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**Villa Di Maria Montessori School**  
**Parent Handbook**  
**2024-25**

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## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Address:** 12707 Alston Road, Sugar Land, TX 77478

**Phone (Office):** 832.874.6399

**Phone (Mobile):** 281.435.0018

**Email:** [info@villadimariamontessori.com](mailto:info@villadimariamontessori.com)

**Website:** [www.villadimariamontessori.com](http://www.villadimariamontessori.com)

**Facebook:** <https://www.facebook.com/villadimariamontessorischool/>

**Linkedin:** <https://www.linkedin.com/company/villa-di-maria-montessori>

**Instagram:** <https://www.instagram.com/villadimariamontessori/>

**Ages:** 16 months to 9.5 years

**Operating Hours:** August – July, Monday – Friday, 7 a.m. – 5:30 p.m.

Villa Di Maria Montessori is licensed with the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services and adheres to the minimum standards set by the state. The standards can be viewed at [www.dfps.state.tx.us](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us). Inspections are performed on a regular basis and the results are available on the website above or by request. The childcare licensing telephone number is 436-525-2187. All suspicions of child abuse and neglect must be reported by calling 1-800-252-5400. Our school abides by the gang-free law under the Texas Penal Code. Any area within 1000 feet of a child-care center is a gang-free zone, where criminal offenses related to organized criminal activity are subject to harsher penalties.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Welcome to Villa Di Maria Montessori School. The director and staff of Villa Di Maria hope this Parent Handbook will answer most of your questions and acquaint you with our school's policies. Please speak with the director for any additional information. Office hours are 7:00 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

## **HISTORY**

In July 2017, taking almost three decades of early childhood teaching experience and her passion for the Association Montessori International (AMI) method, Ms. Sabira Najeeb decided to start the first Montessori school in Sugar Land that is in line with AMI standards. Ms. Sabira's desire to offer parents and children an option for an authentic Montessori school in this area motivated her to purchase a school campus conveniently located near Dairy Ashford, just off Hwy 59 — Villa Di Maria was born.

Since VDM opened its doors half a decade ago, the school has grown by leaps and bounds. Ms. Sabira's persistent commitment to genuine Montessori led her to begin the AMS Accreditation process in 2019. Over the past three years Villa Di Maria has been one of only a few schools in Sugar Land to participate in the Pathway of Continuous School Improvement (a rigorous assessment program designed to evaluate the quality and authenticity of Montessori schools).

## **MISSION STATEMENT**

Villa Di Maria Montessori School aims to provide an outstanding and authentic Montessori environment as per Association Montessori International (AMI) in order to fully nurture the development of each child. We hope to foster in our children the lifelong characteristics of peace, intrinsic discipline, love of learning, academic excellence and genuine curiosity. Villa Di Maria Montessori offers a remarkable learning experience to prepare children for life.

## **MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY**

The Montessori method of education was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori who was the first female, Italian physician. Dr. Montessori developed this approach through the scientific observation of children all over the world. Through her observations, Dr. Montessori found consistent, naturally developing tendencies and characteristics that would serve as the foundation for the creation of optimally prepared environments that would encourage and support the realization of children's full potential.

The primary goal of Montessori education is to fan the sparks of light which every child experiences as they learn, into a lifelong flame.

An authentic Montessori school is one where education is viewed not just as a means to an end, but as a preparation for life; where the method for learning comes, not from a curriculum, but from the natural development of your child; a place where creativity, innovation, and

individuality are valued as much as concentration, motivation, and persistence; where your child is not just a student, but also a teacher.

### **THE PREPARED ENVIRONMENT**

The Montessori classroom is an environment prepared by adults for children. It contains all the essentials for optimal development but nothing superfluous. Attributes of a prepared environment include order and reality, beauty and simplicity. Everything is child-sized to enhance the children's independent functioning. A trained adult and a large enough group of children of mixed ages make up a vital part of the prepared environment.

### **THREE-HOUR WORK CYCLE**

Through years of observation around the world, Dr. Montessori came to understand that children, when left in freedom, displayed a distinct work cycle which was so predictable it could even be graphed. This cycle, with two peaks and one valley, lasted approximately three hours. In Montessori environments children have three hours of open, uninterrupted time to choose independent work, become deeply engaged, and repeat to their own satisfaction.

### **MIXED AGE GROUPS**

One of the hallmarks of Montessori education is that children of mixed ages work together in the same class. Age groupings are based on the Planes of Development as identified by Dr. Maria Montessori. Multi-age groupings enable younger children to learn from older children and experience new challenges through observation; older children reinforce their learning by teaching concepts they have already mastered, develop leadership skills, and serve as role models. Because each child's work is individual, children progress at their own pace; there is cooperation rather than competition between the ages. This arrangement mirrors the real world, in which individuals work and socialize with people of all ages and dispositions.

### **PRIMARY CURRICULUM**

There are several different, yet integrated, areas of learning in a Montessori classroom: practical life skills, sensorial development, language, mathematics, science, and cultural studies (geography, art, music). In addition to the available materials in each area, children also take time out during the day to sing songs, read a story, or enjoy nature.

Children have both individual and group lessons in each area. Throughout the day, children are free to work with the activities. Emphasis is placed on helping children choose pursuits that are of interest to them, thus supporting the child's natural curiosity and desire to learn.

What you won't see in a genuine Montessori program are systems of rewards and punishments to promote work or control behavior. In a Montessori class, children are engaged, active, and respectful because they are internally motivated, spending their time in an environment that consistently supports development of their will — that is, positive willpower and self-control.

## **PRACTICAL LIFE SKILLS**

Children in Montessori classrooms learn to take care of themselves and their environment through activities such as hand washing, dusting, mopping, folding, pouring, cutting, etc. These activities help toddlers and preschool-age children learn to work independently, develop concentration, and prepare for later work with reading and math.

## **SENSORIAL DEVELOPMENT**

Children work with material that develop and refine the 5 senses—seeing, hearing, touching, tasting, and smelling—and build a foundation for speech, writing, and math. Each scientifically designed material isolates a specific quality such as color, size, or shape. This focuses the child's attention on this one characteristic, and teaches them to sort, classify, order, and develop vocabulary to describe objects she experiences in the world around them.

## **LANGUAGE**

When the child leaves the Montessori classroom after the age of six, he will have become an articulate person, being able to communicate his feelings in well-formed sentences and in writing. He will be able to write these thoughts and feelings in a skillful handwriting. He will have the ability to write in different styles and about a variety of subjects. The child will have total reading and a sense of the home language at a level where he will be the master of his words.

## **MATHEMATICS**

All babies are born with mathematical minds, that is, they have a propensity to learn things which enhance their ability to be exact and orderly, to observe, compare, and classify. Humans naturally tend to calculate, measure, reason, abstract, imagine and create. If mathematics is not part of the young child's experience, his subconscious mind will not be accepting of it at a later date. The materials in the math area offer the children the 'keys' that they will need to send them on the road to further exploration and maturation of the mathematical mind. The ways in which the materials are ordered allows the children to complete full intellectual cycles that help them to achieve the freedom to become independent.

## **CULTURAL STUDIES**

A wide range of subjects, including history, geography, science, art, and music, are integrated in lessons in the cultural area of the curriculum. Children learn about their own community and the world around them. Discovering similarities and differences among people and places helps them develop an understanding and appreciation of the diversity of our world, and a respect for all living things. Even though this subject encompasses the largest amount of material, it is also the hardest to characterize fully because it is interwoven in the very fabric of the classroom. Montessori education never shuts any subject into a rigid time slot in the name of organization. Instead, it is common in a Montessori classroom to begin a lesson on an important historical figure, only to add geography by pointing out his country on the globe. Or perhaps, a science

project was prepared using food coloring dyes and a natural discussion on color mixing ensued. Cultural studies in the classroom are viewed first and foremost as an aid to life rather than facts to be memorized. This results in the child's joyful assimilation of the world they live in, rather than disinterested regurgitation of seemingly useless information.

### **TODDLER CURRICULUM**

During the first 3 years of life, your child develops more rapidly than at any other time. During this phase, your child absorbs large amounts of information from the environment through observation and experiences. These are the years that lay the foundation for later learning—and the stronger the foundation, the more the child will be able to build upon it.

The Toddler program offers a curriculum that emerges from each child's unique skills and interests. Based on daily observations, teachers introduce new materials and activities that pique curiosity and stimulate learning. Learning objectives for your child at this age include developing skills such as language, concentration, problem solving, visual discrimination, and physical coordination.

The routines of everyday living are the foundation of the programs. Activities promote independence, order, coordination, and concentration, as well as support social, emotional, physical, and cognitive development. These learning activities include:

Self-care: washing, dressing, toileting, and eating, according to each child's individual capacity

Care of the environment: cleaning, food preparation and food service; plant care and animal care

Large-motor activities (indoors and out): walking, climbing, running, jumping, balancing, climbing steps, and more

Fine-motor skills: reaching, grasping, picking up objects, transferring objects, using tools and utensils, doing artwork

Language: naming objects, describing actions and intentions, discussing pictures, conversation, music, and singing

Social skills: developing manners through interactions with peers, teachers, and adult-led small group games

A Montessori classroom for toddlers safely supports your child's drive to do things alone, developing confidence and a sense of competence. The environment is language-rich, with adults using proper nomenclature rather than baby talk so that the children are exposed to and develop a



broad vocabulary. Adults also support toddlers in communicating with each other. A range of books allows children to explore on their own or read aloud with an adult.

In this learning environment, children work independently, observe others, explore freely, and express their curiosity and creativity. A self-care area fosters toilet awareness and independence in maintaining personal hygiene (such as learning how to wipe one's nose and wash hands independently). A sleeping area with individual floor beds/mats that allows toddlers to exercise autonomy in preparing for rest and allows them to get up independently once rested. There is also an area for gross motor activities to help children coordinate their movements, and low tables that enable them to help prepare, serve, eat, and clean up their snacks and meals.

A Montessori environment for very young children gives your infant or toddler the freedom to safely explore and learn through discovery. The setting is calm, inviting, and homelike, with soft rugs, a rocking chair, books arrayed on low shelves and toys in baskets. Colors are muted, the atmosphere peaceful. The space is organized, clean, and uncluttered.

The classroom is a community in which respect for the independence and character of your child is paramount. Caregivers are consistently calm, gentle, soft-spoken, patient, and trusting. They demonstrate respect and compassion by using eye contact, kneeling to the level of the child, addressing your children by name, and speaking before touching or moving them. The result is a calm, soothing atmosphere in which consistent caregivers create an emotional safe haven for those in their care.

Learning materials are easily accessible. These materials are designed to foster concentration, problem solving, and a sense of achievement. Children select the material that interests them, use it for as long as they would like, clean it up (with assistance when needed), and make another choice.

Equipment that supports gross and fine motor skills, such as low ladders with railings for children who are just learning to walk, are available for toddlers to try. Child-sized furniture, utensils, and other tools enable children to make independent choices and complete activities, which builds self-confidence, concentration, and critical thinking skills.

### **DAILY SCHEDULE FOR TODDLER CLASS**

7:00 – 8:15	Before Care
8:15 – 8:30	Arrival Time
8:30 – 8:45	Preparation for Outside



8:45 – 9:15	Outside Exploration
9:15 – 11:15	Morning Work Time
11:15 – 11:30	Group Time
11:30 – 12:30	Lunch and Clean-Up
12:30 – 2:00	Nap Time
2:00 – 3:00	Afternoon Work Time
3:00 – 3:15	Getting Ready for Dismissal
3:15 – 3:30	Dismissal Time
3:30 – 5:30	After Care

### **DAILY SCHEDULE FOR PRIMARY CLASS**

7:00 – 8:15	Before Care Arrival
8:15 – 8:30	Arrival Time
8:30 – 9:00	Outside Exploration
9:00 – 12:00	Morning Work Time (individual/small group lessons)
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch and Clean-Up
1:00 – 3:00	Afternoon Work Time (individual/small group lessons)
3:00 – 3:15	Getting Ready for Dismissal
3:15 – 3:30	Dismissal Time
3:30 – 5:30	After Care

### **OPERATIONAL POLICIES**

#### **ADMISSIONS**

Villa Di Maria reserves the right to deny entrance to any student to support the overall good of the school. The enrollment of any student is on a trial basis for the first six weeks of attendance to give the school ample time to evaluate that the decision is best for all involved. Additionally, completing one school year only guarantees a spot for the following year if the registration paperwork and fees are submitted during the spring semester before the deadline. Families who choose to wait before completing the registration process lose their guaranteed spot and join the “first come, first served” registration system.

#### **ENROLLMENT DOCUMENTS**

Each school year we require that all existing student records be reviewed for accuracy. Parents must fill the re-registration form on Procare to secure their child’s spot for the upcoming school year. New & current health records and vaccinations records are required! These forms need to be returned prior to the child’s first day of school to ensure the safety of our children.

It is the parent’s responsibility to ensure the school is speedily updated should any changes to the enrollment information occur during the school year. (i.e. street address, phone number, carpool,



etc.) In the event of a school policy change during the academic year, the parents/guardians listed on the enrollment packet will be duly informed and their signatures required to verify their reception of the change.

### **HEALTH AND IMMUNIZATION RECORDS**

The State of Texas requires schools to keep accurate health and immunization records at all times. The parent must submit a signed and dated health care professional's statement, "I have examined the above-named child within the past year and find that he or she is able to take part in the day care program." In addition, the parent must submit an up-to-date vaccination record. Children must have all required vaccines stated by the CDC. You can find more information in the Texas Department of State Health Services at <http://www.dshs.state.tx.us/immunize>. The above listed health forms are due within the first week of enrollment.

### **HEARING/VISION SCREENING**

Hearing and vision screening results are required for all children 4 years old and above by September 1<sup>st</sup> (due within the first week of enrollment).

### **SCREEN TIME POLICY**

Students at VDM do not have access to tablets or other digital devices. The Montessori environment provides a rich and concrete experience for students that does not involve any screen time.

### **ARRIVAL POLICIES**

Parents should drop off students by pulling under the port-cochere area and helping their children out of the car. If it is necessary to speak to a teacher or member of the administrative staff, we request that parents drop off their children as usual, park their car, and walk into the front office.

***Always drop-off your child with a staff member quickly, it will assist your child to be at peace if their drop-off routine is cheerful, fast, and consistent.***

***Regular arrival time is from 8:15-8:30.***

Every effort should be made to ensure the student arrives on time. When a child is late, their sense of order is disrupted, they miss part of the class's outside time and work time, and they weaken the community atmosphere shared by their classmates.

### **DISMISSAL POLICIES**

**HALF-DAY** – Dismissal time is 11:45, with a 15-minute grace period until 12:00.

**SCHOOL-DAY** – Dismissal time is 3:15, with a 15-minute grace period until 3:30.

**AFTER-CARE** – Parents should pick-up their children anytime between 3:30 and 5:30.

A \$1 per minute late charge, which is due ASAP after the pickup time (at least within 24 hours), will be charged for each child who is not picked up by the end of their enrolled dismissal period.

Only persons listed in the enrollment information on file will be allowed to pick up students.



The staff of VDM may require a state issued ID before releasing a child in any circumstance. If it becomes necessary for an adult not listed on the enrollment information to pick up a student, a written or verbal communication with the Head of School prior to the pick-up time will suffice on a case-by-case basis.

Questions for your child's teacher will not be addressed during dismissal time as it will hinder the routine of other children and parents alike. The administrative staff on duty will assist you in scheduling a suitable time to speak with your child's teacher.

### **BEFORE/AFTER-CARE DROP-IN POLICIES**

VDM recognizes that emergencies and unforeseen circumstances are always possibilities and that it is unlikely that parents will be able to come on time every pickup. When this occurs, a VDM staff member waits with the child until their parents arrive and there is a \$1 per minute late charge which is due as soon as possible after the pickup time (at least within 24 hours).

After evaluating the effects on our students and staff of allowing drop-in Before Care and After Care, we have decided that the best way to serve all our families is to discontinue the option. While we continue to care for students whose parents are late to pick them up, the only fee option is the \$1 per minute charge.

If for some reason a parent would like to use the Before and After Care services, parents are welcome to enroll their children in these programs for a month at a time.

### **EMERGENCY SCHOOL CLOSING**

In the event of an emergency which necessitates the temporary closure of VDM, make-up days will not be required. Since we are a smaller private school with only one location, in some cases we will be able to stay open even as the public schools close. When deciding about a potential emergency closure, Villa Di Maria will make the decision independently of Fort Bend ISD.

### **INCLEMENT WEATHER**

In case of inclement weather that impacts the school's operations, VDM will address closing measures separate from Fort Bend ISD.

### **ATTENDANCE**

Parents are required to inform the school in the event of a student's absence (planned or otherwise). Acceptable methods of informing the school of an absence are: in-person verbally to the administrative staff, by phone call or text to (832)-874-6399 or, or by email to [info@villadimariamontessori.com](mailto:info@villadimariamontessori.com).

### **ILLNESS**

Parents must use good judgement when children show signs of illness. Children should be healthy to attend school. It is to be expected that children will catch colds throughout the school

year. An active child with a clear runny nose and an occasional non-productive cough, may and should come to school. Our sole desire is to prevent serious illness from affecting your child. As such, please keep your child at home if your child has symptoms of illness including but not limited to:

- |   |                                 |
|---|---------------------------------|
| o a discolored (yellow, green) runny nose | o a persistent productive cough |
| o itching/draining red eyes               | o fever greater than 100°F      |
| o vomiting                                | o diarrhea                      |
| o lethargy (excessive tiredness)          | o mouth sores                   |

If your child contracts a contagious disease, you are required by law to inform the school promptly so that we may take measures to protect the health of our students and staff members.

### **MEDICATION ADMINISTRATION**

A signed and dated “Authorization for Dispensing Medication” form must be completed by the parent or guardian in order for your child to receive medicine while in school. All medicine must be given to the administrative staff for storage in the front office whether “prescription” or “over-the-counter”.

### **ACCOMODATING FAMILIES AND CHILDREN**

Teachers work together with the students’ families to speak English with children that have differing home languages. The school accommodates children that need therapy by providing the space that is needed and being flexible with the children’s daily schedule.

### **IN CASE OF EMERGENCY**

It is imperative that you keep the emergency contact information in the office up to date. In the event of serious injury or illness, the child’s individual emergency instructions on file in the school office will be consulted immediately and parents/guardians will be called. If parents/guardians cannot be reached, the school will attempt to reach the emergency contacts. If necessary, the child will be transported to medical care in accordance with the information on file.

### **UPDATE CONTACT INFORMATION**

Parents update their contact information through the Procare website ([www.myprocare.com](http://www.myprocare.com)) under their account, by sending an email to [info@villadimariamontessori.com](mailto:info@villadimariamontessori.com) or texting the number (832-874-6399).

### **ACCIDENT DOCUMENTATION**

It is school policy that an accident report be filed for any and all injuries occurring while the child is at school. No matter the severity of the injury, parents will be required to sign the form assenting that they were duly notified by the school.

## **PREVENTION AND RESPONSE TO ABUSE AND NEGLECT OF CHILDREN**

VDM staff are required by law to complete training on identifying and reporting issues relating to abuse or neglect of a child. Furthermore, the entire staff meets annually to go over these policies at the beginning of the academic year. To learn more about preventing, identifying, and reporting child abuse and neglect, parent should visit the website below.

[http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child\\_Protection/Child\\_Safety/](http://www.dfps.state.tx.us/Child_Protection/Child_Safety/)

## **EMERGENCY PLAN**

The staff members at VDM are dedicated to ensuring the safety of our students at all times. Our Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) consists of security measures, procedures, and staff responsibilities in case of an emergency or crisis. A crisis is defined as any situation that jeopardizes the safety or security of students and staff.

The alternate shelter for evacuation is Barrington Place Elementary directly across Alston Road. The staff is extensively trained in procedures for evacuating their classes. The administrative staff will evacuate with a paper copy of the school directory and contact information. In addition, the administrative staff will have electronic access to student information. Once at the designated meeting place, all students in attendance at the time of the emergency will be accounted for and their parents notified. Local authorities and child care licensing will also be informed by phone. Upon arrival the children will be released to the parents. During the period of evacuation, the staff will remain calm and cultivate an atmosphere of peace for the students to the best of their ability.

## **BILLING**

Villa Di Maria Montessori charges tuition on a monthly basis from August to May. *Children are legally enrolled from the date of acceptance and full payment will be required each month in which the child attends.* Villa Di Maria does not offer refunds, credits, or discounts for any reason whatsoever.

*In the case of a parent/guardian wishing to disenroll a child during the school year, the parent/guardian must give the school office one full calendar month's notice for the enrollment status to be updated. 'One full calendar month' is defined as "the period which begins at midnight on the last day of the previous month and ends at midnight on the last day of the month under consideration".* **Accordingly, a parent/guardian wishing to disenroll a child beginning on February 1st would need to give the school written notice BEFORE OR ON January 1st to avoid being charged tuition for the month of February. If the school is given notice AFTER January 1st, the parents will be legally bound to pay February tuition.**

Invoices for each month will be sent out the last week of the previous month. **Payments are always due by the 1st of the month.**

The school is not responsible for lost or overlooked invoices. If a parent is unable to access their invoice for any reason, it is their own responsibility to contact the school before the 1st to ensure they are prepared to pay tuition on time.

**Failure to submit tuition on time will result in a daily \$10 late charge for each child's tuition after the 1st; i.e., the late charges will equal \$10 on the 2<sup>nd</sup>, \$20 on the 3<sup>rd</sup>, and so on.**

## **DISCIPLINE AND GUIDANCE**

The flexible structure of the Montessori class allows students to develop true discipline, intrinsic self-control. Their consequent growth in respect for themselves and others provides the strongest motivation for maintaining behavior patterns conducive to learning. The teachers aid the students in this growth process, always aware of their responsibility to the child as well as to the group. Should a child's actions be inappropriate or lacking in respect, the teacher allows natural or logical consequences to show the necessity of setting limits on personal behavior.

## **SUSPENSION AND EXPULSION**

(see Discipline and Guidance Policy)

## **ADDRESSING CHALLENGING BEHAVIORS**

To address children's challenging behaviors, the director and teachers have ongoing conversations with the family either verbally, by texting (832-874-6399), or emailing [info@villadimariamontessori.com](mailto:info@villadimariamontessori.com). Families and teachers can also communicate any concerns during the parent teacher conferences held twice a year.

## **PARENTAL INFORMATION**

### **SNACKS**

Commercially packaged food is not allowed during school hours.

Parents should send cut vegetables, fresh and dried fruits, nuts, yogurts, cereal, and milk (non-chocolate) for snacks. (Crackers, pretzels, chips, popcorn, cookies, candies, juice, soda, or similar items will be set aside and returned to the parents at the end of the day.)

We understand that there are plenty of healthy packaged snacks. However, during school hours, please only send snacks that fall within the above parameters.

***\*\*\*All decisions made by the school regarding acceptable food items for snack and lunch are non-negotiable and final.\*\*\****

### **LUNCH**

The same rules for snacks also apply to lunches. Good options for lunch are hot soups, rice dishes (i.e. with meat, seafood, curry, vegetables), sandwiches, pasta dishes (salads, chicken,



beef, vegetables) etc. Please feel free to contact us if you have any questions about specific food items.

\*\*\*\*\*Please note that there are many foods which are not allowed at school that are perfectly acceptable for home.

## **UNIFORM POLICY**

The uniform policy is non-negotiable. *If a child arrives at school and is not following the uniform guidelines, parents will be required to bring appropriate items for the child to participate in the classroom life.*

Uniforms are always required for Primary students during school hours Monday-Thursday. Friday is a free dress day each week.

*Uniform shirts are available for purchase in the office. Khaki bottoms can be purchased from any vendor.*

Primary Boy's Uniform – navy blue/hunter green polo shirt with VDM logo + khaki pants or shorts

Primary Girl's Uniform – navy blue/hunter green polo shirt with VDM logo + khaki skort, pants, or shorts

Shoes – Students are required to wear only simple closed toe shoes while on campus. All other types of shoes are subject to removal upon entry at the discretion of the head of school for the safety of the children. There is a zero-tolerance policy on light-up shoes.

If you would like to layer your children's clothing when the weather becomes colder, undershirts, tights, and leggings are all good options. However, all undershirts, tights, or leggings must be solid colored in navy blue, hunter green, black, grey, or white. Any other color is considered against the dress code.

Winter coats and jackets of any colors are acceptable since the students only wear them outside. The school classroom is always kept at a temperature which is comfortable according to the weather. Please label your child's jacket so that it can be easily identified.

## **VISITATIONS AND OBSERVATIONS**

Parents have the right to visit the school at any time during operating hours. However, the school campus is dedicated to being a peaceful and fruitful learning environment for our students, so we must limit the number of visitors at any given time. Therefore, we encourage parents to call the school office to schedule a suitable time to observe. Additionally, Villa Di Maria Montessori invites parents and families to participate in specific activities periodically throughout the school year. (See calendar for details)

## **PARENT-TEACHER CONFERENCES**

Teachers at Villa Di Maria are happy to discuss your child's progress as frequently as they can.





Good communication between parent and teacher is key to a child's success. However, teachers are unable to discuss children during class time. If you would like the opportunity to speak with a teacher, leave a note at the front office and the administrative staff will ensure the teacher is notified so that they can schedule a good time to communicate.

VDM provides at least two dedicated days within the academic year for parent-teacher conferences. A sign-up sheet will be made available, and it is essential that parents make themselves available to discuss their child's progress.

### **STUDENT ASSESSMENT VS GRADING**

Our primary task is to help children construct themselves to flourish in an increasingly technical and competitive world. Graduates of Villa Di Maria Montessori leave with at least two critically important assets that we hope will sustain them throughout their lifetime: the ability to adapt and a love of learning.

Improvements in technology will increase the pace of life significantly. How do you prepare children for such a world? We try by enhancing their ability to think logically, to cope with change, to cooperate with others, to pose creative solutions to old problems, to defend their right to their own opinions and values, and to respect the rights of others. Their ability to adapt to change and their love of learning will be the keys they need to open any door of opportunity.

We provide a qualitative evaluation of a child's performance that takes into consideration the whole child, including strengths, limitations, and social, physical, and creative achievements; the education your child receives at Villa Di Maria Montessori extends far beyond basic skills in math and language. Traditional grades provide a quantitative evaluation of a child's work. Grading creates an environment of winners and losers, undermining the spirit of cooperation and community. Research indicates that grading reduces creativity, as students aim for work that will be safe and acceptable to the adult and therein lies a third powerful reason not to use traditional grades: the children begin to work to please the adult rather than themselves, to work for the extrinsic rather than the intrinsic reward. For these reasons, Villa Di Maria Montessori does not "grade" children.

### **COMMUNICATION SYSTEMS**

The lessons that the students receive and their progress are recorded on Transparent Classroom. The summary of their lessons and the teachers' comments are written in the semi-annual conference reports. Families are also updated either verbally, through text, or online meetings about their child's progress.

### **FAMILY PARTICIPATION**

VDM has several annual events that families can participate in or prepare for either in-person at the school or at home with their children.



The following are some of these events: Parent Orientation, Meet & Greet with the families, Fall Festival, Winter Recital, Parent Night, Kindergarten Graduation.

### **HOME ENVIRONMENT**

Parents should learn as much as they can about Montessori principles as they apply to the preparation of a child's home environment as well as the way parents interact with their children. This begins with the general principle, "Never do something for your child that he can do for himself." Allow your children to engage in all of the simple tasks of practical life that they can do for themselves at each stage of development. Montessori education may also entail learning a communication style different from the way in which we were parented. Children develop a love of learning and become responsible, independent, and capable when parents' values and expectations are consistent with those of the school.

### **PREPARATION FOR THE FIRST DAY OF SCHOOL**

Starting school is a major change in a young person's life. Some children adjust more easily than others. An eager, alert, independent child comes into the classroom and immediately begins taking advantage of the materials offered. Dependent children who are not encouraged to go about on their own need time to adjust and to become independent. A child, who has been the center of attention and suddenly becomes one of a group, needs time to discover his own abilities and the satisfaction that comes from individual accomplishments.

The parents' attitude toward school is of great importance during the first weeks. If you ask your child, "Do you like school?" or "Do you want to go to school?" you are implying that perhaps there is some reason he shouldn't like school or want to go to school. Besides, he will be sure to tell you if his feelings are negative, but let it be his own idea and not yours. If for some reason you are concerned, please call the school and discuss the situation with the teacher but show only positive attitudes to your child.

### **HANDBOOK REVIEWED & UPDATED**

The VDM Parent Handbook is reviewed and updated annually at the start of each school year.

### **2023-2024 IMPORTANT DATES AND CALENDAR**

**August 1-7:** Teacher in Service Week

**August 5:** Parent Orientation, 6:00pm

**August 8:** First Day of Fall Semester

**TBA:** Meet & Greet



**September 2:** Labor Day – No School

**October 14:** Parent Teacher Conferences – No School

(School opens for Before and After Care Students only)

**October 25:** Fall Festival

**November 22:** Thanksgiving Lunch

**November 25 – 29:** Thanksgiving Break – No School

**TBA:** Winter Recital

**December 20:** Student Holiday Party – Last Day of Fall Semester

**December 23 – January 3:** Winter Break – No School

**January 6:** First Day of Spring Semester

**January 20:** Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No School

**February 14:** Student Valentine Exchange

**February 17:** Presidents Day – No School

**February 19-20:** Parent Child Nights, 6-7pm

**March 10 – 14:** Spring Break – No School

**April 17:** Student Easter Egg Hunt

**April 18:** Good Friday – No School

**April 21:** Parent Teacher Conferences – No School

(School opens for Before and After Care students only)

**TBA:** KG Graduation

**May 26:** Memorial Day – No School

**May 30:** Early Dismissal for all Students – Last Day of Spring Semester

**June 2:** First Day of Summer School

**July 4:** Independence Day – No School

**July 25:** Last Day of Summer School

AUGUST '24						
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- 1-7** Teacher in Service Week
- 5** Parent Orientation
- 8** First Day of Fall Semester
- TBA** Meet & Greet

FEBRUARY '25						
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23	24	25	26	27	28	

- 14** Student Valentine Exchange
- 17** Presidents Day – No School
- 19-20** Parent Child Nights

SEPTEMBER '24						
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29	30					

- 2** Labor Day – No School

MARCH '25						
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- 10-14** Spring Break – No School

OCTOBER '24						
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- 14** Parent Teacher Conferences – No School (School opens for Before and After Care students only)
- 25** Fall Festival

APRIL '25						
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- 17** Student Easter Egg Hunt
- 18** Good Friday – No School
- 21** Parent Teacher Conferences – No School (School opens for Before and After Care students only)

NOVEMBER '24						
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- 22** Thanksgiving Lunch
- 25-29** Thanksgiving Break – No School

MAY '25						
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- TBA** KG Graduation
- 26** Memorial Day – No School
- 30** Early Dismissal for all Students – Last Day of Spring Semester

DECEMBER '24						
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29	30	31				

- TBA** Winter Recital
- 20** Student Holiday Party – Last Day of Fall Semester
- 23-31** Winter Break – No School

JUNE '25						
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- 2** First Day of Summer School

JANUARY '25						
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- 6** First Day of Spring Semester
- 20** Martin Luther King Jr. Day – No School

JULY '25						
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13	14	15	16	17	18	19
20	21	22	23	24	25	26
27	28	29	30	31		

- 4** Independence Day – No School
- 25** Last Day of Summer School