Morning Star Montessori Handbook

This handbook provides you with information about our school's policies and classroom procedures. Please keep this handbook handy for your frequent reference. You can always find this handbook on our website under "Current Families".

Montessori education is different from traditional philosophies of early learning because it is child centered, rather than teacher centered. The following guidelines follow the Montessori philosophy of a genuine child friendly classroom.

Phase-In

The first few weeks of school are a time of adjustment for you and your child. That is why we begin our year with what Maria Montessori called the Phase-In period. This period of time allows your child to grow comfortable in our classroom *gradually*. **First year students will start school on Tuesday, 9/8. Returning students will start school on Monday 9/14.** The schedule is below:

First week (New students)		**Second Week (All Students)**	
Tues 9/8	8:55 - 9:45am	Mon 9/12	8:55-10:45
Wed 9/9	8:55 - 10:00am	Tues 9/13	8:55-11:00
Thurs 9/10	8:55 - 10:15am	Wed 9/14	8:55-11:15
Fri 9/11	8:55 - 10:30am	Thurs 9/15	8:55-11:30
		Fri 9/16	8:55-11:45

Arrival and Departure

Caregivers and children should arrive at school by 8:55am. The doors will open between 8:55-9:00am and our school day begins **promptly** at 9:00 am. It is important that your child participate in our morning meeting and group lesson time. Arriving on time and with the other students allows for a smooth transition from home to school. When your child arrives late, it may be challenging for them to enter after the morning meeting has started, and can be disruptive to the flow of activities underway.

You and your child will be greeted at the Liberty Street entrance between 8:55 and 9:00 am. Please say goodbye *at the door* to encourage a smooth transition for your child. To ensure the safety of the children the Liberty Street door will be locked at 9:05. If you arrive after 9:05, please ring the doorbell. A teacher will come down to open the door. Parents should drop off and pick up students on time. If a student is consistently dropped off late or picked up late, the teachers, board and parents will communicate to discuss a plan of action.

Dismissal is at 11:50am. We will meet you at Liberty Street entrance at that time. In consideration for your waiting child, please be prompt. If you will be unavoidably late please text the teachers at 518-218-6656.

Please notify us if your child will be picked up by anyone other than their primary caregivers by texting 518-218-6656. If they need to be picked up by someone who is not listed on their transportation form, we will need permission directly from the child's caregivers before releasing them.

Attendance

It is important for your child to gain the experience of participating in a weekly routine so that they may anticipate and make plans. **If you are keeping your child home from school for any reason, please text or leave a message at 518-218-6656.** Please note that you will likely not receive a response as these messages are viewed on our teacher's tablet and they are not always able to respond if they are with students.

Please notify the school at learn@morningstarmontessorischool.org if your child displays symptoms of an illness, has been diagnosed with a contagious illness, or has the stomach bug or the flu. The school may share this information anonymously with the other parents via email so that families are aware of a possible contagious illness.

Clothing

Plain Slippers – To cut down on dirt in the classroom, and to maintain a quiet environment conducive to learning, we ask that you send your child to school on the first day with *plain* slippers with *soft non-slip* soles if possible. These slippers will be kept at school. Please be sure your child is able to put them on independently and that they fit properly. Socks with grips on the bottom are also acceptable.

Extra Clothes for School - At the beginning of the school year, please send in a change of clothes (2 pants, 2 long sleeve shirts, 2 pairs of socks(with grips), 2 pairs of underpants) in a ziplock with your child's name. We have smocks, but sometimes paint splatters or water spills and your child may need to change clothes to be comfortable. **If soiled clothing is sent home, please send a replacement item for the box the following day.**

Attire - Please be sure your child is dressed in *comfortable play clothes* to come to school each day. An ideal outfit is a **plain shirt** with **no** consumer, T.V., movie characters or messages, long pants, socks and closed toed shoes with backs. We will be working with your child on fastenings

and independent dressing; you can help reinforce this at home. Your child should wear footwear that they can put on and remove independently. We can help with tying shoes.

Tote bag - Your child should bring a tote bag to school every day. Please **no** backpacks or other bags that zip. The tote bag should be large enough to hold school papers and should be labeled with your child's name. This enables us to send home school notices and your child's work, so please check the bag daily. If you wish to send us a note, you may use a clothespin or bag clip to attach it to the outside of the bag, or deliver it to us personally at arrival time.

Illness Policy

Our school illness policy ensures that the needs of the whole group are met. Please keep your child home if:

- Your child is unable to participate in routine activities
- Your child shows any signs of illness prior to school hours

If you are keeping your child home from school for any reason, please text or leave a message at 518-218-6656 to notify our teachers of your child's absence.

Please notify the school if your child tests positive for Covid-19, has a contagious illness that warrants medication, or has the stomach bug or the flu. The School may share this information anonymously with the other parents if we see that an illness is going around in the classroom.

Your child may return to school if they have been fever free for more than 24 hours without the use of fever reducing medicine. We ask that if your child has had the stomach bug, that they be symptom free for 24 hours before their return to school to reduce the spread of illness in the classroom.

Please keep your child home if they are exhibiting any of the following symptoms within the last 24 hours:

- Fever (greater than 100.0°F)/chills
- Cough/shortness of breath
- Fatigue
- Muscle/body aches
- Headache
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea
- New loss of taste/smell

If your child becomes ill at school, we will contact you or the persons designated on your "Emergency Procedures" form. Your child will be made comfortable while awaiting your arrival.

School policy requires that your child's health form and immunization records be on file at school before your child attends school.

Morning Star Montessori requires that students be up to date on their immunizations. NYS School Vaccination Requirements can be found at the following URL: https://www.health.ny.gov/prevention/immunization/schools/school_vaccines/

Good Hygiene Practice

It is important that children develop good hygienic habits. We practice hand washing upon entering the school, after using the bathroom, before snacks and other times during the day when it is deemed necessary. Because children learn by imitating adults, we ask that you support our hand washing efforts by role modeling hand washing practices at home.

At school, children are encouraged to cough and sneeze into their shoulder or elbow, away from others, and to use tissues.

Changes in the Home

Changes in the home can profoundly influence a child. Caregivers are asked to keep teachers informed of such changes as a new baby, a move, a separation or divorce, a new child care provider, the death of a relative or a pet, or anything else which may cause changes in the behavior of your child. The exchange of this information can help both the teachers and the parents understand and meet the needs of your child. Any exchange of information will be kept confidential.

Changes in Address/Emergency Contacts

If you have a change in address or telephone number in either the home or workplace, please notify us in writing. Please remember to update us on any changes in emergency contacts.

School Closings

In the event of a school closing you will be notified by email and text (Kaymbu) at approximately 7:00 am.

Snow Days

If Troy City Schools are closed due to snow or ice, we will be closed.

If Troy City Schools are delayed one or two hours due to snow or ice we will inform you whether school will be open or closed via email and/or text. Some of our teachers do not live in Troy. Generally, if Troy is delayed, it means that the roads in neighboring areas are dangerous to travel on, and will likely result in school closing. There may be times that Troy City Schools remain open, but the surrounding areas have unsafe driving conditions. If this is the case, our school may close to ensure the safety of our staff and families.

Communication

To contact the school regarding illness, absences, late arrivals/pickup - please call or text our Google number at **518-218-6656.** Calls/texts to this number go directly to our email address

and the teachers' tablet in the classroom. Please note you may not receive a reply to your text, but be assured that your message has been received by our teachers.

Kaymbu - We use a family communication app so that we can share urgent messages to our families (school closings due to weather) and so that teachers can share photos of your children with you. There is a Kaymbu family app that you can download to your phone, but if you do not wish to use the app, you can view everything through your email as well. You will receive urgent messages directly to your phone via text from this app.

Slack - We have created a 2026-27 Family Slack Channel. You will receive an invite to this channel via email and can use Slack through the app on your phone or through a web browser. Slack can be used to coordinate play dates, share local events and connect with other Morning Star Families. Please do not use this channel to communicate illnesses, absences, etc. to the school.

Information Nights

There will be at least one Information Night scheduled throughout the school year. These events are for new and returning caregivers (adults only please). Attending these events allows you to gain a deeper knowledge about what your child is doing at school. The teachers will give an overview of the educational materials that are currently in the classroom and will discuss the daily routine and Montessori values. This is a great time to ask questions and socialize with the other families!

Family Classroom Evenings

These events occur 3 times a year. The purpose of this evening is for you to follow your child in the classroom and observe how they choose and complete the works that they have had a lesson on thus far. The focus of the evening is your child. It is an opportunity for your child to teach **you** the lessons they have learned! We will split our Family Evenings into two time slots (4-5pm and 5-6pm). One week prior to the event, we will send out a sign-up sheet via email.

Snack

Families will be asked to contribute snacks and items for food prep on a rotating basis. Please refer to the snack schedule on our Google Calendar to see when you are scheduled to bring in snack. A week's supply of snacks generally includes 20 apples, 2 boxes of Wheat Thins, two eight oz. bricks of mild white cheddar cheese and 2 packages of rice cakes. As the school year progresses the food prep will change and evolve based on the skill…. If you are unable to provide snack for any reason, please do not hesitate to reach out to the school.

Sharing Items

Sharing Day is on Tuesday. We will begin Sharing after Phase In. Please do **not** send toys in to share. ***Sharing items should have educational interest***. Items may include a book, a nature object, an artwork etc.

Observation

We welcome our caregivers to schedule a time to observe their child in the classroom starting in November. The children and teachers need to get to know each other and become familiar with the classroom environment before caregivers observe our class in session.

Conferences

Conferences are scheduled two times during the school year. Please consult the School Calendar for dates. Please be aware that you do not need to wait to discuss your concerns until conference time. Feel free to contact teachers after school hours until 5pm on any day or leave the teachers a message and they will promptly get back to you.

Holidays in the Classroom

Morning Star is a secular school. We support each child's academic, emotional and spiritual growth while embracing everyone's beliefs. The following holidays may be included in the classroom using books, stories, songs, and special works. While there is no religious attachment to what is included in the classroom, stories and traditions surrounding these holidays may be discussed. If your family celebrates a holiday that is not listed below, please let us know and we would love to include it in the classroom.

Holidays may include, but are not limited to: Halloween, Indigenous Peoples' Day, Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Lunar New Year, Valentine's Day, Easter, Mother's Day, Father's Day

Discipline

At Morning Star Montessori, we seek to build your child's self esteem by helping them develop self-control and responsibility for their actions. We never use physical punishment or belittle a child in any way.

To limit the need for any disciplinary action a few simple ground rules are established. These ground rules set limits of behavior for the safety and protection of the children. The approach of the teacher is firm and supportive and takes into consideration each child's developmental level. Children are encouraged to use language to resolve conflicts and will be redirected to alternative activities as necessary. A child may be required to choose a different activity or refrain from interaction with others until appropriate control is regained. In this way children learn acceptable group behavior and develop positive techniques for solving problems.

Adjustment

In order to give top priority to the healthy development of each child, it is imperative that a stable classroom environment be maintained. The School will pursue all possible options to avoid suspension or termination of any student due to behavioral, social/emotional or academic concerns. The decision to remove a child from the classroom is something the school does not take lightly. A decision of this nature would only be reached after thorough discussion with all parties involved, including but not limited to the board, teachers, and parents/guardians. Procedures are detailed in the tuition contract.

Birthdays

We ask that families distribute birthday invitations personally to the caregivers of the child(ren) you wish to invite. We ask that you do not send them in with your child to put in bags.

We celebrate your child's birthday at school with a traditional "Birthday Walk."
We create a timeline using the sandpaper numerals and photos from each year of your child's life. The child's family is invited and may want to talk about the events the photos depict. Your child will carry the Earth (globe) around the sun (a candle) as many times as they are in years, and finally we will sing "Happy Birthday."

Some children may prefer not to be the center of attention and may not wish to have a celebration at school. No problem! We can modify the walk or eliminate it altogether if it makes your child more comfortable.

In preparation for the birthday walk, you and your child may want to:

- Write a simple one statement for each year of your child's life
- You can include developmental highlights, moves, trips, arrival of siblings, likes and dislikes etc.
- Bring a photograph or create a picture of where you live
- Bring a photograph or create a picture of your family
- Bring a photo for each year the child has been on this earth, a birth photo, a photo of the birthday child now

Please contact us one week prior to your child's birthday if you would like to schedule their birthday walk in the classroom.

Donations

We are always happy to receive donations. We gladly accept the following donations on a continual basis:

- paper (blank, colored, lined, tissue, card stock, etc.)
- collage items (buttons, sequins, ribbon, pom-poms, pipe cleaners, etc.)
- pictures cut from magazines (for our picture story work)
- fresh flowers
- laminating film
- time to make classroom materials
- Consumable paper products (tissues, napkins, paper towels, toilet paper, cleaning wipes and 3 oz dixie cups)

Volunteering

Morning Star Montessori is overseen by a volunteer Board of Directors made up primarily of caregivers/guardians of currently enrolled students. The organization cannot operate without a vibrant and engaged Board of Directors. If you're interested in joining the board, please email learn@morningstarmontessorischool.org.

Aside from being on the Board, there are many other opportunities to volunteer. We will reach out to all families for their participation in some volunteer activities through a Volunteer Opportunities sign-up sheet.

Caregiver Participation

We welcome the participation of caregivers in the classroom to share their talents, skills and ideas. When caregivers visit the classroom, we try to incorporate their talents into real learning and a participatory experience for each child. If you would like to share a particular skill or talent with us, please let us know!