your child’s name and bring it to school on the first day. Primary students’ clothes are placed in a bag that fits in the classroom cubby areas.

Students should not wear clothing that will impede the learning process or restrain one’s school activities. If ever there is a conflict between what a student and a teacher believe to be appropriate dress, the head of school or the associate head of school will make the final decision. Clothing with reference to weapons, drugs, or alcohol are also not allowed.

Shoes are to be worn at all times on the school grounds in accordance with North Carolina state law. With regard to shoes, please note open-toed shoes can be of some concern. Young children open doors for themselves (doors that are very heavy), and even the most careful child can misjudge distance and may open a door on their toes. Children also can easily trip when wearing sandals, especially when playing outside. *Therefore, we strongly recommend that students wear closed-toed shoes and all shoes have a back strap on them.* GMS will rely upon families and students to decide what footwear a student will wear and will expect them to keep in mind the student’s activities and safety in making that decision. Sneakers are the safest for younger students to wear and must be worn in order for any student to participate in physical education (Lower Elementary through Junior High).

Other divisions and classes have specific dress code requirements that are detailed in their own notes and handbooks.

### **Field Trips/Student Transportation**

GMS expands students' knowledge of the world by bringing in special programs and resource people to the School. Primary, Elementary, and Junior High students also go out into the community for first-hand experience. These events are planned in conjunction with the curriculum and therefore are designed to enrich classroom studies. There are sometimes additional family fees or costs associated with field trips.

All field trips are announced in advance and all students must have a signed Authorization and Release form on file at the Office in order to attend the trip. Attendance on field trips is a privilege for students, and they are expected to follow all rules and guidelines and the directions of the chaperones throughout the trip.

Students are transported either in the GMS school bus or in approved family or faculty/staff cars. Family members are required by law to leave a copy of their driver's license with the Office. Family members who will be driving must also provide the additional information requested in the field trip preparation process.

### **Team Sports**

Students in the Upper School (Upper Elementary and Junior High) are eligible to participate in a co-ed athletic program at GMS. GMS belongs to the Independent School League which competes with other area independent schools. The athletic year consists of five sports seasons which are determined in a joint decision by the schools' athletic directors, including soccer, flag football, volleyball, basketball, and cross country.

### **Toys**

Students may not bring toys to school. Books or other educational materials that might interest classmates are welcome and should be coordinated with the teacher. Be sure the child's name is marked on books and artifacts.

### **Visitors' Procedures**

We welcome and encourage family members and other visitors to GMS to observe our classrooms, and to participate in the functioning of our school community. However, to maintain a safe campus for our students and staff and to have a record of all campus visitors in the event of an emergency, we ask everyone to abide by the following procedures:

#### *During School Hours (7:30 a.m. to 6 p.m.)*

All visitors (which include parents, guardians, family members, and persons authorized to pick up students as listed in Magnus Health) on campus must sign in at the Office upon arrival to GMS and must obtain and wear a visitor's badge. Entrance to the classrooms, observation areas, meeting rooms, and outdoor campus will not be permitted without a badge. At Pick-up and Drop-off: Signing in and wearing a badge is not required for parents, guardians and authorized persons participating in student drop-off or pick-up. Additionally, all families enrolled in CASA must have their child signed-out when leaving CASA.

All individuals participating in school tours should obtain a visitor's badge through the GMS employee leading the tour.

On occasions when a student must leave the campus at an irregular time (e.g., for a doctor's appointment, for a personal early dismissal, etc.), the students must be signed out through the Office. Parents, guardians and authorized persons should contact the School ahead of time to inform administration and classroom teachers of the need to pick the student up during the school day.

Parents, guardians and authorized persons of students in Toddler, Primary, and Lower Elementary must physically sign students out in the Office when picking up or dropping off students during nonscheduled pick-up and drop-off times. Students in Upper Elementary and Junior High may sign the form themselves and wait for their ride in the Office.

## Section 18: Family Participation

### The Critical Role of Families in Our Community

Students flourish when families are invested in their educational process. Families are essential resources and critical components of any educational community. Independent schools like Greensboro Montessori School (the “School” or “GMS”) especially depend upon having involved families who provide support, volunteer their time, and create home environments for their students that mesh with the mission of the School to educate the whole child.

### Greensboro Montessori School Community Association (GMSCA)

All GMS parent(s)/guardian(s), extended family members, teachers, and staff are considered members of the GMS Community Association (“GMSCA”) and are invited to participate in the association’s activities. Opportunities for involvement abound!

Mission Statement of the GMSCA: *The GMSCA is a dynamic, inclusive organization that strives to enrich the school experience for all. We foster a vibrant school community and serve to bridge and connect home and school while supporting the mission and goals of GMS.*

The GMS Community Association (GMSCA):

- Collaborates to respond to community needs;
- Communicates openly and regularly;
- Facilitates opportunities for cultural and social gatherings;
- Supports volunteerism;
- And cultivates an outreach and support network for GMS families.

The work of the GMSCA is guided collaboratively by a Steering Committee that meets monthly (or more often as needed) and includes coordinators of the various GMSCA initiatives, representatives from each division (including Toddler, Primary, Lower Elementary, Upper Elementary and Junior High), and members of the GMS staff. The family relations coordinator is the School’s liaison to the GMSCA.

Each division is represented on the steering committee by a division coordinator, who serves as a liaison to room parents volunteering at each division. The steering committee also appoints volunteer coordinators in the following areas: family outreach, community events, finance/fundraising and teacher appreciation.

The steering committee is facilitated by a lead coordinator(s) who holds the global view of all GMSCA activities to promote interdependence and cohesiveness in the work of each initiative toward the vision of the GMSCA.

Some regular activities and events sponsored or supported by the GMSCA include: new family welcome and outreach events, community service opportunities, the Fall Festival, fall and spring book fairs, the International Fair, and teacher appreciation events.

### Parenting Education

The School sponsors educational meetings for families throughout the school year. Each event has a particular focus such as curriculum, discipline, or Montessori at home. The dates of the specific events will be announced through the school calendar and school newsletters.

Curriculum Meetings are scheduled for each division at the beginning of every school year and at subsequent times throughout the year. These meetings are conducted by teachers and designed to help families gain a better understanding of the various facets of the philosophy and curriculum, how specific materials are used in the classroom, and how families can complement the curriculum with activities at home. Additional informational meetings are also held during the year for families whose children will be advancing to the next division the following year.

## Our Traditions

Another important way to participate and engage our community is to participate in school-wide events and traditions. Being a school that serves 18-month-olds to 15-year-olds, we naturally have many traditions and events that are focused on different grades. Some events are school-wide events that we warmly encourage all families to attend, as your schedules allow. Others are more division-specific events, but it is still good for younger-grade families to be aware of what will be next for your children as they progress through the school.

We encourage you to keep an eye out for our communications about events and attend those that you can. Below is an overview of some of our more special, recurring community events, as well as some of our traditions that may have names or titles that warrant a bit of an explanation.

- **Hopes, Dreams, and Concerns Parent Conferences (August).** Hopes, Dreams, and Concerns conferences take place at the start of each school year between families and teachers. They are designed to help new families and teachers get to know each other, and to allow teachers to reconnect with returning families. The conferences are an opportunity for families to share their hopes and objectives for their child/ren for the upcoming year and discuss any concerns they may have. We send a link to an electronic sign-up system for individual 30-minute sessions.
- **Coffee Socials (Throughout year).** The GMSCA periodically sponsors coffee socials to allow families and staff to get a chance to connect over coffee and continental breakfasts. They usually begin after standard drop-off times and last an hour or so. It's a great opportunity to get to know fellow members of the community.
- **Junior High Land Weeks (Throughout year).** What is The Land? Our land immersion program features students spending a week, approximately every sixth week, on our 40-acre Land Campus in Oak Ridge to have curriculum extensions and community and personal development experiences. The program began in 2004 and now features a project based learning framework and involves students using and helping manage the 37-acre property as well as the 12-bedroom bunk-house. Students in Primary, Lower and Upper Elementary also spend some time on the land throughout the year.
- **Junior High Microeconomy (Throughout year).** Junior High students engage in real-life work where they break into working committees and teams throughout the years, have CFO's and CEO's, and completely purposeful work for their communities. They raise chickens and sell eggs to the community, they host a winter marketplace for the entire School, they run a farm-to-fork lunch program on selected days of the year, and they run a farm stand called Maria's Market to sell vegetables to the community. Students are responsible for managing the work and the finances of this microeconomy. Each year it takes a slightly different shape.
- **Fall Festival (October).** The annual Fall Festival is our biggest community event of the year. Families and community partners convene on campus for a Sunday afternoon of fun on the field. With music playing in the background, kids enjoy activity stations like inflatables, arts and crafts, face painting, yard games, a cider press, a dunking booth, and more. The Fall Festival is organized and hosted annually by the GMSCA.
- **Community Garden Workdays (Fall & Spring).** Come explore the GMS gardens! Our Environmental Education team will lead us in a couple of garden projects and shares tips

for starting or working in your own garden at home. Even the littlest helpers enjoy these days.

- **Evening in the Pumpkin Patch (October).** The Junior High microeconomy organizes this fall every around Halloween time. This is an event for the whole family, including Halloween-themed games and activities, costumes, and of course pumpkins!
- **Grateful Gathering (November).** This is a school-wide community meal prepared and shared together for all students Toddlers through Junior High. While it is a student only event and families are not invited, we still wanted to make families aware of this special meal.
- **Junior High Marketplace (December).** Each year Junior High students take part in a microeconomy project that culminates with a marketplace. Each team of students develops a small business plan with a variety of hand-made products. They enact the true life of an entrepreneur: conduct research and development for their products; rent a storefront; pay utilities and taxes; develop marketing strategies; repay their start up loans; and calculate their profit margin. Families and students are encouraged to participate and get some holiday shopping done!
- **Spiral Dance (January).** Our entire school community is invited to join in this celebration in honor of the Winter Solstice! Bundle up and join us on our school field (weather permitting)! A Spiral Dance involves everyone joining hands and following the leader in a counter-clockwise direction. As the leader comes near to closing the huge human circle, the leader changes direction and begins moving in a clockwise direction while facing outward toward the rest of the dancers. By continuing to move in this formation, every member in the line will eventually be face to face with every other dancer, offering an opportunity for well wishes and a smile.
- **Fare Faire Production (January).** Upper Elementary students are engaged in creating a drama production each year. They are the actors, directors, costume managers, set designers, and fill all roles associated with the program. Families with child/ren in any grade are welcome to come to the evening performance.
- **Grow with Us: Exploring the Kindergarten and Elementary Years (January).** Please join us for a special evening designed for families transitioning into Kindergarten, Lower Elementary, and Upper Elementary in the following school year. The night will begin with dinner in the Gym, followed by custom, faculty-led break-out sessions in our Primary, Lower Elementary and Upper Elementary classrooms.
- **Green & White Bash (Spring).** The Green & White Bash is our annual spring gala and fundraising event. This evening event provides an opportunity for the adults to get to socialize and support our School! Proceeds from the event directly benefit the School's most valued members: students and faculty. The more we can support these individuals, the better prepared they will be to sustain each other and our community. Proceeds from the Green & White Bash support these invaluable community members in the form of financial assistance for students and professional development for faculty.
- **International Fair (Spring).** We welcome families from all cultures and ethnicities, with over 20 different languages spoken in our families' homes and people of color representing nearly 30% of our student population. The International Fair is typically an annual celebration of this rich diversity. The International Fair includes classroom presentations and an all-school assembly, most often with a guest performer.
- **Grandparents and Special Friends Day (April).** Calling all GMS Grandparents and Special Friends! Come and spend the morning with us! Enjoy coffee and a presentation in our Gym followed by spending time with your grandchild or special friend in their classroom.
- **End of Year Trips (May).** Students in third through ninth grades all participate in end-of-year overnight trips. From Lower Elementary's three-day trip to Earthshine

environmental trip to Upper Elementary's five-day trip to our nation's capital to Junior High's nine-day trip to Costa Rica or eight-day trip to Arizona, our students go where the learning is on these multi-day learning expeditions.

- **Council of Elders Interviews for Graduating Eighth and Ninth Graders (June)**. For those who might want an opportunity to get to know our oldest students more personally and imagine how a Montessori education can help prepare your own child for the future, we encourage you to volunteer to be an interviewer on the Council of Elders. The format is designed such that each student meets one on one with a panel of three to five adults for 30-40 minutes to answer questions and describe the important life lessons they have learned during their educational journey at GMS. Contact Nancy Hofer, associate head of school, if you would like more information or would like to participate.
- **Moving Up Ceremony (June)**. All are welcome and encouraged to attend our annual Moving Up Ceremony in the Gym, which honors every child who is advancing to a new division (Toddler to Primary, Primary to Lower Elementary, Lower Elementary to Upper Elementary, Upper Elementary to Junior High, as well as graduating Junior High students). All students and families are welcome to participate in the assembly.
- **Graduation (June)** The Junior High graduation is a joyful and emotional event, showcasing the talents, accomplishments and personalities of each of our graduates, which includes both eighth graders and ninth graders depending on when they choose to transition to high school. Each student will have a faculty introduction and then a personal reflection on their time at GMS. Everyone is welcome to celebrate and honor these students as they say good-bye to GMS and move forward into the next phase of their school lives.

With all these procedures, guidelines, and policies about the day-to-day operation of our School, in the end, we can promise you that we are going to know your child, love your child, and partner with them and you to ensure their growth and development.

Thank you for choosing our School.