

2014-2015

RENAISSANCE MONTESSORI

TODDLER HANDBOOK

"Education is a natural process spontaneously carried out by the human individual, and is acquired not by listening to words but by experience upon the environment" - Maria Montessori



*"To assist a child, we must provide him with an environment
which will enable him to develop freely"*

-Maria Montessori

Welcome!

As a toddler, there are so many new exciting things happening in your child's life. We are truly honored and thrilled about the opportunity to be a part of this special time in their development. We are greatly looking forward to getting to know your child and family. We appreciate and value the unique qualities of each individual child; therefore, we are carefully and lovingly preparing our room and ourselves to honor your child and who they are becoming. We genuinely care for the children and families we serve and we strive to create a community that will provide your child with experiences to support their individual learning, development of independence, and the formation of their self-identity. We look forward to having fun and learning together while building a strong relationship with each of you in the Toddler Community at Renaissance!

Maria Montessori recognized this period in your child's life as being centered on rapid cognitive and physical development, which happens as they absorb knowledge from the world around them and strive for independence. The focus of the Montessori toddler classroom is "to learn through living and loving in each moment."

As the guides in this classroom community, it is our goal to help facilitate your child's development and help fulfill their desire to "do things themselves." Young children learn by experiencing their surroundings through all of their senses. We will give them a wide scope of opportunities to explore and experience various textures, sights, smells, sounds and tastes while also practicing skills of daily living (i.e cleaning up, preparing snack/lunch, independent toileting, dressing, washing hands, ect.) in order to help them develop independence. We will offer these experiences and learning opportunities throughout the day with various materials, lessons and activities.

We are also dedicated to developing positive relationships with your family to fully support your child. You will soon discover that our classroom is a loving community that works together, learns together, and nurtures each other's individual development. We welcome and encourage you to share your thoughts, ideas, concerns, and questions.

To help make this new transition as smooth as possible, please review the following information about our classroom and initial on the lines provided to signify understanding. Feel free to bring any questions or concerns to the Director, Rachel Kincaid.

"These words reveal the child's inner needs: "Help me to do it alone"

- Maria Montessori

As your child's teachers, we are committed to

- ✧ Working together to ensure that every child in our classroom receives warm, loving care and a safe and enriching learning environment that supports your child's development.
- ✧ Treating each child with respect and dignity as they develop as unique individuals.
- ✧ Building a strong, trusting and caring relationship with you and your child so we may feel safe and secure in the classroom.
- ✧ Providing the children with a safe, clean, and nurturing environment that is sensitive to their needs and promotes positive interactions between all caregivers and children.
- ✧ Following and adhering to all school, county and state regulations to ensure the sanitization and safety of the classroom environment.
- ✧ Carefully observing each child, thoughtfully interacting with them when appropriate (as to not interrupt their own learning process), offering them individual and group lessons in order to meet their needs and maximize their learning potential.
- ✧ Working collaboratively with parents in an effort to ensure continuity of care for you and your child.
- ✧ Providing meaningful learning opportunities for the children's cognitive, emotional, social and physical development in both English and Spanish.
- ✧ Honoring and respecting each child's learning process and supporting it by whatever means possible.

“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future”

- Maria Montessori

New Transitions and Phasing In

It is important that children and families are able to smoothly make the transition from home to school. We have arranged to the classroom to provide your child with a “home-like” environment where they can safely explore and thrive to meet their own innate developmental needs. To truly respect the children and this transition, we ask that your child participate in a “phase-in” day. We feel it best for the children to spend some time in the classroom before they start full-time. This, not only gives the children to adjust to their new classroom environment, but it allows the teachers to the opportunity to learn about each child through observing.

Prior to your child’s “Phase-In” day, please complete the Parent Questionnaire, the completed questionnaire can be submitted to a teacher directly or sent via Email. We also ask that you and your child Create a Family Page together to introduce your family to our community. Please Glue/tape a few pictures of your child and your family (pets can be included too) on a sheet of paper. Your child will share your family’s page with the class on you child’s “Phase-In” day. We will display the pages to help each child get to know each other and help connect home life with school life.

It is our goal to start off your child’s school experience in a positive direction. This visit will help a strong relationship between the teacher, child and your family that is built on trust and respect. We believe this trusting relationship is a key component on facilitating a smooth transition and the overall well-being of the child and classroom community. During this visit, you and the teachers may discuss techniques and methods used which best accommodate your child’s needs. This transition day also allows more time to get to know each other and the other children in the community on a more personal level.

During this time, you may choose to sit in the office or another area of the school, or even run a short errand, depending what is best for your child.

Parent's Steps During Phase-In

- ✧ Walk your child into the school and into the classroom. You should also introduce your child to staff and encourage them to introduce themselves as well
- ✧ Demonstrate to your child that you are comfortable here. Your body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice send your child messages about being at school. We want your child to know that you are comfortable and that school is a friendly, safe place to be for your family.
- ✧ Give a quick goodbye to your child to show that you are confident and comfortable with them being here.
- ✧ Share information about your child with the teachers. Share any specific needs that you or your child may have—because the teachers are often busy with the needs of all their students, it is best to do this in written form so the teacher can give the information their full attention. This information can be handed to the teacher during the “Phase-In” day.
- ✧ Encourage your child to ask a teacher for help, to play, or to work with a teacher.

If your child exhibits extreme difficulty with separation, the teachers will discuss further suggestions or a revised plan to facilitate the positive transition for your child. If your child seems to be handling the trial separation well, then they are welcome to stay for the rest of the day provided that we are able to reach someone via phone if needed. At the end of this visit, we anticipate that your child will develop the understanding that they are in a safe, secure, respectful, and enriching environment that you support and that they will understand that you will always return to them.

Following this “Phase-In” day, we recommend that you say a quick goodbye in the hallway, just outside of the classroom door, so your child walks into their classroom independently or with a teacher. A quick goodbye could be: a hug, kiss, or saying goodbye with a smile.

Parental Encouragement During Phase-In

When you arrive at school each morning, you will see a teacher at the classroom door that is ready to greet and welcome your child to class. As we welcome your child to school each day, it is important that you remain upbeat and with a positive voice. To emphasize this, use positive and encouraging facial and body language. Your child should sense your confidence and delight— not apprehension or stress. It is helpful if you focus on being positive, clear, and consistent with this routine. You may choose to discuss this routine with your child prior to bringing him/her to school. For an example, you could prepare your child ahead of time by saying “I am taking you to school so you can learn and have fun! I am so happy you have a great place to spend your day, I will take you to school and we will say hello to your friends and teachers, you can go in and find a work or book. I will pick you up after nap!”

Prolonging your departure or lingering may cause the transition to be more difficult for your child. Please rest assure that we will treat your child with gentleness, compassion, respect and love. We will contact you via phone if your child truly needs you to return. You are also welcome to call the school if you have any concerns or just want to check in.

Most of us at Renaissance are parents ourselves, and we full understand the feelings and emotions that can arise at this time. Please remember that we are here to support you all and we will work diligently with you and your child to make this a pleasant experience for everyone. Please feel free to discuss any questions or concerns regarding the transition process. This is a process, and like any new experience-it may take a little time. Working together and trusting this process will be essential to making this comfortable and positive transition for your child.

Preparing For School

We request that you provide the items listed below to help us meet the needs of your child. Please initial on the line located next to each item

Materials Needed to be Successful!

- ✎ **DIAPERS AND WIPES** to last approximately a week (*or more*) _____
If your child wears cloth diapers, please bring a zippered, waterproof, plastic lined, machine washable, bag for transporting soiled clothing.
 - ✎ **LUNCH** (*for both half day, and full day students*) _____
Lunch box should be labeled with name and date and should contain a protein, veggie/fruit, carbohydrate option, milk (optional) in portions that your child can finish. Your child's teacher will not be able to heat up any food at lunch so please pack hot and cold food in Thermos© containers. Please introduce any new foods 3 times at home before sending to school to check for potential food allergies.
 - ✎ **NAP MATERIALS** (*full day children*) _____
A crib-sized, labeled sheet, small blanket, and a small pillow. All full day kids will be asked to lie down for a nap.
 - ✎ **EXTRA CLOTHING** _____
Each child should have **FIVE** sets of clothes (Shirt, pants/shorts, socks, and underwear. **ALL LABELED**) and an extra pair of shoes at school. Please bring 5 sets of clothes on your child's first day. We will use them as back up and to practice dressing skills as part of the classroom curriculum. Clothing must be brought in a bag, labeled with your child's name.
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☞ **APPROPRIATE CLOTHING** _____

When dressing your child for school, keep in mind the weather! Temperatures can change throughout the day, so dressing your child in layers makes it easier for them to take off a sweater if it gets too hot, or put on another jacket if it gets too cold. Weather permitting, we go outside each day—dress your child appropriate for outdoor play.

—Dress your child in clothing that they can manage to put on / take off themselves, as this builds independence. Elastic pants without buttons are best.

—Send your child to school with close-toed shoes for their safety. The shoe should fit well enough that if they were to kick a ball, it will stay on. We prefer shoes that do not have laces as the children will be practicing putting their shoes on and take off on their own.

—When dressing your child, consider their comfort, as he/she will be moving quite a bit. For girls, you may want to consider putting shorts or bloomers under skirts and dresses as the children are very active during the day.

☞ **BUG SPRAY** _____

Please apply at home!

☞ **INDEPENDENCE** _____

We encourage independence, as we work with helping your child gain independence in the classroom— we would like your support in continuing it at home by practicing washing, dressing, and undressing, washing dishes/cups, eating properly at the table/ manners, wiping after using the restroom, using tissues for nose wiping and feeding themselves.

☞ **BOTTLES** _____

During the summer months, please send a reusable, filled water bottle with your child's name and drop it in the basket outside your child's classroom each morning. Take home daily.

“Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called Intelligence”

-Maria Montessori

Transition to Independent Toileting

Children that are in diapers will begin toilet training when they show readiness. This may be showing interest in the toilet such as wanting to sit on it. It may be that they are able to recognize the "full" feeling or are able to tell you they have just peed or pooped in their diaper. This does not mean they are ready for underwear.

We will introduce them to sitting on the toilet. They may or may not be successful each time they sit. Going through the motions is our first step. It may be a few weeks to a few

months before they become independent in toileting. Each child is different. Accidents are expected. The child will not be scolded or embarrassed. They will be asked to go to their bins and get a change of clothes. We will assist as needed.

Diapering is done frequently. Children are asked to help. They will be shown their diaper/supplies bin and will learn to bring a diaper and wipes with them to the bathroom. They may be asked to bring clothes if there's a need to change. Children are changed in the standing up position in front of a full length mirror for pee (teacher sits behind them to instruct and help as needed) and lying down for poop. The children assist in pulling down their pants/shorts and in removing their diapers. If toilet training, they may sit on the toilet for a few minutes then wipe, flush and then get a clean diaper. They will assist in getting dressed and will place their used diaper in the diaper disposal bin. This will be done each time there's a diaper change. Children wash their hands at the designated sink before rejoining their friends.

Once your child is ready to go into underwear, we will ask you to bring in many changes of clothing for the week. The child is expected to be in underwear at home and school while the training process is going on. Pull-ups seem to delay toileting and sends mixed messages. The child continues to think it is ok to pee/poop in the pull-up. When placed in underwear they will think it's fine to do their necessities in the underwear. We understand it may be messy and inconvenient for a while. This being said, we will not place your child in a pull-up in the classroom or for napping.

Plastic pants over underwear are also not used. The child believes it's fine to pee/poop because there won't be a mess thus delaying toilet training. Although they help contain the urine, it creates quite the flood when the child is asked to change. By now, they are in charge of their needs with minimum teacher involvement. Having to deal with plastic underwear full of urine is much harder for them than dealing with wet clothing.

All soiled clothes and bedding will be sent home in a plastic bag. All soiled areas are disinfected in a timely Manner.

Parent—Teacher Communication

Communication between the parents and teachers is essential to our thriving community. We truly value communication with you; though drop-off and dismissal may not always be the best time for lengthy conversations. These are especially important times in your child's day so we would like to make this time as smooth and child-focused as possible. We just ask that parents are mindful of communications with their child, with the teachers, and with other parents or staff during these times.

Communication is valued and welcomed. Please keep in mind that others may also have things they need to communicate to the teachers. During these transition times, we invite any communication that may be relevant to your child's day or anything that will enable us to give responsive care to your child. If you would like to have a more in-depth conversation, or share information not requiring immediate feedback, please feel free to call us or e-mail us. We desire positive relationships and frequent communication with you, so we truly hope you will feel comfortable contacting us via phone or e-mail at any time. Phone calls and e-mails will be returned within 24 hours.

In an effort to truly honor and respect the needs of each child and family, we hope you will help us keep pick-up and drop-off times running smoothly and peacefully. If an in-depth conversation is necessary, please contact us to schedule a time to meet before or after school. We strongly believe that communication is vital to your child's well-being.

If you need to communicate something to us in the morning but are unable to, please jot down a note and hand it to us or leave it in the basket located above the cubbies. This would be a helpful thing to do if you want to let us know your child had a difficult night/morning, or needs something specific for that day. We will also look forward to discussing your child with you during the two parent-teacher conferences each year. Periodically, we will send home short "About My Day" notes. These notes will say a talk a little bit about your child's day and if there's a need for more clothing or diapers.

*"it is the child who makes the man, and no man
exists who was not made by the child he once
way"*

-Maria Montessori

Sickness at Home

Whenever your child is ill and will not be coming to school, please call and email the school office in the morning to let us know that he or she will be absent. Students with infectious diseases, such as chickenpox or strep throat, must stay out of school until the contagious stage has passed. For the sake of the other children's health, it is vital that you let the office know your child's diagnosis as soon as possible.

Please keep your child home as long as there is a fever present, a sore throat, eye infection, continuous and colored/excessive nasal excretions, or persistent chest cough. We determine the need to send a child home by both the symptoms listed above and by their behavior. Children who fall asleep during the morning work cycle or who are uncharacteristically cranky or sad during the day may be sent home. Children with symptoms of vomiting, diarrhea, head lice, or an undiagnosed skin rash should remain at home also. Children will be sent home if any of the above symptoms appear while they are at school. They should remain at home for at least the next 24 hours.

You will want to make arrangements in advance with a friend or relative when you cannot come yourself. Because colds, flus, and other childhood illnesses spread from child to child with alarming speed, please do not send your child to school if they have a fever, are nauseous, or display any other symptoms of illness. Weather permitting, students will go outside to play every day. If you feel that your child may be too sick to go out to play, then he/she should not come to school until he can participate in all school activities.

Sickness at School

In the classrooms, the teachers are diligent about assisting children with keeping their noses and faces clean and free of mucus. The children are learning this process but require more adult supervision during the times of the year when illness is more prevalent. We teach children how to blow their noses and wash their hands. We strongly encourage parents to help their children practice these skills at home and support these very important self-help skills. If your child ever feels ill, we will keep him or her quiet and comfortable. If your child seems to be too ill to remain in school, we will contact you to arrange them to be picked up within an hour. If a parent cannot be reached within half an hour, we will begin calling the Emergency Contact on the “Medical Emergency” information form that is kept on file in the office. The child will be isolated from the rest of the children in the office until somebody is able to take him/her home. We understand how difficult it can be for a working parent to break free during the day—yet all of our children get ill from time to time. Always have a backup plan!

Emergency Care

In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention—we want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your Emergency Medical Information form up to date in the office. We must be able to reach you at any time during the school day. If your child needs immediate medical attention and you cannot be reached: your enrollment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to Rex Hospital. Naturally, we will continue our efforts to contact you. If your child should need basic first aid, a trained staff member will administer aid while other staff continue to contact parents and/or medical professionals.

Medication

We do not administer medication at school, this includes aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs and topical creams. Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that dosages are taken during hours when the child is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably should not be in school for a full day. We also ask that children do not bring vitamins, flower essences, or other homeopathic remedies to school. When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a parent must administer the medication to his/her child in accordance with the following procedures. Medication may not be stored at the school. Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any child.

Birthdays

In our classroom community we would like to celebrate your child's birthday in a way that honors them as unique individual. As a community, we will collaborate to determine a special activity for the day that honor your child. If you would like to bring a special, low sugar, treat to help us celebrate or join us during the celebration, we would welcome that as well. Please do not send birthday invitations to school to be passed out. They should be sent through the mail or through e-mail.

"The things he sees are not just remembered; they form a part of his soul."

– Maria Montessori

DISCIPLINE

Discipline means “to teach.” At Renaissance Montessori we use a positive, non-violent, approach to discipline. We notice the things that our students are doing correctly and encourage them in that regard. Examples are: “You concentrated so well on that activity.” “Thank you for being so patient or cooperative.” “Thanks for welcoming our visitor. That was so friendly.” “You are really being creative today.” In addition, we use neutral moments to teach social skills through role-plays, discussions, and skits so that our students have practiced appropriate language and actions before situations arise. A large piece of our curriculum at all levels is “Grace and Courtesy,” which includes control of movement and manners. Should a conflict occur, our students are coached in conflict / resolution skills and community meeting skills. If a pattern of misbehavior continues, then the parents will be contacted to help determine the cause and find solutions. We follow an approach based on empowerment, mutual respect, and trust. Neither corporal punishment nor physical or emotional intimidation are allowed at Renaissance Montessori. If anyone consciously or flagrantly violates the social contract regarding safety, kindness, and courtesy, our response is to identify the appropriate and natural consequences of these actions. We have worked together to create a system of ground rules and discipline that is firm, fair, and consistent in order to help students maintain the school’s values and character.

All students are expected to adhere to and respect them to protect one another. Renaissance Montessori expects full cooperation from students and families during school hours, or whenever the student/family represents the school, whether on Renaissance Montessori property or away from the campus. The school must always be a safe learning environment. Any student who repeatedly breaks the ground rules, or interferes with the health, safety, or educational development of him/herself or others may be temporarily or permanently excluded from attendance at school by the Director or his or her designee. In this extreme situation, we need to reiterate that there will be no reduction, credit, or remission of tuition or fees.

“The prize and punishments are incentives toward unnatural or forced effort, and, therefore we certainly cannot speak of the natural development of the child in connection with them.”
- Maria Montessori



Toddler Orientation

Please initial on each line, thank you!

Preparing for School

We request that you provide the items listed below to help us meet the needs of your child

_____ : **Lunch** (for both half and full day students)

- ℞ Lunch box should be labeled with child's name and date and should contain a protein, vegetable/ fruit, carbohydrate option, milk (option) in portions that your child can finish. Your child's teacher will not be able to heat up any food during lunch, so please pack hot and cold foods in Thermos® brand containers. Please introduce any new foods 3 times at home before sending to school to check for potential food allergies

_____ : **Nap Materials** for full day children

- ℞ Crib-sized, labeled sheet, small blanket, and a small pillow. All full day children will be asked to lie down for a nap

_____ : **Extra Clothing**

- ℞ Each child should have FIVE (5) sets of clothes: shirt, pants/shorts, socks, underwear [all labeled] and an extra pair of shoes at school. Please bring the five sets of clothes on your child's first day. We will use them as "back up" clothes and to practice dressing skills as part of the classroom curriculum. Clothing must be brought in a bag labeled with your child's name.

_____ : **Appropriate Clothing**

- ℞ When dressing your child for school: keep in mind the weather. Temperatures can change throughout the day, so dressing your child in layers makes it easier for them to take off a sweater if it gets too hot, or put on another jacket if it gets too cold. Weather permitting, we go outside every day. Dress your child appropriately for outdoor play.
- ℞ Dress your child in clothing that they can manage to put on/take off themselves – this builds independence. Elastic pants without buttons are best!
- ℞ Send your child to school in closed-toe shoes for their safety. The shoe should fit well enough that if they were to kick a ball, it would stay on. We prefer shoes that do not have laces as the children will be practicing putting their shoes on and off on their own.
- ℞ When dressing your child, consider their comfort as well, they will be moving quite a bit. For girls, you may want to consider putting shorts or bloomers under skirts and dresses as children are very active throughout the day.

_____ : Enough **diapers** and wipes to approximately one week (or more)

- ℞ If your child wears cloth diapers, please bring a zippered, waterproof, plastic lined, machine washable, bag for transporting soiled clothing

Preparing for School (cont)

_____ : Should your child need **sunscreen**, or bug repellant- please apply before coming to school

_____ : We encourage **independence**. As we work with helping your child gain independence in the classroom we would like your support in continuing to work with them at home practicing hand washing, dressing and undressing, washing dishes/ cups, eating properly at the table/ manners, wiping after using the bathroom, using tissues for nose wiping and feeding themselves.

_____ : During the **Summer** months, please bring a reusable, filled water bottle with your child's name and drop it in the basket outside your child's classroom each morning. Take home each day.

"Our care of the child should be governed, not by the desire to make him learn things, but by the endeavor always to keep burning within him that light which is called intelligence"

– Maria Montessori