



Montessori Academy of Valparaiso

505 Marquette St
Valparaiso, IN 46383
(219)462-1932

Policy and Procedure Handbook

School Cancellation/Delay Policy

When the Montessori Academy closes for snow or severe weather, all of our programs, classes and enrichment will also be closed.

If the Valparaiso Community Schools calls a “**2 Hour Delay**”, we will make the decision about our school as follows:

2 Hour Delay for **FOG**: MAV will be open as usual. Classes at normal times.

2 Hour Delay for **COLD**: MAV will be open as usual. Classes at normal times.

2 Hour Delay for **SNOW/ICE**:

Toddler **8:00-10:00 am** class: **Cancelled**

Preschool **8:00-11:00 am** class: **Cancelled**

Full Day Preschool **8:00-2:45 pm** class: **new time 10:00 am-2:45 pm**

Kindergarten **8:00-2:45 pm** class: **new time 10:00 am-2:45 pm**

Toddler **10:30-12:30 pm** class: **Class at normal times**

If the Valparaiso Community Schools **cancels** school, we will make the decision about our school as follows:

Cancellation due to **FOG**: MAV will be open as usual.

Cancellation due to **COLD**: MAV will be open as usual.

Cancellation due to **SNOW/ICE**: MAV will make a decision based on what is safest for everyone.

Our school will not automatically cancel if Valparaiso does. **Notification of any cancellation will be sent via our Brightwheel and Homeroom app.**

Staff Calls

If you would like to talk to a Directress, call or email the office and request that the Directress contact you. The office staff is able to answer questions concerning procedures and policies.

Tuition Payments and Receipts

Tuition payments are due on or before the first (1st) of each month. Tuition is not subject to adjustments for illness, absence, or vacation. Payments received after the 5th of the month are considered late and a \$25.00 late fee for each student you are paying for will be added to your tuition bill. If payment is not received by the 10th of the month, your child will not be permitted back to school until the account has been made current. There is a \$35.00 fee for returned checks.

Monthly statements and invoices can be viewed and downloaded on the Brightwheel app.

Paperwork for Enrollment

The following forms **MUST** be completed and on file in the office no later than the first day of school. Children are not permitted to attend school without all the paperwork on file. If you choose not to have your child vaccinated, you must fill out a waiver form. Please contact the office for that form.

Forms: Tuition Agreement, Enrollment form, a copy of current vaccination records, or vaccination waiver form, and signed Handbook Acknowledgement.

Tuition Agreements

Tuition Agreements are signed at the time of enrollment for the full school year starting in August and ending in May. **You have until June 1st to make changes or withdraw.** After this date you will be responsible for the full contract even after withdrawing. If legal action needs to be taken to collect the fees, you are responsible for all of the legal fees and attorney fees incurred to do so. The registration fee paid at the time of enrollment is nonrefundable. No transfer of the child’s records will be made until the withdrawal form is completed and filed with the school office. There are no refunds given for days off due to sickness or vacations.

MAV reserves the right to terminate the contract to provide education for your child. Whenever, in the judgment of the Directress and owner, the behavior of your child is such that your child poses a threat of injury to self, to others, to school material/property, or your child disrupts the educational processes of the school.

A positive and constructive working relationship between the Montessori Academy of Valparaiso and a student's parents/guardians is essential to the fulfillment of our mission. This being said, MAV has reserved the right not to continue enrollment or not to re-enroll a student if the school reasonably concludes that the actions of a parent/guardian make such a positive and constructive relationship impossible or otherwise seriously interfere with MAV's accomplishment of its educational purposes. (see behavior)

Toddler Transfer to Preschool

A toddler must turn 3 years old prior to November 1st in order to be considered for moving to a preschool class in January (unless it is their second year in the toddler program.) Several additional factors will determine if they are able to transfer. The following will be considered: being **fully** toilet trained, directress' evaluation of the child's readiness, parents' opinion on what is best for their child, and space available in our preschool program at the time. If our preschool classrooms are already full, we are unable to make any moves in January.

Attendance

The Montessori method is rooted in structure, repetition, self-discipline, and improvement. While MAV understands that children may not be able to attend school every day of the year, we do encourage families to send children every day possible. Please call the office if your child will not be in school so that the office may alert the child's Directress.

Field Trips

Anytime an off-site field trip will be taken, written notification will be sent via email with a deadline date and an amount due (if applicable). If we do not receive the permission slip and amount due by the deadline, MAV will accept that you as parent/guardian have signified that your child will not be attending the field trip or school that day. *If you do not return the slip acknowledging your attendance at school rather than attending the field trip, we will not have a place for them on field trip day as we plan our staff around planned attendance.*

Parents will provide transportation to all of our field trips and be responsible for their own child during each field trip. Therefore, a child will need a parent or other adult to chaperone each field trip.

Enrichment Program

The Enrichment program is designed to allow our students additional time to play with their friends after their regular school day is finished. This playtime is conducted with adult supervision and includes crafts, stories, snack, and outdoor time. To assure the quality of our program, MAV requires a "reservation" be made for children who will need to use the Enrichment program. An enrichment form is due by the Wednesday prior to the week that the child will need to stay in Enrichment. Forms can be found outside the office or attached to the monthly newsletter. *If a reservation is made during the same week as enrichment is needed, a \$10.00 late fee must be included on the enrichment form.*

Communication from the Office

Communication from the office will be sent to your **email address**. This will include newsletters, announcements, extracurricular activities registrations, and field trip forms. Most forms can also be found on the Brightwheel app. Please print any forms at home and return to school by the deadline indicated. The office will also post reminders/info about the school on the white board in our entry way.

Custody Issues

If one (1) parent has been awarded custody of a student by a court order, the parent of custody shall provide to MAV a copy of the custody order and inform the school in writing of any restrictions and/or limitations in the rights of the non-custodial parent.

Medical and Health Information

To help decrease the spread of illness, the following policy must be adhered to before your child can return to school. Your child **may not** come to school:

1. If he/she has a communicable disease: mumps, chicken pox, strep throat, scarlet fever, COVID, etc. These should be reported to the school immediately so that we may inform the rest of the student population of a possible interaction.
2. We will continue to follow the Porter County Health Department's most up to date COVID-19 guidelines. If your child tests positive, please contact our office if you are unsure of the current protocol.
3. If your child has any fever, vomiting, or diarrhea. Your child needs to be free of any of these symptoms for 24 hours after the initial onset. If your child is sent home at any point during the day due to these symptoms, they may not return to school the following day.
4. If your child has any skin rash which has not been diagnosed by a doctor.
5. If he/she is in the first 48 hours of a common cold with secretions. Nasal discharge, which is green or opaque yellow, may indicate bacterial infection. Although the child may not feel ill, it is during this phase of the upper respiratory infection that the infection spreads rapidly through respiratory droplet dispersion.
6. If your child has pink eye and has been given drops by a doctor, your child may not return to school until you have had 24 hours of medication.
7. For the protection of your child, please cover any open wound or sore with a bandage.

If your child comes to school with any of the above conditions, they will be sent home. It is your responsibility to have your child picked up from the school as soon as possible. Please have a contact that can pick up your child in case you are away from the area, so your child will be comfortable as soon as possible. If we are unable to reach you to pick up your child if ill, we will contact your emergency contacts to come pick up your child.

Please keep in mind that sending your child to school when they are feeling extremely tired from sickness, with a persistent cough, a low-grade fever, or nose that continuously runs really hinders their ability to do work in the classroom and enjoy their time with us. **If your child displays any of these symptoms during the day, even if they are not running a fever, we may call you to pick them up and take them home, so they will be more comfortable.**

Allergies and Food Restrictions

If your child is allergic to a certain food or is restricted from eating certain foods, you must inform MAV in writing. This information should be provided on the medical portion of the Student Application. All such information is posted in the classrooms where the child is cared for.

If your child suffers from a life-threatening allergy or condition, please talk to the child's Directress to describe the treatment plan and emergency action plan. If your child requires an Epi-Pen or similar device, arrange to have one placed in your child's classroom file at school.

The Montessori Academy of Valparaiso makes every attempt to prevent your child from exposure to the items you list; however, an accidental exposure may occur. It is **EXTREMELY** important that MAV be informed if your child's allergy is life-threatening, so that we can initiate emergency procedures should your child develop symptoms which indicate such exposure.

If your child's food restriction is not allergy-related, please indicate this as well. In this event, we will inform you of any accidental exposure that we are aware of but will not initiate emergency procedures.

Medication

The giving or application of ANY medication, oral or topical, prescription or over-the-counter will be done ONLY on written order from a parent. The proper form is available from the MAV office and it must be signed by the parent. Verbal requests will not be honored. No medication will be dispensed without this complete form.

All prescription medicine must also come with the original pharmacy label attached. All over-the-counter medication must come in the original package. Safe delivery and pick up of the child's medication is the responsibility of the parent. All instructions for administration, including the time and amount to be given must accompany the medication in writing.

Class Papers and Works

Preschool and Kindergarten students bring their completed work home weekly in a folder. Bringing work home from school is special for the children so please take the time to go over the work with your child. If they bring a book home, please let them read it to you. Folders and books should be returned the following school day.

Timely Arrival

Being on time is supportive to your child's schedule and allows them to participate in all the special events of the day. A child does not like to feel as though the class has started without them. The first fifteen minutes of class is set aside for "transition", which gives the children a chance to take off their coats, find a place on the line, hear a story, and discuss the days of the week, calendar, or start work for the day, etc. When children come in late it also disrupts the concentration of the children at work. A child who is late also has a harder time transitioning to the classroom which can place added stress on the child for the day.

Observing Your Child in Class

MAV encourages parents and caregivers to observe their children at work in the classroom. Because the Toddlers and Preschoolers are easily distracted, all Toddler and Preschool observations are made from the hallway through the glass. Parents can make an appointment with their child's Directress if they wish to observe from inside the classroom.

Observing your child at work is important and gives you an opportunity to evaluate your child's concentration, persistence, patience, and social skills. A staff member will observe with you. Questions regarding specific issues about your child's education or behavior should be asked of the Directress, as our office staff are not always familiar with the details of your child's progress.

Conferences

Parent-Directress conferences are scheduled twice a year, Fall and Spring. This is your opportunity to come in to talk to your child's Directress about his/her progress.

Each semester there will be conference appointments available. The appointments are filled on a first-come, first-served basis.

In consideration of the student, no children are permitted to attend conferences.

Behavior

The Montessori Academy of Valparaiso takes pride in the opportunities it provides to students. We believe that the Montessori method of educating children by developing their own desire to learn, their own sense of self, and their own self-control/self-discipline is the best way to begin a love of learning. The method does not tolerate consistent aggressive behavior by children because it robs the class of a sense of security and instills fear that prevents children from learning.

While MAV understands that changes in family situations and normal child development cause children of all ages to exhibit “poor behavior”, we also expect families to work through these times with their children to improve their behavior. The parents/guardians of a child who consistently exhibits aggressive behavior (including, but not limited to hitting, biting, throwing, kicking, etc.), disruptive behavior (including, but not limited to an inability to sit on line for stories or group activities, tantrums, etc.) will be contacted by the child’s Directress to discuss the child’s behavior. The meeting will include discussion of a plan to improve the child’s classroom activities. If a child demonstrates a pattern of behavior with little, to no improvement within a reasonable amount of time, we may recommend modifying their schedule to limit the number of hours at school or possibly withdrawing from the program.

This behavior includes but is not limited to the following:

1. Aggression (verbal or physical)
2. Repeated physical assaults on children and/or teachers
3. Constant over activity that is undirected toward any specific activity
4. No attention span for any activity or encounter during the day
5. Inability to follow simple requests
6. Uncontrolled emotional state when spoken to
7. Destruction to the school, the school property, or property of others
8. Unable to separate from parents/caregivers in an appropriate manner.

Biting

We understand many children go through a biting phase, especially in the toddler years. Due to the possible risk involved in a child biting through another child's skin possibly causing infection, or even disease, we cannot tolerate this behavior. We have a no tolerance policy, any child who bites will be sent home for the day and is subject to dismissal. The Directress and owner will talk with the parents/guardians about the situation.

MAV will consider the best interest of all of the children in our school when contemplating a single child’s behavior and situation. At no time will any behavior that jeopardizes the well-being or safety of the other children or staff be tolerated.

Inappropriate Interactions

While body exploration is a very normal curiosity at this age, we have measures in place to protect the safety of all students. The following steps will be taken in the instance of inappropriate language referring to the body, inappropriate exposure of private body parts, or touching of another’s private body parts.

1. First occurrence: a phone call will be made to parent/guardian
2. Second occurrence: the student will be sent home, and a mandatory conference with parent/guardian will be scheduled.
3. Third occurrence: depending on the severity of the incidents, the student will be dismissed from MAV and proper reporting may take place.

All of our staff is trained in identifying and reporting child sexual abuse. We feel it is imperative to always follow the proper steps to protect the safety of all children.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

MAV uses a convenient “line” to begin our school day and again at dismissal. Carline begins 10 minutes before the start of class and ends 20 minutes after the start of class for the 8:00 am car line. Other car line times use the 5 minutes before and after the start of class timeframe.

When you pull into the driveway make sure your name **sign** is **clearly visible** in the windshield and placed on the passenger side visor. Your child(ren) should get **unbuckled, collect all of their things and be ready** to get out of the car **BEFORE** your car arrives at the school door. Your child should **have their hat, coat and gloves on their person**. They should have **classroom items in one hand and their lunch in another** (if they bring one). This is the start of **continuity of responsibility** that we are teaching your child. All their clothing and belongings are **their responsibility** when they arrive in the classroom, so it should also be their responsibility when they are in the car. When you get to the door, pull up far enough that your **child’s door is completely under the awning**, allowing your child to move easily into the school and keeping staff members and your child dry during inclement weather.

Off-Line Arrival and Dismissal

If you arrive before or after the line, an adult must **bring your child safely and quietly into the building**. Children are NEVER permitted in the halls without an adult present. Allowing a child to enter the building on his or her own is not permitted. At the end of the day, an adult must come into the building to pick up a child who is not being dismissed on the line.

Walking Your Child In

The arrival line will be slowed by families who choose to walk their child into the building. More importantly, walking your child in between moving vehicles presents a **safety concern**. If you have a time constraint, leave home earlier and be the first car in line; or if you must walk in, try to arrive before or after the line to do so. If you have business to conduct in school, drop your child off in line and then park your vehicle and come into the building. If you must walk your child in during the arrival line, please **park in the MAV parking** lot and hold your child’s hand while escorting them into the building. When you walk in the parking lot, please walk along the **North side of the car line**. **DO NOT WALK YOUR CHILD IN FRONT OF THE FIRST CAR IN LINE or IN BETWEEN THE CAR LINE AT ANY TIME**. Please **do not park in the circle** at all during line time as it is a safety concern for children walking in between moving cars as well as your car will block the drive, in case of an Emergency.

ATTENTION: New Late Drop-Off Policy

If you arrive past 8:30 you must park and walk your student(s) into school. Carline is over at this time and there is not always someone available to come outside.

ALL STUDENTS MUST ARRIVE BEFORE 9:15!

After 9:15, students will not be permitted to attend school that day. Late arrivals cause a great disruption to classroom routine and work time. It also negatively affects the child who is arriving late consistently. We understand that appointments are often scheduled at this time. If this is the case, please call the office ahead of time to let us know what time your child will be arriving.

Hazards of the Car Line/Line Etiquette

Please do not allow your child to hang out the window or sun roof while waiting in the car line. If you must bring a pet with you in your car, please have the **pet restrained with a leash**. We are always concerned when pets are present because the pet might sense a threat to your child when we reach in your car to help your child out of their seat.

As a non-smoking campus, we also would like to ask parents to refrain from smoking in their car during

our carline. Refrain from cell phone usage for the safety of all in the parking lot. Please do not block the entrance to the MAV staff parking lot as well as the entrances of the neighboring businesses.

Dismissal

The children will begin to be dismissed five minutes before the end of each class. Form a line in the driveway and a staff member will bring your child to your car. If you arrive more than 5 minutes early, please do not block the front door. **Wait back** approximately **2 car lengths** until a staff member opens the door to the school; **then pull forward**. Do not park your car in the driveway where the line forms and enter the building as it is impossible for the line to start when there are cars parked in the way.

Once you have picked up your child, please **pull completely out of the parking lot before buckling the seat belt or car seat**. This allows for a smooth dismissal. It is the parent's responsibility to inform grandparents, babysitters, etc. of our dismissal times and procedures (such as pulling forward to secure the child's safety seat, etc.) Please inform them that they need to have an ID on them to pick up your child.

Children who are not picked up on time will be brought to Enrichment. Parents must come in and sign the child out. There will be an initial \$10 fee per child, then the hourly fee is in effect. **Late pick up times are 5 minutes after half-day dismissal (11:05) and 15 minutes after the end of the day dismissal (3:00).**

Snacks

Each family will be assigned a week to provide snacks for the class. Please bring them in on Monday of the week you are assigned. We focus on the snacks being healthy, and also providing an opportunity for the children to sample foods that they may not have been exposed to before. All food items must come to school in the original, unopened packaging, with a visible ingredient label.

Lunches

Children who stay all day need to bring a lunch. We have microwaves. Please make sure re-heated items take no longer than 30 seconds to heat-up and are in microwave safe dishes. We will send home all food that is not eaten, so that you will know how much your child ate. We have silverware at school, so you do not need to send any. We will ask children to eat their main dish before any chips, cookies, etc. The teachers sit with the children for lunch and use this opportunity to talk about the food groups and healthy eating. **All** students need to bring a **FILLED** water bottle daily. If they run out, we will always re-fill their container. However, it just makes the mornings easier if it starts off full.

Birthday Celebrations

Each Directress has their own way of recognizing the birthdays of students during class. If a parent does wish to do something for all the students in recognition of the child's birthday, we ask that the child's Directress be contacted in advance. Please plan accordingly as to be respectful of classroom allergies. If you bring cupcakes, please keep frosting to a minimum and preferably not chocolate. To make cupcakes crumbless, use any cake mix and add only a can of clear pop. Bake as directed. No crumbs!

What to Wear

Toddlers

Toddlers do not go outdoors during class time in inclement weather. Please send your toddler without boots and snowsuits for ease in independent dressing. Toddlers do not need slippers. As your Toddler becomes ready for toilet learning, avoid dressing him/her in onesies, tights, button pants, belts, etc. as these items make it difficult for the child to avoid accidents. Please communicate with your child's Directress when he/she is potty training. Keep in mind footwear needs to be comfortable. Boots or flip flops are difficult for Toddlers to walk around in as well as to sit on the floor for an extended period of time. We ask that they do not wear shoes that "squeak" unless the noise can be turned off.

Preschool and Kindergarten

Clothing should allow for freedom of movement, should not impede participation in sometimes messy activities in the classroom, and should be easy to manipulate by the child as all preschool aged children must be potty trained. This means elastic waistbands are best. No belts, until or unless your child can manage them by him/herself. The children spend much time up and down from the floor doing their work and they play hard outside.

Non-slip, soled slippers are the safest and are to be worn by preschool and kindergarten children and will be kept at school. Large animal or character slippers, although cute, are not practical or safe. The children will play outside daily unless the weather prevents outdoor play (rain or wind-chill below 20 degrees F).

Closed toe gym shoes are the safest type of shoe to be worn on the playground for climbing and walking through the mulch. During cold weather, a backpack containing snow pants, boots, gloves and hats will be needed EACH and EVERY day for all children. If your child arrives to school without their cold weather backpack you will be asked to bring it back. Please no rolling backpacks.

Label, Label, Label

Anything and everything which can become detached from your child and which you would like returned home, must be labeled.

Please consider labels from www.mabelslabels.com (Labels that will not come off in the wash)