



*Passion for Learning.
Success for Life.*

PARENT HANDBOOK 2018-2019

Joliet Montessori School
1600 Root Street, Crest Hill, Illinois 60403
Main Office: 815.741.4180
Fax: 815-741-9753

Hours of Operation:

Before Care: 7:00 AM - 8:30 AM
Classrooms in Session: 8:30 AM – 3 PM
After Care: 3:00 PM - 6:00 PM

Office Hours: Monday - Friday, 8:00 AM – 4:00 PM

Faculty and Staff

Ms. Kristina Reid
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Mrs. Gosia Wolf
Primary Directress, Willow Room
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Mrs. Minerva Widner
Primary Assistant, Oak Room/ Before Care

Mrs. Jennifer Ritsema
Primary Assistant, Willow Room

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Mrs. Ashley Zupan
Upper Elementary Directress, Catalpa Room
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Upper Elementary Assistant, Catalpa Room

Mrs. Vicki Hartmann
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Mrs. Patti Dowling
Adolescent Math Specialist

Mrs. Birute Povilaitiene
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Mrs. Daria Passo
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Administrative Team

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Board of Trustees

We are pleased to announce the current year **Board of Trustees** for Joliet Montessori School. Each Trustee is charged with supporting the school's mission and overseeing the fiscal health of the organization. Specific responsibilities of the Board of Trustees include assuring that there are adequate resources for the school to deliver its mission to the student body. The Board does so by the development of the strategic plan, review of the school's progress toward those goals, cultivation of major donors and hiring, supporting, and evaluating the Head of School.

Bobbi Pehle, President, HSE Committee Chair
Dawn Polacek, Vice President, Committee of Trustees Chair
Scott Termine, Treasurer, Finance Committee Chair
Tawnie Cisneros, Secretary, Marketing Committee Chair

Board of Trustee Members

Stephen Zaborsky
Jessica Schumacher
Tom Finnegan
Andrea Londergon
Alyson Wozniak

The Board of Trustees consists of current JMS parents, past parents, alumni students, and friends from Joliet and surrounding communities. Board members are profiled by the Committee on Trustees to identify individuals who will best carry out the strategic plan and move our school forward. Each member of the Board has expressed a continuing pledge to the success of JMS.

Every effort is made to ensure that the Board embodies a broad cross section of our school community and includes individuals who bring distinct skills to the school.

Our Board of Trustees is a strategic entity which functions under the guidance of Independent School Management (ISM), of which the school is a consortium member.

The Board of Trustees meetings are held at the school on the third Monday of each month. Meetings begin at 7 p.m. All parents are invited and welcome to attend. Agendas and approved minutes can be reviewed in the office.

Joliet Montessori School Mission Statement

Joliet Montessori School inspires students to engage academically and socially every day, developing independence, a love of work, and a respect for all.

Portrait of a JMS Graduate

Our graduates...

Strive to meet their academic potential
Take responsibility for their education
Contribute consciously to their community
Treat others with grace and courtesy
Commit to lifelong learning

Characteristics of Professional Excellence

Our directresses...

Dedicate themselves to the Montessori philosophy
Respect children and their natural learning cycles
Provide a loving, caring, nurturing environment
Develop high expectations based on each child's potential
Model sincerity and engage in genuine communication with students

Qualities of a Montessori Culture

Our community...

Expects greatness of ourselves even in times of challenge
Recognizes that each individual matters to the success of the whole school
Strives to bring out the best in each other through compassion and teamwork
Resolves differences of opinion with respect, integrity and honesty
Embraces personal transformation toward an ever-deepening Montessori practice

Montessori Philosophy

In the words of Maria Montessori, we shall describe the Montessori Method as an “aid to life.” In the early 1900’s she developed this philosophy of education based upon her intuitive observations of children from diverse cultures. She saw universal principles of human behavior, which belong to all peoples. There are three main themes to her work.

1) Human development does not occur in a steady pattern but in a series of four formative “planes.”

- a. The first plane in development occurs from birth to age six. During this time, children are sensorial explorers. They will often find themselves absorbed with one characteristic in their environment to the exclusion of all others.
- b. The second plane occurs from age six to age twelve. These children begin to explore the world in abstract concepts rather than depending solely on concrete materials.
- c. The third plane occurs from age twelve to age eighteen. Children this age seek to understand the world and their place in it.
- d. The fourth plane occurs from age eighteen to age twenty-four. As young adults, individuals seek to understand how to contribute fully to their society.

2) Human beings develop in relation to their environment. Dr. Montessori created materials to match the child’s developmental needs. Many of these materials are specific to a Montessori classroom. The child uses this prepared environment to select individual activities which correspond to his/her own “sensitive periods” of interest.

3) Human beings require the freedom to follow their individual interests while developing within the prepared environment. When the child is free to follow his/her interests, focused learning occurs. To be free means to be in control of self, not to be controlled by emotions or whim. Children are free to choose their own activities. They are not free to waste their days in aimless activity or idle conversation with their friends. In a Montessori classroom, freedom always goes hand in hand with responsibility.

Your child’s Montessori education will instill self-knowledge and a love of learning. These traits will provide a foundation for his/her entire life. A Montessori education is an aid to the development of a happy, independent, responsible and loving individual who continues to seek greater knowledge.

Montessori Recognition

Joliet Montessori School has been affiliated with and recognized by the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) since our inception in 1966. We are also accredited by and members of the American Montessori Society (AMS). The AMI & AMS pedagogical standards for schools ensure that each school is offering programs for their children that allow for their full intellectual, social and psychological growth. The following guidelines are in place:

- Montessori trained directors who reflect a philosophical approach in the classroom consistent with AMI & AMS training
- One assistant in each primary classroom
- A consultation with an AMI & AMS trained consultant once every three years
- A complete set of Montessori Materials, from an AMI or AMS approved manufacturer, for each class
- Classes comprised of children representing three-year age ranges:
 - Primary: 3-6 years
 - Lower Elementary: 6-9 years
 - Upper Elementary: 9-12 years
 - Adolescent: 12-15 years
- Classes with an appropriate number of children to ensure social development - between 24-35 children
- A five-day week for all students
- Three-hour uninterrupted morning work cycles at each level
- Afternoon sessions with prolonged, uninterrupted work periods

Professional Affiliations

Member, Association Montessori International (AMI)
 Member, American Montessori Society (AMS)
 Member, Association of Illinois Montessori Schools (AIMS)
 Member, Independent School Management (ISM)
 Member, North American Montessori Teachers Association (NAMTA)
 License-Exempt Center Provider, Child Care Assistance Program (DCFS)

Enrollment and Registration

Application for Enrollment

Joliet Montessori maintains an enrollment pool. Parents and guardians may pick up an application at the school or download from the JMS website. Prospective families will return the completed application with the \$100.00 non-refundable application processing fee. Accepted applicants, as determined by our Directresses and Head of School, will be invited to enroll when a placement is available upon the completion of a tour of the campus and a meet-and-greet with the primary directress of the classroom in review. New siblings and their families must complete the admissions process.

Perpetual Enrollment Tuition Contract

All families must complete the family Perpetual Enrollment Tuition Contract. Requests for class assignments, transitions, and sibling placement must also be submitted in writing at this time. Once the initial contract is submitted, students will be considered perpetually enrolled for future academic years unless the Responsible Party submits, in writing, their intention to withdraw by the specified annual opt-out due date.

All due dates for tuition deposits and tuition payments, and opt-out dates will be communicated by the school administration. Tuition deposits are non-refundable and non-transferable unless admission is denied by the school. All accounts must be current prior to finalization of the registration process.

Class Assignments

Placements are considered deliberately and with great care, in accordance with AMI & AMS guidelines. The JMS administration and faculty are collaboratively responsible for the placement of children into specific classrooms. The administrative team and primary faculty determine the placement of students and siblings in the primary program. The administrative team and elementary faculty are responsible for placing elementary students. The administrative team and adolescent faculty are responsible for placing adolescent students. Once placements have been made, the class rosters are considered final.

We ask all families to honor the 3 year cycles of Montessori. All students will be notified of their placement status once class rosters are finalized.

Elementary Transitions

Elementary sixth year transitions into the Adolescent Program will be handled on a case-by-case basis and will be considered only when the student has clearly entered the third plane of development. The Head of School, after careful consideration of input from both classroom directresses and the parents/legal guardians, will make the final determination that the transition is in the best interests of the student academically, emotionally and socially.

Sibling Placement

In all programs, siblings will be placed into classes based on what is needed to create an optimal dynamic. During the admissions process and parent-director conferences, families may discuss their particular situation with the directress, leaving open the possibility for siblings to be placed in the same class, or to have them in separate classes, when it is in the best interest of the children and the class dynamic.

While every effort will be made to accommodate requests, Joliet Montessori cannot guarantee specific classroom transitions or placements.

Enrollment Pool

When all classes have been filled, remaining families will be notified and placed in the enrollment pool. When more currently enrolled students re-register for programs than there are spaces available, preferences will be given to those families who have demonstrated a commitment to the JMS Mission and Partnership Agreement, and who intend on completing the enrollment level's three year cycle.

Notice of Dismissal

Joliet Montessori School may at any time, in its sole discretion, discontinue a student's enrollment if it determines that the student's behavior is detrimental to the well-being of other students or the staff; or the student or any parent or guardian repeatedly fails to follow rules and policies as established for the harmony and safety of all of the children and staff; or tuition is not paid for 30 days. Written notice of a student's dismissal will be mailed or delivered to the parent or guardian and no refund of tuition deposit or application fees will be made.

Payment Policy - Terms and Rates

The entire staff of JMS is committed to your child's education for the entire academic term; and as such, we expect full and timely payment of all amounts invoiced. All families are **required** to set up a FACTS account online for all tuition payments, unless grandfathered into a bank withdrawal with our Business Manager. Once the Family Perpetual Enrollment Contract is submitted, responsible parties are contractually obligated for the full year's tuition.

All deposits, tuition payments and fees are non-refundable if an application is withdrawn by the family once placement has been granted. Further, there will be no refunds for absences or early withdrawal.

Also note:

- Tuition is prorated for all start dates beginning after October 1.
- A multi-student discount of 10% will be applied to the tuition for all second and subsequently enrolled children.
- Financial Aid is available, and determinations are need-based. You can access the application on our website under FAQs within the Admissions tab.
- Joliet Montessori School is a license-exempt center with the Department of Children and Family Services. JMS does works with Child Care Resource and Referral for families that qualify for the Child Care Assistance Program. Monthly payments are required by the family who are wholly responsible for any and all balances not funded by CCR&R.
- Payment Plan Options are: Annually, Bi-Annually or Monthly.
- All Payment plans are required to go through FACTs Tuition Management Service, a third-party administrator. The FACTs portal can be accessed through our website by selecting Admissions and then Financial Information.
- Before/After Care Payments accepted via cash, check or credit card in the Business Office. Tuition Rates for the School Year 2017 -2018 are as follows:

JMS Program (5 days/week)	Schedule	10% Tuition Deposit	Annual Payment Option through FACTS – Due August 1	Bi-Annual Payment Option through FACTS - Due August 1 & January 1	Monthly Payment Plan through FACTs (July-March)
Primary Half-Day	8:30 AM to 12 noon	\$505.00	\$4,545.00	\$2,272.50	\$505.00
Primary Full-Day	8:30 AM to 3 PM	\$730.00	\$6,570.00	\$3,285.00	\$730.00
Lower Elementary	8:30 AM to 3 PM	\$826.00	\$7,434.00	\$3,717.00	\$826.00
Upper Elementary, with NCI	8:30 AM to 3 PM	\$905.00	\$8,145.00	\$4,072.50	\$905.00
Adolescent, with NCI	8:30 AM to 3 PM	\$967.00	\$8,703.00	\$4,351.50	\$967.00

	Childcare before and after school can be added to the other programs as needed.				
Support Programs					
Before School Care	7:00 AM to 8:30 AM	NA	\$87.60/month (billed in advance)	\$6.75/day (actual usage)	
After School Care	3:15 PM to 6:00PM	NA	\$175.20/month (billed in advance)	\$16.50/day (actual usage)	
Late Pick Up Fee	After 6:00 PM		\$10.00 for the first 15 minutes + \$1/minute there after		
Other Fees					
Tuition Past Due			\$25.00 per occurrence, per month invoice is outstanding		
Before/After Care Past Due			\$10.00 per occurrence, per month invoice is outstanding		
NSF Check			\$25.00 per occurrence		

Payment Policy – Delinquent Accounts

Fees for past due accounts are described in the previous chart. Appropriate actions, including suspension of before/after care privileges or after school program registration or Nature's Classroom attendance, may be enacted for continued non-payment of outstanding balances. Accounts in arrears for 60+ days may result in suspension of enrollment, until at such time accounts are made current. JMS reserves the right to engage legal counsel and/or collections professionals to assist with seriously delinquent accounts.

ALL accounts (including tuition, extended care, after school care, Nature's Classroom) must be paid in full prior to the release of any student records to parents or to other educational institutions.

Please contact the JMS Business Manager for questions concerning invoicing, payment plans and other financial matters.

Operational Procedures

Attendance

Absences

Regular school attendance is vitally important to a student's academic achievement and the teaching-learning process, so it is important that staff, parents and students be familiar with the JMS attendance policy. Regular attendance helps to develop patterns of behavior essential to professional and personal success in life. A brief explanatory note when a student returns to school after an absence helps the teacher understand each student's health, personal or family issues or needs and encourages communication. Frequent absences impact academic and social progress. JMS expects that students will attend classes daily for the entire regular school term. Please refrain from taking students out of school unnecessarily. Teachers are not responsible for providing work for students when vacations are taken outside of the school calendar or lessons are missed due to extreme tardiness. The school will notify parents when students have an excessive number of absences and are at risk of not being promoted to the next academic level. In this case, parents will be required to meet with administration to discuss the impact of excessive absences on the Student's education, as well as appropriate next steps for the Student's future at the School.

Tardiness

All students can enter the classroom between 8:30 - 8:45 AM. The school day begins officially by 8:45 AM. After 8:45 the student is marked "tardy" in the attendance book. It is important that students have sufficient time to organize and settle in before the school day begins. Bringing students to school late is difficult for them as they may have missed important morning announcements and group meetings. Students may also be excluded from certain lessons planned by the teacher if the student is late for the beginning of that lesson. Young students often have a difficult time when they enter the classroom late and see that their classmates have already begun their morning work. For older students, joining in lessons and work groups that are underway is often socially awkward and can be academically challenging. If a child is consistently tardy, a written notice will be sent to parents/guardians to alert families so adjustments can be made to the family's schedule.

If your child will be absent, please either contact 815-741-4180 or SchoolCues. Should your child contract a contagious disease, please notify the school immediately so that we may alert the faculty and other parents. Contact your family physician for exclusionary time frames for children returning to school after an illness.

Children who are ill should recuperate at home. Children must be fever free without the aid of medication for 24 hours before returning to school. Children must be free of vomiting and diarrhea before returning to school. We ask you to be considerate not only of your own child's health but also that of the other children and the staff. Your child may be removed from the classroom, at the discretion of the directress, to help prevent the spread of illness and contagious diseases. Please ensure all contact information is updated as needed in the event your child becomes ill while at school.

Arrivals, Dismissals, Carpool Protocols and Extended Care

Class begins at 8:30 AM. Children will be welcomed through morning carpool until 8:45 AM. Parents are expected to escort their children to the office following the close of carpool at 8:45 AM. A staff member will see your child to the classroom.

Dismissal for Half Day children begins at 12:00 noon and typically concludes at approximately 12:10 PM. Please be on time to pick up your children. Pickups after 12:10 PM will be assessed a late fee.

Dismissal for Full Day children begins at 3:00 PM and typically concludes by 3:15 PM. Children who have not been picked up by the close of dismissal will be released to After Care, and parents will be invoiced accordingly.

Early Release/Late Arrival of Students

One of the foundations of Montessori education is the uninterrupted three hour work cycle. In order for your child to receive the full benefit of his/her Montessori experience; he/she must attend regularly. Late arrivals are not only detrimental to your own child's education; they are also disruptive for children who are already working.

If possible, please schedule appointments after the 12:00 noon and 3:00 PM dismissals. If you must pick your child up early, please send a written note to your child's directress in order to minimize classroom disruption. Once arriving on campus to pick up your child early, please check in with the office staff to sign your child out. While one of the office staff members retrieves your child from their classroom, please remain at the office until the staff member has returned with your child.

Carpool Protocols:

All families are expected to follow carpool procedure at all times.

Carpool is an excellent opportunity to effectively role model the grace and courtesy that distinguishes the Montessori community. Please adhere to the designated carpool route. **All vehicles must enter into the JMS driveway via Imperial Drive. Do not pull directly into the driveway, even if you do not see any cars.** Cars are almost always en route around the block during carpool times.

Carpool name tags must be displayed at all times when picking up your children. Please do not depend on the staff to visually recognize you or your vehicle. For the safety of all children, please remain in your car unless you are helping to buckle your child. In that case, please make sure your car is in park.

Primary and Elementary carpool protocol is in effect during the following times, 8:30– 8:45 AM, 12:00 noon - 12:10 PM, and 3:00- 3:15 PM. Adolescent carpool protocol is in effect from 8:30 – 8:45 AM and 3:00 – 3:15 PM. Please do not park in front of the Adolescent House at 1612 Root

St., as this is the Adolescent carpool queuing area. If you would like to park and walk your child for arrivals and dismissals, you may park on the north side of Root Street beyond the Adolescent House.

In order to ensure the safety of our children and to facilitate traffic flow, the parking lot is closed during carpool. Cell phone use in carpool is strictly prohibited.

Children will not be released to unauthorized people without **written notification** from the parent or legal guardian. Authorized people will still be required to provide identification before we will release your child. Please be patient; the safety of our children is our first priority.

Please help us be good neighbors. Watch your speed and follow all rules of the road, as well as our carpool protocol. **Do not use our neighbor's driveways to turn around and under no circumstances should you U-turn on the streets surrounding the school.** While waiting on Imperial, please wait behind our school sign, instead of the stop sign, prior to turning the corner onto Root Street. This will allow neighborhood traffic to continue unimpeded. Traffic on Root Street has the right of way. Do not stop on Root Street to allow vehicles to turn into JMS. This can create a safety hazard for fire trucks leaving the station and interrupts the flow of neighborhood traffic.

During carpool, the staff is concentrating on the safety of our children. Please do not give the attendants verbal messages or engage in extended conversations. Provide written notes which can be forwarded or contact the office during the school day to set up a meeting if needed.

Children not picked up by the close of carpool will be sent to After Care, and invoiced accordingly.

Extended Care

Before and After Care is provided as a service for our working families. Before Care opens at 7:00 AM and remains open until the children move to their classrooms at 8:30 AM. After Care begins at 3:00 PM and is open until 6:00 PM. All children remaining on campus at the close of 3:00 PM dismissal (3:15 PM) will be immediately released to After Care and invoiced at the Drop-In rate. Children picked up after 6:00 PM will be charged a late pick-up fee.

Assessments and Standardized Testing

Students, third year through seventh year will participate in our IOWA Basics assessments. Our 8th years will participate in the PSAT's. These assessments are designed to provide our directresses with information regarding the current instructional level of each student. Our goal is to identify growth over time and to use assessment information to help each individual student achieve their own academic potential. PSAT results will be forwarded to eighth-years' high schools for class placement. It is even more important to have consistent bedtime routines and healthy meals during the week of testing to ensure the best results for your own child.

Birth Certificates

In accordance with Public Act 84-130, families must provide the original birth certificate with the raised seal for newly enrolling children. The office will make a copy and return to the family. All other required forms will be provided to families during the enrollment process.

Birthdays

Montessori classrooms celebrate each child's birthday. You can support this by adhering to the following protocols. If your child is celebrating his/her birthday at school, you may send in a healthy snack for all to share, in accordance with our nut-aware policy. Some suggestions are bagel, fruit or vegetable trays. Your directress may have additional ideas. Any sweetened treats must be individually wrapped so that they can be sent home with the children at the end of the day.

Please do not deliver birthday party invitations to school. The parent directory is provided to facilitate these types of communications outside of school. If you would like to present a gift to Joliet Montessori or your child's classroom in honor of your child's birthday, we are always grateful for such support. Please contact the office for suggestions.

Care and Concern

Grace and Courtesy amongst our student body is a foundational tenant in any Montessori classroom environment. It is the mission of Joliet Montessori to provide all our students with a safe and productive social and academic environment.

If a child is experiencing repeated behavioral challenges, either the parents/legal guardians or the classroom directress may initiate the Care and Concern process. It is designed to help us work as a team to enhance and ensure the child's academic and social well-being.

**** Phase One: Initial Care and Concern Discussion –** This meeting will include the classroom directress, the Head of School, the parents or legal guardians, and the student (when appropriate). The nature of the concern will be communicated, and a school and parent action plan will be determined by the involved parties.

**** Phase Two: Continuing Care and Concern Discussion –** These meetings will continue as long as all parties are in agreement that progress is being made, action plan items are being supported and followed, and placement at Joliet Montessori remains appropriate.

**** Phase Three: Final Care and Concern Discussion –** Once the plan outcomes have been met and the concern has been resolved, the Care and Concern Process will be considered completed. If outcomes have not been met, the school may call for dismissal of the student.

This process will enable us to respectfully and compassionately address and resolve concerns, while ensuring a mission-appropriate student body for all our students.

**** Bullying behavior and prevention:** Bullying is defined as any written or verbal expression, physical act or gesture, or a pattern thereof, which is intended to cause distress upon one or more students in the school environment. Bullying is intentional, ongoing and targeted behavior towards one or more individuals. Bullying is very different from your usual playground mix-ups or disagreements, etc. Bullying behavior is unacceptable at Joliet Montessori School. The following chart has been put in place as a guideline for parents and staff members.

Friendly Teasing	Hurtful Teasing	Peer Conflicts	Bullying
Equal power Neutral Purpose is to be playful Joins relationships Funny to both parties	Unequal power Sensitive topic Purpose is to upset Excludes Sarcastic	Equal power Occurs occasionally Negotiations and options Withdrawing and options Relationship is valued Effort to resolve	Imbalance of power Occurs repeatedly Intentional and serious Seeks to gain power Victim is vulnerable No remorse No effort to resolve
Friendly Teasing: One student comments to another student that he should turn his/her jersey inside out because his favorite team lost last night	Hurtful Teasing: One girl comments to another girl that she looks chubby in the outfit she is wearing.	Peer Conflicts: Two students have a disagreement on the playground about which one will be the pitcher in kickball.	Bullying: One student repeatedly threatens another student that if he walks down a specific hallway he will get "beat up." Another example is one student repeatedly calling another student a name regarding his sexual orientation.

Joliet Montessori advocates immediate student-centered intervention and conflict resolution techniques when students are affected by peer mistreatment.

Clothing

Children should dress comfortably so they can sit at the tables or on floor rugs to work, play, paint, etc. Please help your children help themselves by offering them clothing choices that include the option to dress in layers. This will allow them to self-regulate their body temperature for optimal comfort. Individual directresses may have their own dress expectations, which will be communicated to parents as appropriate.

Shoes need to be sturdy, closed-toed with non-skid soles for safety when playing outdoors. **Flip-flops will not be allowed.** Please refrain from sending children in shoes that flash or light in any way or fashion boots that go past their calf muscle. In order to keep mud and dirt away from our

carpeted areas, all children are required to bring inside shoes that will remain at school. Primary children are asked to bring ballet slippers. Elementary children may bring comfortable, appropriate inside shoes of their choice. If your child comes to school in a dress or skirt, they must wear privacy shorts underneath. Shirts need to cover midriffs and undergarments. Baseball caps and oversized hats will remain in your child's cubby for outdoor use only. **As always, please label everything with your child's name.** Joliet Montessori School sells Mabel's Labels for your convenience. Please call the office and ask for details if interested.

Primary directresses request that all children bring a change of clothes to keep in the classroom which includes the following: shirt, pants, socks, and underwear.

Co-Curricular Program

The JMS after school co-curricular program is designed to complement the Cosmic Education curriculum and enrich the school experience. Co-curriculars are available to kindergarten, elementary, and adolescent students at the rates indicated during registration periods. Class schedules may change from session to session based on facilitator availability. Current year schedules and offerings will be communicated via newsletter, School Cues or other means.

Communication

JMS is committed to providing timely and effective communication to the members of our community. Valuable information is conveyed via the Parent Handbook, parent education evenings, our website, our Facebook page, newsletters and news briefs, notes sent by classroom directors and letters mailed through the U.S. Postal Service.

We ask our families to assist us in this effort by familiarizing themselves with the policies and procedures necessary to operate the school, to stay informed by reading all written communication provided by JMS, and to address any concerns immediately using the appropriate channels.

Monthly newsletters are distributed to all families. As email is one of our primary forms of communication with our families, we ask you to please keep the office informed of your current email contact information and contact us if you experience any difficulties with email delivery.

All staff members can be reached via email and telephone and are committed to open and frequent communication. Each class directress has an email address and telephone extension from the main school line. Contact information for all members of the JMS staff can be found on the front cover of this handbook. Class directresses will not answer their telephone extensions or reply to emails during the class day. Messages will be retrieved and returned within 24 hours. Should you have an emergency during school hours, please call the office and speak with an office staff member. Under no circumstances should staff or faculty members be contacted via personal cell phone or social media for school matters. Please understand that our teachers have personal lives they go home to every day and their personal time should be respected and honored as such. Social media platforms are designed to share photos or stories

about the students. If you have personal questions regarding operations or personal matters regarding your child, please communicate via email or school telephone.

Conceal and Carry Law

While Conceal and Carry is now allowed in many public and private places in the state of Illinois, citizens are prohibited from carrying them into public schools or on school grounds, according to the new law (430 ILCS 66/65). In order to keep students safe and to be in compliance with state law, Joliet Montessori School displays Illinois State Police issued signs on school doors to remind those with concealed carry licenses that firearms are not permitted in our building or on school grounds.

Conflict Resolution

It is our intention to work collaboratively with our families to resolve issues and find solutions. Parental concerns relating to curriculum or classroom management issues should be addressed with your child's directress. Parental concerns requiring additional assistance will be directed to the Assistant Head of School. Administrative and communication issues are handled by the Head of School.

Once all appropriate channels have been exhausted, any unresolved issues should then be submitted, in writing, to the Head Support and Evaluation Committee, with a courtesy copy provided to the Head of School. The Committee and the Head will then work together to address the concern and resolve the issue.

It is our goal to model for our community both the value of healthy discussions aimed at finding mutually satisfactory solutions and the peaceful resolution of differences.

Custody/Access Policy

Parents and legal guardians will be allowed access for orientation, parent education evenings, drop-off, pick-up, observations, parent conferences and all other parent/school interactions unless there is legal documentation on file limiting or otherwise restricting said access. JMS will not limit access solely at the request of one of the child's parents or other legal guardians.

Decision Making Process

Circumstances sometimes dictate that changes be implemented in the administration and/or operation of JMS. These suggestions may come from faculty, staff, parents, trustees, or external agencies such as AMI, AMS or ISM. The following criteria are in place for adopting administrative and procedural changes:

- All changes are evaluated in relation to Montessori Pedagogy.
- Classroom issues are referred to our faculty for input with the Head of School.

- Administrative and operational issues are decided by the Head of School.
- Issues requiring parental input and implementation may result in the formation of an ad hoc committee reporting to the Head of School and the Board of Trustees.
- Issues resulting in changes to the by-laws or budget must be voted on by the Board.
- Decisions will be communicated to parents in a timely fashion.

Emergencies

It is imperative that we be able to notify you if your child becomes ill or injured at school. If we cannot reach you directly, we will call your designated emergency contact person. Please contact the office immediately if you, or your designated representatives, have any address or telephone changes.

Emergency or Inclement Weather Closing

Families will be notified of emergency school closings via SchoolCues and the school website by 6:00 a.m. We will also contact WJOL, AM 1340 Joliet radio, with school closing information, and post school closings on our Facebook page, and the Emergency Closing Center (www.EmergencyClosings.com) page. Each parent should exercise his/her own judgment when driving in severe weather. The school will be open when we feel a majority of parents can safely bring their children to school.

Emergency Response Drills

Each year we review and revise our Emergency Response Plan with the Crest Hill Police & Lockport Fire departments. Various drills to include fire, tornado, and indoor and playground safety, are held regularly throughout the school year, in accordance with state regulations. Children are instructed as to the proper procedures, when to leave and when to stay, exits to be used, safety procedures and the danger of fire and smoke in a public building. Parents should discuss the safety practices to be followed at school as well as develop a plan to use at home.

Family Directory

The family directory is an internal document provided to our current families to facilitate communication outside of school. Please utilize this in order to coordinate school related functions, birthday parties, play dates, etc. Contact the office if you prefer not to be included. Please **do not** use the family directory for any business or commercial solicitations, or personal solicitations not affiliated with JMS business.

Field Trips

Elementary children may take field trips at any point during the academic year as pertains to classroom studies. Permission slips must be submitted for children to be transported off campus. Chaperone opportunities are available, but limited. Not all parents who volunteer will be able to participate. We appreciate your understanding.

Going Outs

The Going Out is a meaningful, productive component of ‘Cosmic Education’ as implemented in a Montessori classroom.

As children develop through the second plane, they realize that not all their answers can be found in the classroom environment. Going Outs are not field trips, nor are they play dates. They are small group visits to local areas of interest, specifically coordinated, planned and implemented by the children themselves, in direct conjunction with the research happening in the classroom.

The classroom requirements for eligibility are very clearly communicated to the children by their directress. Children must meet the Going Out criteria of the classroom in order to be eligible for Going Out participation. Going Outs are a privilege which must be earned.

- Dr. Montessori believed that Going Outs spoke for the Montessori Method, because the children serve as ambassadors when they Go Out into society and conduct themselves accordingly. Consequently, children must have demonstrated consistent appropriate behavior and the grace and courtesy necessary to be successful ambassadors.
- They must have completed the preliminary research to prepare for a successful Going Out. These requirements may vary, depending on the age of the child and the level of the research required for the project.
- They must also fully complete the process of preparing for the trip – researching the itinerary for the trip, coordinating the chaperone, and arranging required transportation.
- Going Outs are the work of the children. Failure to accomplish any one of these steps may result in the child not participating in the Going Out process. If this is the case, the directress will clearly communicate the expectations, address the necessary corrective action, and provide the opportunity for redress.
- Some children may choose not to participate in the Going Out process at all during any given year. This choice will be respected.

The freedom and responsibility given at the elementary level is intentionally provided to help the children prepare for life. This freedom and responsibility are necessary components in developing the independence each child will need in order to take his or her place in the society of the classroom and in the larger world.

Going Out adult chaperone guidelines will be provided as part of the preparation for the Going Out. Adults interested in serving as chaperones must join the Going Out Chaperone Pool and complete a background check and have all required documentation on file prior to the Going Out.

Guide to Giving

JMS is a not-for-profit, tax-exempt corporation organized under Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. All revenues and operating funds are received from tuitions, fees, donations, and grants. All donations are tax deductible. There are many ways you may contribute to JMS:

- JMS Annual Fund Campaign – It is the expectation, as articulated in our Family Perpetual Enrollment Contract, that all families contribute at their personal challenge level. Please note that the parent participation level is an indicator that many corporations take into account when considering grant applications.
- Unrestricted monetary gifts to your child's classroom.
- Matching gifts – Hundreds of companies will match donations; please contact your human relations department to obtain appropriate paperwork.
- Planned giving (i.e., wills, living trusts, charitable remainder trusts, etc.)
- Gifts in Kind – These gifts include services such handy man, carpentry, gardening, etc. These types of donations are always welcomed and appreciated.
- Occasional voluntary opportunities to fund raise will be provided throughout the school year.

Health Records

JMS has adopted a first day exclusionary policy as required by the Illinois State Board of Education. **All required Health Examinations must be turned in prior to the child's first day of school.** Failure to provide required documentation will result in the child being held out of class until such time as the paperwork is submitted.

The Health Records Program at JMS is under the direction of the Will County Public Health Department. For students attending school programs where grades are not assigned, health examinations with immunizations or doctor signed exemptions are required to be completed prior to the date of entry to the school, for Kindergarten, 6th or transfer or new students. Dental exams are required by law for children entering Kindergarten, 2nd, 6th and transfer students. Eye exams are required for children entering Kindergarten, 8th and Illinois schools for the first time.

Preschool and Vision and Hearing screenings are done periodically at the school. When screening tests indicate concerns, parents will be notified so that the family may follow up with

the family doctor.

State and County Guidelines for health records are as follows:

- All public and private schools are required to maintain up-to-date health examinations for currently enrolled children.
- All exams must document immunization history or be accompanied by immunization records, or an immunization exemption, in writing. All exams must be completed by a licensed dentist/physician.
- Medical History must be completed and signed by the parent. Physician is required to sign and date physicals upon completion.

Information on physical and immunization clinics can be obtained by calling the Will County Community Health Center at 815-727-8670.

Internet Access and Usage Policy

Access to the Internet enables students to explore many educational libraries, databases, and websites. The intent of JMS is to make Internet access available to elementary and adolescents to further educational goals and objectives, as necessary. Children accessing the Internet will do so only under the direction of their director and are to only use Internet access as provided in the classroom. While the school makes full use of firewalls, Internet filtering and monitoring software, no internet security system is without fail. Families should be aware that some material accessible via the Internet may contain items that are inaccurate, potentially offensive, illegal or defamatory. We believe that the benefits to students from Internet access, in the form of information resources, outweigh the disadvantages. While parents are ultimately responsible for setting and conveying the standards that their children should follow when using media and information sources, JMS faculty and staff will make every reasonable effort to remind your child of his or her role as a responsible digital citizen.

Lunch

Involve your child in packing his or her lunch. It allows them the freedom and responsibility of choice and direct input, and it contributes to the development of their independence. Please send your children to school with a healthy, nutritious, nut-aware lunch. We suggest a simple lunch which includes a main course (whole grains, protein), cut fresh fruit and/or vegetable and a reusable water bottle. Do not allow your children to choose soda, candy or excessively sweet foods such as muffins, sugary yogurts, etc. Classroom directresses may have their own lunch guidelines, which will be communicated to parents as appropriate.

Children do not share food. If your child forgets his/her lunch, we will contact you to make arrangements. If you must purchase food locally for drop-off, please consider using a neighborhood grocery store. Please do not drop off "fast food" lunches for your children.

Media Use of Images

Occasionally, JMS will utilize promotional materials and/or receive media news coverage which includes the work of the children. Permission to participate is included in the Family Perpetual Enrollment Contract and will remain in effect until graduation or unless a change of status is provided, in writing, to the office.

Medication

We recognize that occasionally a medication must be administered during school hours. All medications should be given to the office in its original container. A completed and signed authorization form must accompany all medications. **Prescription and over-the-counter medicines will not be administered without this form;** this includes Epi-pens and inhalers. All Epi-pens and inhalers must be accompanied by a Student Health Care Plan.

New Student Referral Program

New student placement referrals will result in a \$250 thank you gift, payable directly to the referring family, subsequent to new family enrollment. Word of mouth is one of our most powerful marketing tools and this program is intended to express our appreciation to those families who are sharing their positive experience at JMS with their friends and family.

Program parameters are as follows:

- Referral thank you gifts are applicable only for families brand new to JMS. Siblings and families returning after a lapse in attendance will not be eligible.
- Applicants may identify only one referring family.
- New students must remain actively enrolled at JMS for a minimum of 60 school days (approximately three calendar months.)
- There will be no limit to the number of thank you gifts referring current families may receive.
- Thank you gifts will be disbursed in December and June, at the close of the semester in which the new child(ren) begin attendance.

Employees of JMS are not eligible for referral thank you gifts.

Nut-Aware Policy

JMS strives to be a safe school for all our students, including our students who have a life-threatening food allergy. Towards this goal, we have adopted a nut-aware environment. We will work with our students and their parents to understand that nuts should not be brought to school

for lunch, snacks, or other celebrations. This includes items that contain ingredients made with nut oils or butters. We request that all parents support our students by keeping all nut products at home. Directresses will work with students to establish good hand washing and classroom maintenance standards. School administration has further defined the school's efforts toward this goal by adopting a school-wide action plan, which can be reviewed in detail on our website.

Observations

Classroom observations are an important piece of understanding your child's educational experience here at JMS. Observations are held twice a year in October and March and we encourage all our parents to observe your child's class in action. Your cooperation according to the following guidelines is greatly appreciated:

- Please sit quietly and observe the children as a class. Be sure to observe children other than your own. If you are inside the classroom, please do not interfere with the work of the children. Please do not ask for your child to be moved or for us to interfere in the natural environment at all.
- Please do not initiate conversation with the children. If a child greets you, respond appropriately, of course, but do not seek to prolong the conversation. If necessary, please gently remind the children to return to their work. If you are observing with someone, please keep your conversation low, and to a minimum.
- The directresses may not be able to take time from their classroom duties to converse with you during or immediately after your observation. If questions occur to you while you are observing, please write them down on the clipboard provided and leave it on the chair for the director.

What to Notice

** Children initiating their own activities and choosing their own work: independent work; work in groups

** The directress presenting individual and small-group lessons

** Orderly use of materials and the return of materials to their original locations

** A variety of work in progress, from mathematics to geography, from language to music

** Independence, which is revealed by children who are not overly dependent on the adults in the environment

** Elaborate work, such as very long addition problems, research, or detailed charts

** Children cooperating with each other

** Varying levels of concentration and self-discipline

** An atmosphere of responsibility and respect

We hope you enjoy your visit!

Outdoor Safety

We encourage children to play courageously; to explore, to build, to imagine, and to follow their natural play inclinations in a mindful way, while maintaining an awareness of, and an appreciation for, their friends and classmates.

Guidelines are in place to help protect the safety and well-being of our children and are discussed with the children as part of the classroom orientation process. Adult supervision will be interactively present at all times in order to supervise, observe, facilitate conflict resolution, and to escort any children who need to re-enter the building for restrooms, first aid, pick-ups, etc. Parents, during the school day, please do not approach the outdoor environment without first checking in with the office; not all our faculty and staff may be able to visually identify you.

Winter Weather Play: Children will go out to play whenever it is not physically dangerous to do so. We do check the precipitation, temperature and wind chill factor every day during inclement weather. We will enjoy outdoor recess when the wind chill factor is 20 degrees or warmer. All children should be in possession of hats, waterproof gloves/mittens, snow pants, and appropriate footwear for the weather.

When we are blessed with snow, children must have snow pants, boots, hats and gloves/mittens in order to play in the snow. Elementary children who are not dressed for snow play will remain on the blacktop.

Parent Ambassador Program

JMS Parent Ambassadors exist to support the school's administration and Board of Trustees to accomplish the strategic and operational goals of the school. The Parent Ambassador Program assists with the school's logistical needs and promotes activities that enhance school and community spirit. All parents are invited and encouraged to participate.

Parent/Directress Conferences

Conferences are an essential component of communication between parents and classroom directresses. These meetings are valuable tools in our continuing efforts to create and maintain productive working relationships that benefit our families and our children. Conferences are scheduled very tightly, please be on time. Directresses are also available throughout the school year to address concerns that require immediate attention.

Tips for a Successful Conference

- *Observe your child's class prior to the conference.* Observations provide a frame of reference that will make discussion of use of materials and classroom dynamics easier to comprehend. And it's just fun.
- *Talk with your child before the conference.* Familiarize yourself with your child's classroom experience.
- *Be prepared to ask questions.* Write down any questions and/or concerns you may have prior to the conference so you don't forget what you want to discuss.
- *Be on time for the conference.* Conferences are tightly scheduled. Please be considerate of the conference schedule, and your fellow parents, and arrive on time.
- *Please keep your conference to the allotted amount of time.* If you feel that you absolutely need more than the regularly scheduled time, then follow-up and arrange an additional meeting before or after school.
- *Knock on the door when it is time for your conference.* This is not rude. This will let them know that you are there and waiting your turn.
- *Please be patient if your conference is delayed.* Despite our best efforts, occasionally conferences may run behind. You will still receive your allotted amount of time and the same attention to detail in your conference.
- *Be positive during the conference.* Remember you are both there to help your child succeed. Don't react defensively if your child's directress brings up a concern. We are a team, working collaboratively to best meet the needs of your child.
- *Work together to create a plan of action.* Creating a specific plan will allow both you and your child's directress to address issues and monitor progress throughout the school year. Administration stands ready to assist parents and directresses in this process, when necessary.
- *Discuss the social and behavioral as well as the academic.* Children's experiences are more than just the academics. Your child's role in the larger classroom environment is just as important to your child's overall development as a person.
- *What can you do at home to complement your child's experience at school?* There are many ways you can bring Montessori into your home. Your directresses will be happy to share their suggestions with you.
- *Follow-up.* Keeping the lines of communication open will allow us to continue to work together on behalf of your child.

Partnership Agreement

Parents are expected to abide by the terms of the Parent Handbook and the Perpetual Enrollment Agreement.

You are an important member of the Joliet Montessori School community. You have the power to be a positive or a negative influence. With the former, our school will thrive; with the latter, our school will struggle. When in doubt, take the high road that seeks a path to understanding.

Physical or Sexual Abuse Policy

Our faculty and staff are required under P.A. 25-925 of the Illinois State Board of Education to report any case of suspected physical or sexual abuse immediately to the Head of School. The Head of School is obligated to make an oral report immediately to the Department of Health and Human Services.

The Illinois Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act (the “Act”) imposes special requirements on school personnel with respect to reporting suspected child abuse and neglect. It also gives certain protections to people who make reports of abuse or neglect under the Act. Under Illinois law, the employee is protected from any lawsuit for taking such action.

Child abuse and neglect are defined in the Act. Essentially, abuse is excessive non-accidental physical injury by a family or household member or the commission of a sex offense against the child by any person. Sex offenses include sexual relations between a child under 18 years of age and a person more than five years older than the victim. Neglect is the withholding of food or medical treatment or other care or treatment necessary for the child’s well-being or abandonment.

The fact that faculty and staff may have learned of abuse or neglect through a communication that would otherwise be considered privileged does not exempt the faculty and staff’s duty to report.

Special Needs Policy

It is our goal to meet the educational and developmental needs of all our students. JMS shall provide an appropriate Montessori education and necessary related services to all children with unique and special needs to the best of our ability, as will meet the educational and developmental concerns of each individual child. Maintaining a student’s IEP is the responsibility of the parents/guardians. JMS uses documentation as one piece of the child’s educational portfolio and may at times, ask parents for updated progress from professionals.

If it is determined by the Head of School and Faculty, in partnership with the student’s parents or legal guardians, that Joliet Montessori is not capable of meeting the educational and developmental needs of the child, parents will be informed of this determination and options for a more suitable and appropriate educational environment will be discussed and provided.

Step-Up Policy

Each primary half-day child will be invited to step-up to full-day when the directress is assured of his or her greatest readiness for success in the afternoon environment.

It is our belief that the majority of children are prepared for the rigors of the full day experience by the age of five. The vast majority of JMS primary children will be invited to step-up no later than their 5th birthday. If there are extenuating circumstances preventing a child from stepping up by their 5th birthday, the directress will discuss the situation in detail with the parents/legal guardians. Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure that each child's needs are being met in order for the child to succeed as an 'afternoonner.'

Supplies

Most classroom supplies are provided by JMS. Individual classrooms may have specific requests for parent donations. These needs will be discussed during the orientation process. Due to limited space, it is advised that the children do not bring backpacks.

Toys, Cell Phones and Miscellaneous Articles

Please refrain from sending your children to school with items such as toys, cell phones, games, candy, money, etc. They will not be allowed to use them while at school. If your child has something interesting/educational to show the class, your classroom directress will have specific plans for how these may be shared. Please contact your directress if you have any questions.

This handbook cannot be - and is not intended to be - all inclusive. The Head of School reserves the right to resolve issues and concerns not specifically addressed in detail, in accordance with Montessori Philosophy and the guidelines and policies established by the Board of Trustees.