



SHERWOOD MONTESSORI

Family Handbook

2011-2012

June 27, 2011

Dear Families of Sherwood Montessori,

This is the second ever volume of the Sherwood Family Handbook. Thank you to all who gave their input and helped me to appreciate what parents and community members were looking forward to seeing in terms of contents. Much of what is included in this document is an overview of procedures and policies. More details can be seen in our Board approved policies and in our Charter; both are available online at our website and in hard copy form at the school site. This will be a living document, open to changes, additions, and deletions as our community needs dictate.

Please do familiarize yourself and your children with the contents of this handbook. We would like to have all students sign and return the bottom of this page as you turn in your beginning-of-the-year paperwork. By doing so, we will promote a more cohesive community in which all members are informed of the expectations and procedures in place at Sherwood.

Warm regards,

Michelle Yezbick
Director, Sherwood Montessori

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My family and I have gone over the contents of the Sherwood Family Handbook. I know that if I have any questions about what we have read, I can ask my teacher or Michelle for help in understanding it. The teachers and staff of Sherwood can count on my cooperation.

Signed,

your name

your proud parent and/or guardian

Contents

Contact Information.....	1
Our Mission Statement.....	2
A (Very) Short History of Sherwood Montessori.....	2
The Elementary Curriculum.....	3
The Middle School Curriculum: Erdkinder.....	3
Attendance.....	4
Birthdays.....	6
Bullying.....	7
Cell Phones.....	8
Child Care.....	8
Clothing.....	8
Communication.....	8
Conferences (Fall & Spring).....	9
Diversity.....	9
Field Trips.....	10
Grievances.....	10
Guidance and Discipline.....	10
Independence.....	12
Injuries.....	13
Lunch.....	13
Medications at School.....	14
Observations.....	14
Orientation for Parents of Students Attending School For the First Time.....	15
Parking.....	17
Recommended Reading on the Montessori Method.....	17
Report Cards.....	18
Safety.....	18
SBIT.....	18
Sherwood Montessori Board Meetings.....	19
SMPO.....	19
Toys and Electronics.....	20
Visitation and Office Hours.....	20
Volunteering.....	20

Appendix

Incident Report Form

Parking Map

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Our Mission Statement

The mission of Sherwood Montessori is to educate K-8 students of the greater Chico area by providing Montessori education within the context of **mutual respect and joy**. The focus of the education will be on **engaging critical thinking and fostering empathy**, and developing the skills needed to become **competent, responsible citizens** who are **life-long learners** and **skillful problem solvers**. The school will serve our community by providing a rich and supportive educational environment for children based upon the philosophy of Maria Montessori which allows each child to reach his or her own potential academically, personally, and socially and will focus on **educating the whole child intellectually, physically, and psychologically**. The methodology used will develop a firm foundation for the students, and will emphasize **ethics, initiative, persistence, and self-confidence**.

This mission will be accomplished by a concerted **community-based effort** between the school, the parents, and the individual child.

Core Values:

To successfully implement and sustain this mission, the school will be founded on the following core values:

- To creatively apply the Montessori method toward reaching high academic standards, while emphasizing core subjects
- To maintain a diverse total school population through inclusive mixed-aged, mentor based classrooms that welcome all students
- To place emphasis on collaboration, problem-solving, and self-directed goal-setting for each Montessori student according to developmental readiness
- To nurture a commitment toward sustainability and environmental awareness locally and globally, both in Chico and in the greater world
- To apply firm standards of conduct, emphasizing mutual respect, honesty, and courtesy
- To employ creative, passionate, and engaged teachers who are committed to the Montessori philosophy
- To nurture high parental involvement and collaboration in all areas of education and Governance

A (Very) Short History of Sherwood Montessori

Sherwood Montessori was started when a group of parents saw the need for a Montessori approach to education in the Chico community. Our current Board Chair, Russell Shapiro, wrote the school's Charter Petition and it was approved by the Chico Unified School District Board of Education on December 2, 2009. Planning for the school's opening began immediately and Sherwood opened its doors to close to 100 students on August 25, 2010. The Mission Statement above represents the dream that we have had the privilege to see realized. Our history is just beginning, and we, the educators, parents, families, and community members will be the authors of it. With the guidance of the Mission Statement and the inspiration that comes from wanting a better world for our children, Sherwood will be shaped into the kind of school of which we can say: *I wish I had gone to a school like that.*

The Elementary Curriculum

The Montessori Elementary curriculum at Sherwood includes the traditional Montessori lessons and methodology supplemented with content needed for learners to be successful in the twenty-first century. Instruction is tailored for each individual learner. With multiple age groupings, children are able to move forward in areas of strength and receive support in areas of relative weakness all within their primary learning environment. The curriculum across subjects moves from content and skills presented and practiced first in the concrete realm before moving gradually to the abstract realm, supporting and ensuring mastery at each stage.

The classroom materials have been carefully designed for the success of the learner. They are attractive and inviting, made of natural materials, and deliberately planned in their ability to create an area of focus for the learner as she or he constructs understanding through multiple sensory modalities. The materials and learning environment have been planned with the perspective of the learner in mind. Thus, they are developmentally appropriate, appealing, orderly, and include “control of error” which enables the children to develop independence. It is not necessary for an adult to point out mistakes; the materials and environment facilitate the child’s ability to self-correct. A sense of ownership of one’s work and one’s classroom develops and the locus of control shifts from the adult to the child. The result is true emancipating education and the nurturing of lifelong learning.

The Middle School Curriculum: Erdkinder

Maria Montessori outlined a compelling approach to teaching adolescents that she called “Erdkinder”, German for “Earth Children”. With the Erdkinder approach, kids are presented with a real world setting in which they construct their education based on the needs the environment provides. An urban setting might find the students running a grocery store or a bed and breakfast. A rural setting would likely be a farm. At Sherwood, we have a garden to table to market program in which the students grow food, prepare food, and sell food for donations to charity at our Friday Farmers Market.

The question often posed by adolescents: “Why do I have to learn this?” is answered before it is asked. The need to use the correct amount of nutrients for growing plants sets up a lesson on operations with decimals, for example. The changing needs of the plant throughout its life cycle brings in the periodic table of the elements and botany. The need to express the beauty one is experiencing calls for language and fine arts. Questions for research present themselves naturally and the motivation to learn the academic skills needed for authentic research follow.

As with the elementary curriculum, there is an emphasis on individualizing each child's program. Every student at Sherwood Montessori is educated with the preparation for success in high school and beyond as the goal. Our work is not limited to preparing the child as an academic, although this certainly is our responsibility. We also see our work as preparing children with all skills needed to be successful in the twenty-first century. Please see the following objectives for an overview of the skills and goals that fall within the scope of our program.

General Educational Objectives of the Montessori Program

Physical Skills

- Developing control and mastery of the body's movement
- Developing healthy lifestyles and an appreciation of maintaining a healthy body
- Developing fine motor coordination

Physical Goal

- Learn sports and athletic skills that can be enjoyed into adulthood
- Master fine motor control necessary for writing and other skills

Emotional Skills

- An awareness of one's own feelings
- Communication of one's feelings to others
- Ability to peacefully problem-solve conflicts

Emotional Goals

- Develop empathy
- Develop self-confidence
- Develop healthy self-esteem
- Develop an appreciation of one's connection to with others

Intellectual Skills

- The mastery of all academic and thinking skills needed for lifelong learning

Intellectual Goal

- To become an independent, self-directed learner

Attendance

Sherwood Montessori is committed to delivering a high quality, authentic Montessori education by a concerted community-based effort between the school, the parents, and the individual child. Families put their trust in us that we will adhere to this commitment just as we put our trust in families that they will do the same. Regular attendance is essential for children to succeed in school. A child who is excessively absent will miss out on community building and social opportunities that cannot be recreated. Excessive tardiness can have a similar effect on a child's educational experience. Late arrival is also disruptive to the class as children stop their activities to wonder why their peer was late. *Please call the school if you know your child will miss school for any reason.* Office staff is instructed to call the parents of any child who is not present at school if we have not had a call, email or note sent that notifies us of the absence. The safety of the children is a primary concern at Sherwood and these calls home are to ensure that safety.

Arrival

The Montessori classroom is a structured environment, with the early part of the day being reserved for organizing activities and planning the work period. Late arrival interferes with the community as a whole and prevents the child from participating in cooperative learning experiences. Please allow sufficient time for your child to arrive at school and not feel rushed. The feelings of the child as he enters class can set the tone for the day.

Between 8:15 a.m. and 8:30 a.m., Sherwood Montessori staff is available to monitor the playground as the students arrive. Please refer to the traffic map for details about where to park and where to walk.

Children arriving *after 8:30 a.m.* are tardy; if the child arrives after attendance sheets have been collected by the office they *must be signed in at the front office*. Please park and walk your child in through the main entrance and sign him or her in at the front office. Your child will be given a tardy slip to hand to her or his teacher as a means of communicating that late arrival procedures were followed. This is not used as a punitive measure, but to facilitate safety procedures. When a child is not present at school and no call has been made to the school to explain the absence, a call home is made to determine the whereabouts of the child. This call can be very alarming for parents if they expect that the child is at school! Office staff has no way of knowing if a child arrives tardy without the above procedure being followed.

Dismissal

Dismissal is at 3:00p.m. Monday-Friday, excepting Wednesday when dismissal is at 2:00 p.m. There is a 15 minute grace period for pick-ups after school. After 3:15 p.m. (2:15 p.m. On Wednesdays), children who have not yet been picked up will be signed in to after school care and families will be responsible for paying child care rates.

Early Out Procedures

When it is necessary to take your child out of school before dismissal time, please come to the front office to sign your child out. You will be given an early out form to hand to the classroom teacher or teacher's aide to facilitate communication that she or he has been signed out in the office.

Absences

Education Code Section 48260 defines a "truant" as any pupil absent without valid excuse 3 full days in one school year or tardy or absent for more than any 30-minute period during the school day without a valid excuse on 3 occasions in one school year, or any combination thereof. Education Code Section 48205 provides the following absences as "excused"- illness; quarantine; medical, dental, optometric, or chiropractic appointment; funeral services of a member of the immediate family; and for justifiable personal reasons. Inasmuch as class participation is an integral part of students' learning experiences, parents/guardians and students shall be encouraged to schedule medical appointments outside of school hours. Student absence for religious instruction or participation in religious exercises away from school property may be considered excused subject to law and administrative regulations.

Most students will have times when it will be necessary to be absent from school. It is important for sick children to stay home to recuperate. **We are not equipped to accommodate children with illnesses while they convalesce.** Following is a list of conditions that warrant an excused absence due to illness:

1. A temperature of more than 100°F orally
2. Nausea or vomiting
3. Stomachache
4. Diarrhea

5. Persistent cough
6. Earache
7. Thick yellowish or greenish discharge from nose
8. Sore throat
9. Rash or infection of the skin
10. Red or pink eyes

Following are guidelines for determining when it is appropriate for a student to return to school after an illness:

- Bronchitis: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more
- Chicken Pox: when lesions are crusted over (approximately one week)
- Colds: no presence of yellow or green mucus, which may be related to an infection (may return if there is no elevated temperature, sore throat, or severe cough)
- Conjunctivitis: when discharge from eyes has stopped; for bacterial conjunctivitis, usually 24 hours after starting antibiotic eye drops; see physician regarding viral infections
- Diarrhea: free of diarrhea for 24 hours or more if caused by illness and not medication
- Ear Infection: on antibiotics for 24 hours or more
- Fever: fever-free for at least 24 hours (readings are generally lower in morning)
- Strep Throat: after treatment with antibiotics for at least 24 hours
- Vomiting: free from vomiting for 24 hours or more

Family vacations are not valid excuses for missing school. Please schedule your vacations during school vacation times. If an extended absence is unavoidable, please contact the Director to see if an Independent Study Contract can be implemented.

Birthdays

Each child's birthday can be shared at school with a special celebration. Celebrations are unique to each classroom, changing at each level. Usually the child brings a treat for the celebrations. Please communicate with your child's teacher about allergies your child's classmates may have and about what types of treats are allowed. Food choices are a very personal and sensitive topic, and it can be challenging for a school to accommodate a diverse set of beliefs from the community. For children, the bottom line is that it is sad when they can't have a treat that is brought or if their treat cannot be served because of allergens or high sugar content. Communication between the school and parents can eliminate these disappointments. Teachers can give parents a list of ideas for low or no sugar refreshments for these occasions.

If a child is having a birthday party outside of school, we ask that parents distribute invitations through the mail. Not being invited to a birthday party can be devastating to a child and disruptive to the learning environment, therefore no birthday party invitations will be distributed at school unless the entire class is invited to the party. If you are unable to obtain an address for a student in the class, you may ask the office for a list of contact information for the class. Some parents have opted out of sharing this information and we will be unable to give contact information for these students.

Bullying

Maria Montessori developed her approach to education with nothing short of world peace as its ultimate goal. At Sherwood Montessori, we uphold this high expectation by creating classrooms and a school as a whole that reflects our belief in this possibility.

To achieve a climate of peace, joy, and respect, high expectations for positive behaviors will be the norm and problematic behaviors will be dealt with firmly and consistently.

Bullying may be relational and/or physical and demonstrates an observable **pattern of behaviors**. **Bullying will under no circumstances be tolerated by any person, adult or child, and will be dealt with decisively.** Relational bullying can include:

- verbal putdowns
- threats of exclusion
- tattling
- boasting and drawing disparaging comparisons
- talking behind one's back with other students
- internet bullying
- threats of physical violence
- threatening non-verbal behaviors such as glaring at someone
- using one's physical size to intimidate
- pushing
- pulling
- pinching
- shoving
- tripping
- any other such means of exerting power and/or intimidation.

Instances of bullying behavior will be dealt with as they happen. Education and support will be provided to all students involved in a short and empathic manner. If additional support is required, the teacher(s), Director, and parent(s)/guardian(s) will develop and implement a plan. However, by responding **proactively** to these situations, the goal is to prevent unhealthy and conflictual dynamics between teacher, students, and parents.

Cell Phones

Children may bring cell phones to school provided they are turned off and remain out of students' hands until after school has been dismissed. The school cannot be held responsible for cell phones that are lost, stolen, or broken while on school grounds. Classroom teachers have the authority to collect cell phones during the instructional day and return them at the end of the day if needed.

Child Care

Sherwood Montessori provides child care for one hour before school starts in the morning (7:30 a.m.-8:30 a.m.) and up to three hours in the afternoon/evening after school (3:00 p.m.-6:00 p.m.). The aftercare program includes healthy snack time, time to do homework/quietly look at books, outside time, and activities such as arts and crafts. The rate for child care is \$5 per hour. Families will be billed at the beginning of each month for the hours used in the previous month. For families that qualify for free lunch there is no charge for child care.

Clothing

It is recommended that children wear comfortable and washable clothing that will enable them to participate freely in the many activities of the day. Children in the elementary and middle school levels should wear comfortable athletic shoes on their Physical Education class day/s, no boots or sandals. To prevent loss, jackets and sweatshirts should be labeled with the child's name. There is a Lost and Found container in the front office; parents are advised to check there routinely for their child's belongings. **Items in the Lost and Found will be sent to a charitable agency at Thanksgiving Break, Spring Break, and Summer Break.** Prior to these donations, lost and found items will be displayed for parents to peruse at arrival and dismissal times.

Communication

Your child's classroom teacher will be the source of answers for many questions that may arise throughout the school year. Be sure to determine with him or her when the best times to address questions are. Email is another way parents can communicate with school faculty. Lead teachers, office staff, and the director have email addresses: firstname@sherwoodmontessori.org

The Wednesday Envelope, parent/teacher conferences, parent nights, school newsletters, bulletin boards, and the events calendar on our website are some of the ways we keep parents notified of activities going on at the school. The Wednesday Envelope is distributed weekly to each family and includes important information. Parents should empty the envelope's contents completely and return the empty envelope to the classroom on Thursday.

When parents need to communicate regarding an issue that is happening at school, the appropriate individual needs to be identified. If the issue is a classroom related issue, the classroom teacher is the person with whom the communication needs to be addressed. All of

Sherwood's teachers are committed to providing a high quality Montessori education to each child. When there are problems, the teachers need them brought to their attention so they can be solved. Open communication is essential for this process.

If the issue is a school related issue, the Director is the individual with whom the communication should be addressed. Issues with school personnel, facilities, financial issues, and issues with other parents and family members are some examples. If a parent has first tried to resolve an issue with a teacher and is not satisfied with the outcome, then the Director is the appropriate person with which to communicate.

The Sherwood Montessori Board of Directors is available if issues are not resolved with the Director. Although our Board members have a commitment to helping Sherwood implement its mission, they are not involved in day to day operations and so are limited in their abilities to help with problem-solving.

Conferences (Fall & Spring)

Fall and Spring parent/teacher conferences are held each year. These conferences offer parents the opportunity to speak individually with their child's teacher, to hear about the child's progress and the teacher's goals for their child. Conferences are an opportunity for parents to give teachers additional information about their child. Please check the school calendar for the exact dates and keep this time available.

Diversity

Developing and maintaining a diverse student population is a priority for Sherwood Montessori. Being a successful person in the twenty-first century means having an appreciation for a variety of perspectives. It means being able to shift one's concept of etiquette and assess the appropriateness of one's behavior, discourse style, non-verbal communication, and a host of other facets of social interaction. Sherwood strives to be a welcoming environment to families from an array of cultural backgrounds.

Although you may assess our current population as being heavily European-American, and you would be correct, consider the ways that European-Americans are diverse within that large group. An Irish Catholic-American may have a very different set of values and customs from a Wiccan Australian-American, for example. Although both individuals may seem similar, there is a wealth of cultural differences between them that could offer opportunities for sharing different perspectives and creating flexible, tolerant, divergent thinkers. Sherwood is committed to increasing cultural diversity; we are also committed to acknowledging the diversity we have already. We encourage all families to explicitly teach what your home culture is and where it comes from to support us in our mission to prepare all our kids for success in a pluralistic society.

Field Trips

Excursions into the world beyond the classroom are an excellent way for Montessori students to extend and apply the learning they pursue in the classroom. Whole group field trips as well as smaller group excursions based on interest are encouraged. To drive on a field trip, drivers need to fill out a “Volunteer Driver Form” and attach a copy of proof of insurance. These are kept on file in the office for the school year. Each year a new form must be completed, but only one form per driver is needed regardless of how many children attend Sherwood.

Grievances

Differences and disagreements are a part of life and Sherwood Montessori recognizes the need for healthy communication and a positive and proactive way to handle grievances that is aligned with our Mission Statement.

If parent(s) have a complaint, we ask that parent(s) report their concerns directly to the school personnel concerned, and discuss these concerns in a private meeting, preferably within 24 to 48 hours. The School Director shall be made aware of these concerns by the parents and/or individual if they are unresolved. If, in discussion with the School Director, the parent wishes to file a formal grievance, proper paperwork will be provided. The paperwork will become part of the permanent records of the school and will outline the issue and includes an appropriate timeline. The Director will meet with those filing within five working days to review the complaint. The Director will work with the parent or guardian, student, teacher, aides, or other employees whose participation is relevant in order to resolve the concern. The Director will provide a written response within 10 working days of the meeting. If the parent or guardian is not satisfied with the outcome or decision by the Director regarding the complaint, they have the right to file a written appeal with the Director within five days of receiving the response. The Board of Directors will serve as an appeals body if a complaint is not resolved. The Board will respond within 30 days of receiving the appeal. If a parent has a complaint with the Director of the school, a letter would be sent to the Board of Directors for the administrative remedy to be followed.

The Board prohibits retaliation against complainants. The Board of Directors will not investigate anonymous complaints unless it so desires. The steps above outline the process for filing a complaint and parents are expected to exhaust all the steps in this administrative remedy before pursuing other action.

Guidance and Discipline

Guidelines

The Montessori classroom provides a variety of activities from which to choose. Once a child becomes acclimated to the classroom, her or his concentration on the absorbing tasks enable the teacher to maintain a comfortable hum of activity. A combination of group and

individual attention is provided. Children are free to move about the environment provided they follow Sherwood's philosophy of mutual respect which includes respect for self, respect for others, and respect for the environment. Occasionally, a child may disrupt the normalized atmosphere; when this occurs, the teacher is responsible for redirecting the child's behavior in a positive manner. If unacceptable behavior continues, the following measures will be taken:

Observe - The teacher will make every attempt to see the situation from the child's point of view. At this point the teacher will ask the child questions to try to resolve the conflict. S/he will always involve the feelings of the child when trying to find a solution.

Discuss - Dr. Montessori believed a child to be capable of reason at an early age. The teacher will attempt to ascertain the cause of the child's acting out. On occasion, a parent may receive an Incident Report, which is intended to keep you apprised of any situations which have occurred. After three incident reports, parents are required to attend a conference with their child's teacher and the Director. Certain actions, such as willful fighting, will require a parent to be called to come to the school to take the child home for the day. Usually, a conference will follow such measures.

Conference - Continued disruption will require a discussion as to the nature of the misbehavior. Communication between parents, teacher, and child is essential. The aim of these conferences is to suggest the best ways in which to deal with the behavior and gain cooperation from the child. Information shared at these conferences will help to better understand the child's perception.

Referral- When parent conferences fail to successfully resolve a situation, we can recommend an appropriate professional on a private basis, or direct you to services offered by our contracted special education service providers. These professionals include, but are not limited to, the following: speech therapist, school resource specialist, and school child psychologist.

Dismissal - When all efforts previously stated prove unsuccessful, and we sincerely believe that our program is unable to meet the needs of the child, we may require that a child be dismissed from the school. Please understand that the well-being of your child, as well as his or her classmates, is our primary concern. Every effort possible will be taken to avoid this final measure. Parents have a legal right to appeal a decision to expel a student and details can be read in our Charter.

Guidelines for Behavior

While we have every confidence that your child will handle herself/himself appropriately at school, the following guidelines will let you know how we deal with certain situations. Please take time to familiarize yourself and your child with these simple rules and courtesies.

Classroom:

Each classroom has rules that are chosen in collaboration with the children/teens. The following are typical of rules that are agreed upon in Sherwood classrooms:

- Respect and take care of equipment and materials.
- Treat others the way you would want to be treated.
- Walk and talk softly inside.
- Listen, without interruption, when others are speaking and working.

Consequences:

1. Receive redirection.

2. Additional lesson given to show appropriate behavior.
3. Seated alone at a table within classroom.
4. Seated alone under supervision in the office.
5. Incident report sent home regarding the behavior.
6. Parent will be called to pick up child and conference will be scheduled.

Lunchtime:

- Wash hands before eating
- Remain seated while eating.
- Eat only your own food; share conversation not food.
- If you finish eating, you may raise your hand to be dismissed by an adult. Your area must be clean. You will need to stay at the lunch table for the first 15-20 minutes of the lunch period even if you finish early.
- Use the outside bathrooms during lunch and during the afternoon break.
- Listen to the adults the first time.
- Candy may not be eaten at school.

Consequences:

1. Receive redirection.
2. Receive lesson on proper dining manners.
3. Parent will be notified if lunch is not appropriate or if the child is not eating.

Playground:

- Stay in the limits of the fenced playground.
- No willful physical harm to others.
- Children/teens may use the bathrooms outside, near the lunch tables. Kindergarten and first graders may use the bathroom by the front office.
- Respectful behavior is expected.
- Playground equipment will be used as intended and returned to proper place when finished.
- Throw only balls, and only to a partner who is ready. Keep balls away from church buildings and off of roofs.
- Monkey bars and slides are one way routes.
- Rough housing and play fighting is unsafe, and so is not allowed.

Consequences:

1. Receive redirection.
2. Spend 5 minutes sitting out.
3. Child will walk with the teacher for a specified time limit.
4. Incident report sent home to the parent.
5. Removal from playground, under supervision in the office.
6. Parent will be called to pick up child from school.

Independence

Fostering independence in students is one of the pillars of the Montessori approach to education. Children are taught to be problem-solvers who can figure out solutions with resourcefulness, not being overly reliant on adults. This independence as a goal is considered when teachers plan

lessons, set up their classrooms, and put classroom procedures in place.

Although independence is a goal for all students, Sherwood teachers understand that children come to school with a variety of skills and background experiences in being independent learners. High expectations are maintained for all learners, and appropriate, individualized scaffolds are put in place to ensure that these expectations are met. When a child is unable to meet the expectation, the blame is not put on the child. Accommodations will be made to help the child continue to approach the goal of independence.

To acknowledge that independence is a cornerstone of the Montessori method of education without also considering the value of interdependence would give a skewed picture of our work. Montessori valued interdependence highly; the multi-age classrooms are a testament to that. Montessori felt that older children would gain leadership skills and responsibility by being in mentor roles while younger children would gain motivation and resourcefulness. She also developed lessons in the cultural areas of the curriculum, particularly geography, to show the connectedness of all people. Thus, interdependence as well as independence has its place in our school.

Injuries

Sherwood staff has been trained in first aid and CPR. If your child is hurt at school, appropriate care will be given. If the injury results in a bump or mark, an injury report will be sent home to inform parents of the nature of the injury. If your child needs to be picked up from school for medical attention, school staff will call all numbers on the Emergency Form until an adult can be reached. *Please keep us updated regarding changes to phone numbers and contact information.* For serious injuries, staff will call 911 and see that the injured child is transported to the emergency room for treatment.

Lunch

Lunchtime will be at 11:30 a.m. for kids in grades 4-8. For kids in grades 1-3, lunchtime is at 12:00 p.m. Lunchtime rules are reviewed with all students and are listed in the *Guidance and Discipline* section of this handbook. School lunches can be purchased through the Healthy Lunch and Lifestyle Project (HELP) and can be ordered online at www.helpshasta.com. Families without Internet connection are welcome to use a computer at the school; come in to the office and we will set you up on a machine. The Healthy Lunches Program is committed to using whole grains and pastas, whole fruits and vegetables, and lean meats. Local and organic ingredients are used as much as possible while also balancing the need to keep the lunches affordable for families. Families that qualify can receive free or reduced lunches by filling out an application, available in the office.

If you choose to send lunch from home, please remember to include an ice pack for days when the weather is hot. Please do not pack candy or sweets in your child's lunch. Caffeinated beverages are allowed only with authorization from your child's physician.

Medications at School

School staff is able to treat injuries that occur at school with ice, soap and water, and bandages. No other medications are administered unless an "Authorization To Administer Medication" is on file. If your child needs medicine administered at school, please contact the office to receive this form which will need to be filled by a doctor. Children who need to take medication come to the office where medication is kept in a locked cabinet.

Observations

Parent observations in Montessori classrooms usually begin in November, after the children have had an opportunity to establish community norms and a sense of ownership over the classroom. After this period of what Montessori called "normalization" occurs, parents are welcome and encouraged to observe. Please plan these observations in advance with your child's teacher and familiarize yourself with the observation guidelines.

Observation guidelines

- Sign in as a visitor in the school office.
- Limit your observation time to about 30 minutes.
- Remain quietly in the chair provided for you.
- If a child approaches you, answer any comment or question briefly. Please do not engage the children in conversation or ask them to demonstrate activities.
- Please keep in mind that your child can respond to your presence in a variety of ways. Therefore, do not expect this to be a typical day for your child, but rather a chance to see some of your child's activities and a view of how the classroom functions as a whole.
- Make note of any questions that arise during your observation and arrange a time to meet with your teacher to discuss your observations.

In order to make your visit more meaningful, here are some questions to consider as you observe your child:

- What kinds of activities is your child choosing?
- Does he/she choose activities independently?
- Does he/she use the materials with care?
- Does he/she complete the activity and return it to the shelf properly?
- Is he/she working with focus and concentration?
- Does he/she work through difficulties or do they frustrate easily?
- Are her/his movements controlled and settled?
- Does he/she seek help when needed?
- How does he/she interact with the other children?
- Does he/she respect the work of others?

Does he/she participate in group activities?
Does he/she work cooperatively with other children?

In addition to observing your child, take a few minutes to also observe the classroom community as a whole. Look for:

- The variety of activities that are in use
- The interactions between the adults and the children
- The balance of individual and small group activities
- Instances of helpfulness, whether spontaneous or suggested by an adult
- Examples of leadership – children helping other children

Orientation for Parents of Students Attending School for the First Time

Most children want to come to school, but feeling anxious about new experiences is usually part of the emotions a child will experience. It can also be difficult for a parent to separate from his or her child for the first time. The following is meant as a help to ease the transition for both parents and children.

Readiness to Start School

Our teachers are focused on knowing your child as a whole, unique individual. Whether they are “academically ready” for kindergarten is not a primary concern. Knowing ones colors, numbers, letters, or shapes is not a prerequisite for starting school. We are prepared to meet your child wherever she or he is in terms of academic background knowledge. Avoid statements about academic preparedness that might induce anxiety such as, “You need to learn your shapes so you are ready for school.” Teachers appreciate help in preparing the child to be successful socially and behaviorally. Children need to be ready to learn to share, to take turns, to solve problems peacefully, and to talk about their feelings. It is also helpful if they have had some help in being aware of their voice volume and body movements and the need to adapt these in indoor and outdoor environments.

Going to School

Here are some skills that your child will be developing right away:

1. Keeping track of belongings. (School provides specific storage areas. You keep track of your child’s keeping track of their clothes, shoes, etc.)
2. Understanding order. (Putting things back, having to take turns...you can encourage the same habits at home.)
3. Doing things for oneself. (Dressing oneself and taking care of personal hygiene etc., are skills which will come out of the necessity in a classroom setting. Children are usually motivated to learn these and become more independent as they observe older children accomplishing them.)
4. Sharing an adult.
5. Inner controls related to environment. (Child learns to observe the limits and expected behaviors of the environment and the community because s/he wants to belong.)

6. Development of language. (New experiences will broaden your child's vocabulary.)
7. Desire to work. (School provides opportunities for social comparison which often translates to a desire to work to gain new skills.)

Being Aware of Your Feelings

Below are some feelings you may be experiencing.

1. Concern about being accepted and liked in the school community.
2. You may feel loss. Indeed, you are losing time with your child, but you are gaining the opportunity to broaden your child's world, and you will always be your child's first teacher.
3. You may feel anticipation for the adventures ahead.

Try to focus on #3 and downplay #1 & 2.

Some Handy Responses

If your child says: I want you to come into school and be with me.

You might say: This school is for children like you, it is not a school for grownups.

If your child says: The playground is scary.

You might say: Yes, when things are new they can be scary. Soon it won't be new, and it won't seem scary to you anymore.

If your child says: I don't want to go to school.

You might say: You are a big boy/girl. You need to go to school.

- Don't over-discuss ahead of time.
- If there is an issue upon arrival, don't be hesitant and don't give a choice. Remain firm, loving, and calm.

Also Important to Note

1. Children do not always express the wide range of feelings they have when starting school. When asked about how school is going, they often say nothing or focus on one or two negative incidents. Parents should not always be literal about what a child shares regarding school. Much more is happening than they are expressing.
2. Most children understand that school is different and behave differently at school than they do at home. They are becoming members of the classroom and school community and this takes a great deal of effort at first. Your child may come home overtired at first while they make this adjustment. She may exhibit behaviors aberrant to their usual selves as she "lets her hair down" at home. Home is a safe place to blow off steam, and this should pass in time.
3. It takes some time for teachers to get to know your child as a learner. Expect that your child's teacher will focus on community building and teaching rules and procedures initially. This is time well spent that will ensure that more time can be used later to focus on individual academic plans. Your child's teacher will likely start with work that is very easy for him or her. Know that this is a wise teacher's move to build confidence in learners as more information about individual's skill levels is collected.

Parking

Please use the diagonal parking spaces adjacent to the street. The parking spots in the lot on the side closest to the school are for drop off/pick up. This becomes part of the playground during the afternoon break. Please do not park in the church parking lot which is the area from the fence to the street.

Recommended Reading on the Montessori Method

The books listed below are suggested for those interested in learning more about Dr. Maria Montessori, her method of learning, and the development of children. Some of these books are available in the school's lending library in the front lobby. Parents are welcome to borrow these books from the school.

Books by Dr. Maria Montessori:

- *The Absorbent Mind* - Dr. Montessori's comprehensive book on early childhood.
- *The Discovery of the Child* - Montessori concepts of education and the teaching materials.
- *The Secret of Childhood* - The child's role in society with focus on the child's spirituality.
- *Education and Peace* - A collection of speeches and essays by Maria Montessori on world peace.
- *Education for a New World* - This book discusses preparing the child for tomorrow's world.
- *To Educate the Human Potential* - The cosmic view of education beyond age 6 is the focus of this book.
- *The Formation of Man* - Montessori philosophy and her approach to world literacy.
- *From Childhood to Adolescence* - An overview of the different states of development through adolescence; includes the Erdkinder concept.

Books by other authors:

- *Maria Montessori: Her Life and Work* by E. M. Standing - A detailed account of the Montessori Method in theory and in practice.
- *Montessori: A Modern Approach* by Paula Polk Lillard - A good introduction to Montessori for parents, educators and all professionals working with children.
- *Montessori: The Science behind the Genius* by Dr. Angeline Lillard, professor of psychology at the University of Virginia. An academic work that connects modern research with the Montessori method.
- *Positive Discipline* by Jane Nelson, licensed marriage, family, and child therapist provides proven strategies for establishing and maintaining respectful, nurturing relationships using positive techniques.
- *Beyond Discipline: From Compliance to Community* by Alfie Kohn describes a discipline approach used in classrooms that uses a positive and cooperative approach

Report Cards

Our report cards were created with input gathered from multiple sources to ultimately provide parents with a clear, informative picture of their child's performance at school. Academic skills that are evaluated are from the California state standards. The Montessori philosophy seeks to educate the whole child and the reports are wider in scope than simply academics, therefore report cards contain information on social and emotional growth as well. Your child's teacher is the best source of information about the report cards and can answer any questions you may have.

Safety

The safety of the children, staff, and visitors at Sherwood Montessori is of vital importance. If you are interested in being a member of the Safety Committee, please see the Director. The Safety Committee will work with the Director, the Board, and the school's insurance carriers to continually improve the Safety Plan for the school.

Some ways parents can help keep Sherwood a safe place include:

- Reviewing school rules with children
- Notifying the school of any changes in medical conditions
- Driving slowly and defensively near the school
- Keeping contagious children home from school
- Encouraging children to go to the adults at school when they have a conflict they need help resolving
- Pointing out malfunction in equipment or hazards on or near the school site

SBIT

SBIT is an acronym for "School Based Intervention Team". Our SBIT will be called on to be a source of expertise whenever a student is not achieving up to her or his potential. Sherwood's SBIT is comprised of the student's teacher, the student's parent/s, special education providers, the Director of the school, and one full time teacher on staff. The process of formally identifying a child for a modification in academic services can begin with a parent, teacher, or any staff member expressing a concern for a child. Concerns can be academic or emotional in their scope. Once the concern is expressed, the SBIT will meet to identify possible interventions for the student. After a determined amount of time with interventions in place, usually about six weeks, the SBIT will meet again to evaluate the effectiveness of the interventions. Interventions will be modified as needed until the child is able to function in way reflective of her or his potential.

Sherwood Montessori Board Meetings

Regular, Special, and Emergency Board meetings are open to the public and parents and community members are welcome to attend. There will also be a separate opportunity at Regular meetings for general public comment on all subjects relating to the school except personnel or potential liability issues. In accordance with the Brown Act, agendas for meetings will be posted 24 hours in advance of the meetings. Agendas are posted on the school website as well as physically at the school site. Meetings are usually held at the school and a change of venue will also be posted.

Community members who attend are invited to make comments related to items posted on the agenda. These comments must be limited in length and the Board will not respond. This may feel strange as we are used to two-way communication in most other settings; Board meetings are regulated by the Brown Act and use Robert's Rules of Order.

Occasionally, the Board may hold a special closed session. These meetings are not open to the public but are limited to personnel issues and potential litigation. Board members may not disclose details of what occurs in closed meetings.

SMPO

Parent involvement is vital for the success of Sherwood Montessori. In addition to providing volunteer opportunities that enrich our program, with participation parents make a powerful statement to the children that school is important and education is valued by the family. At the beginning of the school year, parents will be asked to fill out a "Parent Involvement Questionnaire" to help identify areas of interest and expertise that may benefit the school. These will be given to the elected panel of the Sherwood Montessori Parent Organization (SMPO). The SMPO provides parents with an avenue to effective participation in the school's operations. All parents at Sherwood are de facto members of the SMPO. Active membership is encouraged and achieved by attending regularly scheduled SMPO meetings. At meetings, parents can learn more about how to optimize their skills as a volunteer.

The SMPO will be self-governed by an elected panel of three parents, serving staggering two-year terms, chosen for the following year through an open vote of all parents prior to the annual April Meeting of the Board of Directors. A representative of the SMPO will serve as a non-voting member of the Board of Directors and will be responsible for communication between the SMPO and the Board. For this inaugural year, the elected panel will be chosen after leaders emerge through participation in committees formed to address the school's varying needs as we start our first year.

Toys and Electronics

Children are encouraged to bring items from home that relate to the current themes. Special things responsibly collected from nature such as bird nests, unusual shells and rock specimens

are most welcome. However, toys and electronics from home are not allowed in the school. If a child finds it hard to part with a particular toy, perhaps the toy can accompany the child to school and remain in the car to wait for the child's return at the end of the day.

Visitation Policy

Sherwood is a community-based school, and all community members' voices and input are valued and necessary. In order to run a school efficiently, procedures around visits and appointments are needed to ensure that input is received and the business of the school is not disrupted.

The director of a school that is community-based must maintain an open door policy while also ensuring that daily operations of the school are running smoothly. Office hours for appointments with the director are every morning from 8:15-8:45 and every afternoon from 3:00-3:30 with the exception of Wednesdays. Please schedule an appointment with the front office in advance if you would like to be ensured of an appointment during these times or if you need an appointment at another time.

For more details, our board adopted policy regarding visitation is posted on our website on the Board of Directors/policies page.

Volunteering

Sherwood Montessori is committed to being a school in which collaboration and high family involvement is optimized to provide students with the best possible school experience. Seeing parents helping out at the school sends a positive lesson for children. It shows them that education is valued and it is important enough to work for and invest time in. Not every family has unlimited resources of time or skills to offer, but there are things that any and all of us can do. The SMPO committees offer a variety of tasks and projects in which parents and families can be involved. In addition, as each family gets to know the teachers and their child's program, parents can find other ways to help. Each family is encouraged to perform a **minimum of 50 hours** of volunteer service for the school each academic year.



Incident Report Form

Student's name: _____ Teacher's name: _____

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____

*Reporting Staff Member:

Incident Type:

- Fighting/ physical aggression
- Social isolation/ exclusion
- Stealing or damage to property
- Disrespect/ defiance to adult
- Profanity/ obscene gestures
- Threats/ taunting/ making faces
- Name calling (_____)
- Other (please describe)

- Action Taken:
- Verbal Warning
- Modified Recess
- Student Conference
- Parent Conference
- Guidance Referral
- Other: _____
- Sent to Principal

Student's signature: _____ Date: _____

Parent's signature: _____ Date: _____

Principal's signature: _____ Date: _____

* Reporting Staff Members: Please make a copy before sending home to parent for documentation purposes.

** Parents: You may write comments/remarks on the back of this form and sign and return if you wish. The signed, returned copy with remarks will be kept on file in place of an unsigned form.



Filbert

Hawthorne Avenue

PARKING

NO PARKING

DROP OFF ONLY

PARKING HERE

Moss Avenue