

STRONGBRIDGE MONTESSORI SCHOOL HANDBOOK

Welcome to Strongbridge Montessori School. We want to cooperate with you in providing an enriched educational environment for your child. There will be many opportunities for us to work together, to share, and to learn. We are glad you have joined us. We look forward to a fulfilling and lasting relationship.

Background & Philosophy

SMS was founded in 2005 by Hilary Mosher, M.S. to provide a quality educational preschool program. We encompass the philosophy and educational approach expressed by Dr. Maria Montessori while always keeping open to new ideas to broaden and enhance our program. The staff views each child as an individual with a unique background, personality, maturity, and intellect. We encourage a 'whole family' approach at Strongbridge by providing opportunities for parents and staff to work together, share, and to learn from one another.

Location/mailing address

Strongbridge is located in the Guintoli neighborhood of Arcata, on Valley East Blvd. Our phone number is (707) 845-5173 and the mailing address is PO Box 2474, McKinleyville, CA 95519. SMS is a private, sole proprietorship institution with no religious affiliation.

The Class Group

At SMS the class can be composed of a total of 30 children at any one time, with a mix of full time, morning, and afternoon session students within a three-year age span from 2.5 years to people who turn 6 during their final year. The ratio of children to adults is at least as specified by the California Department of Social Services Community Care Licensing regulations and most often about 8 to 1, depending on enrollment levels.

Tuition

When you sign an enrollment agreement for your child, you are committing to paying annual tuition for the entire year, beginning in September and ending in August. Tuition can be paid in full on the first day of school, in 12 monthly payments, 10 monthly payments, quarterly, or biannually. If your child is admitted after the first month of the school year, the tuition will be pro-rated.

Tuition checks should be made payable to Strongbridge Montessori School and placed in the tuition envelope near the sign-in sheet. Parents are not billed by the school (to cut expenses) but notices are posted the day before and the day that monthly payment is due (by the first school day of the month, or post-dated if during breaks). In order to maintain services over the entire year, it is essential that the annual income from fees be assured. For this reason it is understood

that no reduction or remission of fees can be allowed for absence or withdrawal until the vacancy can be filled.

Parents are requested to see that their child's tuition is paid promptly. If tuition is not paid on the date it is due (including post-dated checks), they will be required to put down a deposit equal to the amount of one month's tuition before their child may attend school. This deposit will be used for the final month's tuition at the end of your child's enrollment at Strongbridge. If it must be accessed because of late payment, it must be re-deposited no later than five days from the due date, or the student will not be able to attend school. If a family's deposit must be accessed for late tuition more than once, the student will be placed on enrollment probation. A third time for late tuition will unfortunately mean that the student must find another school.

There is a \$10.00 per day late fee for up to 5 days. After that, the student is no longer eligible to attend, and collection activities will begin.

If a tuition check is returned for insufficient funds, there is a \$25. service fee and payment must be made within 24 hours of notification by cash or certified check only. The second time a tuition check is returned, a tuition deposit equal to the amount of one month's tuition will be required in addition to the service fee and tuition, and all subsequent payments must be made in cash or certified check. This deposit will be continued from one year to another and will be used for the final month's tuition upon leaving SMS.

Subsidy

SMS accepts students participating in the Changing Tides Family Services state child care subsidy program. Income eligible families are encouraged to apply to the program. It is the parent/guardian's responsibility to make sure all signed forms are submitted to the agency in a timely fashion and that any co-pays are made on schedule.

Scholarships

There is one, annual part-time work-based scholarship available to families with demonstrated need. The work is based upon an hour-to-hour match of parent labor for school time, to be mutually agreed-upon based on SMS needs and parent/guardian abilities. Interested families may inquire at any time need arises.

Classroom Observations

Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe their child's class. Seeing the children at

Work/play is the best and only real way of understanding what they are experiencing.

Arrangements should be made in advance with the teacher so as to avoid congestion on any one day. Observers must be seated and ready no later than 8:55 a.m. for the morning /full-time session and by 12:30 for the afternoon session (although they are welcome to come for lunch) and agree to abide by the

Observer's Policies. Unscheduled observations (only by parents/guardians of registered students) must remain as unobtrusive as possible to prevent classroom disruption. Playground observations are available any time.

Parent Involvement

Parents are encouraged to participate through volunteering in the classroom to listen to children read and/or to help with lunch time. Volunteers are also needed to help coordinate the grocery scrip program, to master the SMS website, to work on fund-raising events and activities, as well as to help with the annual Harvest Potluck Gathering and occasional work days. If you are interested in volunteering, please let the Director know.

Conferences

Conferences for student evaluation are held two times during the year in winter and late summer. They are scheduled on a Saturday and require mandatory attendance for all parents/guardians. Students are not allowed at the school on conference days and arrangements should be made for alternate care during the half-hour period. There are no make-up conferences available to those who cannot attend.

Parents wishing to discuss their child's progress or other aspects of the school outside of conferences may do so after school, if the issue is urgent, otherwise they should send an e-mail to the Director at: hilmo@efn.org.

Student's Well-Being

The teachers need to know about such things as sleep disruption, stress in the home, failure to eat a meal, or any other information that may provide insight into the child's behavior. Parents are requested to inform the teachers of such matters either by phone or by informing the Aide at drop-off. Any incident occurring in school that has upset your child should be reported in the same manner. Remember that a child's perception of an incident, while important, may not be what actually occurred. Staff will make every effort to inform parent/guardians of incidents such as an injury or an extraordinary accomplishment at pick-up time.

Arrival and Dismissal

The child's arrival at school each day is one of the most important elements to insure effective integration into the school program. It is essential that scheduled times be observed to avoid class disruption and to ensure the student's participation as a member of the opening activities. Parents need to support the child's independence by encouraging the child to manage their own coats, food, books, sharing items, etc... from the car and into the building. The same is true for picking up the child. Arriving adults cause students to transition into the next part of their day. Adults arriving too early will cause the eclipse of the learning activities and are unnecessarily disruptive and antithetical to the Montessori Method. Late pick up of a morning student can place the school in jeopardy of

violating State licensing laws regarding child-teacher ratios, subjecting the school to a \$100. fine, which will be payable by the family of the child responsible for violating the policy. There is a late fee of \$10.00 per fifteen-minute increment after the pick-up time (morning or afternoon), and emergency contacts will be called to pick the student up if parents are not available after ten minutes.

Morning arrival is between 8:55 and 9:05 a.m. Early arrival is discouraged as it disrupts teacher prep time. Early arrivals will need to wait on the porch until the door is unlocked. Parents/guardians must sign their child in on the sign-in sheet using the child's first and last name and their own first and last name, and give the child a hug and a kiss good-bye, and then leave the building. Students need to carry their own things into school from the car and must put them away where they belong. Parent/guardians should always check the child's shelf for any finished work or other things that need to go home and take them away. Often when adults linger in the classroom during the morning greeting time, it distracts the student and can prevent them from integrating effectively into the morning's activities.

Morning students must be picked up and afternoon students dropped off and signed out between 11:55 a.m. and 12:05 p.m. Earlier arrival will disrupt the entire program so attention to scheduling is important.

Afternoon Dismissal is between 2:55 and 3:05 p.m. Students often want to continue playing with their friends after school, but must do so off the school grounds. While it may be tempting to encourage further activities on the playground among friends, the school's insurance policy is only in effect when teachers are supervising.

All adults must be careful in the parking lot and on the road leading to the school to drive slowly and cautiously. Students MUST hold the adult's hand in the parking lot AT ALL TIMES. Courtesy in parking and backing out is essential, no matter how much of a hurry you may be in. Please, no parking in front of the entry doors. Parents with children under age 12 in the car may not leave them unattended (per California law) but are encouraged to ask another parent to supervise while they dash in and sign their child out.

Separation Anxiety

Some children may experience separation anxiety upon arriving at school. This is age-appropriate and should subside a short time after the child enrolls, although can reoccur occasionally due to tiredness, illness, insecurities, etc... If your child is having problems separating from you, the Teacher's Aide will assist by gently holding the child and soothing them while you leave. Although the child may protest loudly, it is important to remember that in 99.9% of cases, within minutes (often seconds) of the adult leaving, the child will join in the regular program and completely recover from their anxiety. If the child protests prior to entering the school, reassure them that you will be back in a few hours and that although you

love them more than anything, now is the time for them to have fun at school while you must attend to your own activities. Part of the preschooler's job at this stage of development is to experiment with how/if they can control what happens to them. Their tears and/or explosive behavior are designed to elicit your immediate action to do what they want. As infants and toddlers, this was a necessary means of communication, but by preschool, it is developmentally appropriate for children to gain autonomous confidence and the ability to understand and abide by boundaries and limits, as well as to use words, rather than crying. Do not over-dramatize or draw out the process of separation no matter how upset your child is. Be loving and firm and your confidence will aid your child in more readily accepting your departure. If the adult's demeanor reflects the child's level of distress, they are allowing the child to be effective in their attempt at manipulation.

A very few children may experience delay in this area of development. In these rare cases, a plan is established whereby the parent can attend class as an observer with the child for a short time the first few days. Gradually, over a period of a week or so, an attempt will be made to assist the child in the separation process. If this is unsuccessful, the child may need more time developmentally before they are ready to attend school.

Nap Time: During the regular school year session, full time students whose parents request it will be given the opportunity to rest after the lunch period. Nap time is from 12:30 to 2:15 p.m. If a child awakens earlier, or cannot fall asleep after a few minutes, they will join regular activities. They will lie down on 3/4 in thick vinyl mats covered with a clean, fitted crib sheet and have a blanket. Bedding must be provided by the parents (fully labeled) and present on the first day of school. Mats can be purchased at K-Mart or on-line. All sheets and blankets will be taken home on Friday to be laundered, and returned on Monday.

Toileting: A child must have demonstrated the ability to use the toilet regularly for all waste functions before they can enroll in the school. Children who have yet to gain full mastery of toileting abilities will be assisted by staff to achieve more effective skills. In the event of accidents, children will be assisted to change and clean themselves, and to put soiled clothing in plastic bags in their cubbies. For this purpose, all students should have at least one complete change of clothes in their cubbies at all times clearly marked with initials. All children should wear clothing that is easy for them to use when toileting. Coveralls and belts, as well as tight-fitting waist bands are discouraged in favor of elastic waists. No paper-product underpants are allowed. If a child continues to have problems toileting for a prolonged period, medical referrals may be made.

School Closings

When the school must be closed because of inclement weather, or for other unexpected reasons, parents will be contacted by phone at home before school. In case of poor weather conditions, the school recognizes the right of each parent to decide whether or not to send his or her child to school.

Emergencies

It is understood that in everyone's lives the unexpected is to be expected occasionally. If you experience a true, verifiable emergency that prohibits you from abiding by the schedule or any other policies, staff will make every effort to assist in caring for your child (without penalty) until you or someone you appoint can take over.

Siblings/guests

Adults need to keep any children who are not registered at the school under their control at all times. This means that the child is standing next to the adult, and if toddlers, holding onto the adult's hand. Children are not allowed to run around in the school, to yell, or to handle the Montessori materials. They should stay with the adult at all times. Children over the age of five are not allowed to play on the playground, pursuant to Social Services regulations.

Nutrition

Candy, gum, and soft drinks are not allowed at school. Highly sugared foods such as cookies and cakes are discouraged except for special occasions such as birthdays, and even then, the use of unrefined sugar is advised whenever possible. We ask that snack foods such as chips, Pirate's Booty, and crackers be kept to a bare minimum as they don't provide significant nutrition.

Snack: Full time and morning students need to bring a snack. It should contain enough food to satiate hunger and refuel, without being the size of a full meal. High protein items, such as nuts, cheese, meats, and some snack bars, along with some fruit/veggie and carbohydrate choices should suffice. Avoid messy items such as crumbly muffins, watery yogurt, or applesauce without reusable lids. Please prepare fruits, such as oranges so that the child can eat them without taking a lot of time to peel. Juice boxes, water bottles, or milk cartons are fine, but children are also encouraged to use the purified water cooler to slake thirst.

Lunch

Children who stay all day or are in the afternoon session need to bring a lunch in a container that will easily fit into the cubby along with spare clothes. Please send lunches that your child enjoys. Limit the amount of dessert. To support recycling efforts, we encourage you to purchase reusable containers for your child's lunch. Anything such as apple sauce or yogurt must have a replaceable lid in the event that it is not finished. Since children are not allowed to share food, pay attention to the amount and types of food that return home with the child and try to adjust accordingly. School is not a place to experiment with new foods, as we do not want the child to go hungry if they won't eat what is served. It is common for preschoolers to like something one day, and then say they don't like it the next. Staff will reassure them that they need to eat the food regardless of whether they have decided not to like it today when they clearly liked it

yesterday. Parents/guardians will be informed about children who are not eating well or seem to not have enough to eat. Many children enjoy a thermos of hot soup or macaroni and cheese, and some like to have a salad or veggies with dip. Don't forget to include a napkin and eating utensils when necessary.

Personal Items

Since the materials in the classroom are for the use of all the children, please leave toys, wallets, purses, and jewelry at home. Some determined children may need to be "patted down" before entering school. Some books or other educational materials are welcome. The books should not contain movie, cartoon, or television influences but be aimed more towards age-appropriate English literature, such as classic stories ("Where The Wild Things Are", "Goodnight Room" "The Little Engine That Could", etc...) and books that explore developmental themes like feelings, colors, animals, nature, and cultural experiences. Items for sharing should not include rocks but may include things such as leaves, shells, magnifying glasses, kaleidoscopes, fossils, post cards, pine cones, etc... Please, label all items with your child's name and be sure to take them home.

Clothing

Please have your children dress in practical, comfortably fitting, age-appropriate clothes that they can manage themselves, and that allow them to participate in all activities. This means that shoes for students under four should not have laces, and that coverall connectors, snaps, button-fly pants, and tiny zippers/buttons are out. We also don't allow shoes or boots with any kind of elevated heel (including cowboy boots), and discourage open-toed sandals, and clogs because of uncomfortable interaction with woodchips on the playground. Although trendy fashions may look cute on preschoolers, we do not allow costumes, midriff tops, long skirts (the hems get stepped on, causing tripping), and sexually suggestive, or violence-themed garments. This includes Super Heros. We usually go out to play in all weather, so please help your child to select appropriate seasonal garments. Rain boots may be brought for outdoor play, but must be accompanied by indoor shoes. Because children often become attached to certain items, it is advised that you put away seasonal outfits (such as rain boots in summer or sleeveless tops in winter) where they are not available for viewing/argument. It is also advised that children select their clothes for school the night before to minimize indecision time during rushed morning hours. If a child refuses to get dressed on time, it is suggested that you bring them to school in whatever state of dress they are in (pajamas, undies, etc...) and staff will allow them to complete their dressing in another room. Usually this solves the problem after only one occurrence and is preferable to recurring lateness.

To avoid unnecessary confusion and prevent loss of clothing, all garments (including shoes) **MUST** be marked with your child's initials. All students must have a spare set of clothing, to be kept in their cubbies at all times. Please try to change the contents with appropriate seasonal clothing as needed. When soiled clothing is sent home, please send in a replacement **the next day** in a bag labeled with your child's name.

Grooming/Personal Care

All students must arrive at school every day clean, with their teeth and hair brushed, and having used the toilet. The hair must not obscure the child's eyes/vision in any way to promote optimum visual acuity. Anything used to keep the hair out of the eyes must be previously proven to stay firmly in place throughout the day. It is strongly suggested that parents/guardians consider getting the child a hair cut that prevents hair in the eyes (i.e. bangs) at least until children reach an age when their hair is less wispy and more likely to respond to styling techniques or devices. Children who require extensive attention by staff for repeated hair grooming will be sent home with a note requiring an appropriate hair style.

Health/ Absences

When a child will be absent from school please call or text as soon as possible. If the absence is due to illness, please include information regarding symptoms for purposes of tracking infectious disease and public health reporting. If the child displays symptoms such as tiredness, lethargy, sore throat, skin rash, watery eyes/nose, redness of the eyes, excessive mucus, coughing, fever, vomiting or diarrhea, please keep them home. The rule for returning from illness is 24 hours from the time the symptom ceased. If a child exhibits symptoms of illness while at school, a parent/guardian will be called to come get them. It is **very strongly recommended** that all students be given all vaccinations appropriate to their age. **Chicken pox vaccinations are mandatory.** This is not only to protect the child from illness, but also to protect the greater school community, which may include pregnant mothers, unborn/newborn siblings, and family members with lowered immune system conditions such as cancer. For these community members, contracting chicken pox is extremely serious and can be fatal.

If a child must leave school during regular hours (i.e., doctor's appointment, vacation), the teacher should be notified in advance by writing it on the school calendar. Please avoid scheduling activities such as arts classes or sports during school hours. Any child that has 5 consecutive unexcused absences will be considered disenrolled. The Montessori Method is not a drop-in childcare program. To benefit fully from the program, it is important for children to attend as regularly as possible.

Medication

If your child is taking medication during the school day, please bring it with

written, dated and signed (by parent/guardian) instructions and permission for dosing in the original prescription container (if prescribed) or the original over-the-counter container.

School Birthdays

It is our custom to celebrate this most important day for your child. Special treats may be sent for your child's birthday celebration; however, we ask that goodies with refined sugar be avoided. We suggest cookies, muffins (made with unrefined sugar), fruit, pizza, etc... Your child will wear a crown, be allowed to be first at everything (in line, to ring the bell, say the weather, etc...) and may choose three party games to be played after the goodies. Parents are encouraged to stay and record the event, or to just enjoy.

Non-school Parties

If one student from SMS is invited to another's party, ALL students must be invited. The exception is if the child hosting the party is in a half day session that the uninvited student isn't in (i.e. the host is in the morning session and the uninvited student is in the afternoon session). This policy is in place to prevent uninvited children from experiencing the pain of feeling left out. We realize that this could impose hardship on parents wanting to have a small, private gathering, or a party at an expensive location, but urge parents to consider simple home/garage/yard/park celebrations replete with traditional party games, inexpensive favors and foods, or simply to invite others unrelated to the school. Even though children may enjoy expensive parties in trendy venues in the short run, remember that they are not likely to create lasting memories at this young age. Also it is typical that not all children invited will show up.

Playdates:

Parents/guardians are encouraged to arrange play dates outside of school to promote their child's developing social skills and special friendships. Staff may make suggestions regarding a play date, especially for new students and if parents agree, the process is for staff to ask the other child's parent to give their phone number if they are interested in setting something up. If a parent/guardian is not able to accept a requested play date (for any reason), it is understood that they may need to graciously turn it down. In this event, staff will suggest alternatives.

Holidays

SMS is fortunate to have children of diversified racial, religious, and cultural backgrounds. The rituals and special foods associated with each group's celebration of the holidays provide valuable learning experiences for the children. Parents are encouraged to arrange a holiday celebration with the teacher.

Field Trips

SMS strives to take students on one field trip during each month that does not have a long break. A notice regarding field trips will be placed on the wipe-off

board at least one week prior to the scheduled trip. If a parent/guardian is unable to accompany their child on a field trip, they should inform the teacher and arrangements will be made for the student's transportation, either with a teacher or with another student's family. Parents are encouraged to tell the teacher if they know of good field trip opportunities that will offer age-appropriate experiences such as museums, theatre, interpretive centers, parents' place of employment, farms, factories, fairs, nurseries, etc... Parents are encouraged to attend whenever possible and to share any photos they might take during the trip. Trips are only scheduled during the first half of the day because of napping schedules, but afternoon session students are encouraged to attend. If the trip is over before the afternoon session begins, the parents will need to accompany their child in the school until then.

Discipline, Violence and Bullying Policy

Discipline at SMS is based on a positive attitude toward children. The Montessori Method is based upon the premise that self discipline is the desired goal of all people. To this end, the staff models and teaches respect and problem-solving skills. We believe that prevention of inappropriate behavior, based on reasoning and clear expectations is most effective. Expectations are discussed whenever appropriate with the students. Students are taught that SMS is a peaceful school based upon mutual respect and that there is zero tolerance for violence or bullying. Appropriate use of non-violent communication, and frustration tolerance skills are imparted and required, as opposed to crying/hitting/name-calling, etc... In all areas the child is assisted in developing the skills necessary to control his/her own actions using "self-talk" to develop inner discipline. Natural and/or logical consequence is used as a means of helping the child to develop inner limits. If a child is disruptive or endangers themselves or others, staff will immediately intervene in as positive a manner as possible. Expectations will be consistently clarified. If necessary, a child may be asked to remove him/herself from the group for a reflective time-out for a time in minute's equivalent to their years in age. If violations reoccur, staff, parents, and child will work together to modify behavior. If a child persists in the unprovoked, willful hurting/disturbance of others after being reasoned with and experiencing consequences, they will be immediately suspended from school for one day. Continued negative behavior will result in a therapeutic behavioral referral and possibly expulsion.

Martial Arts Training

SMS does not allow children who are involved in martial arts or any other programs that promote physical struggle (such as wrestling or boxing) to be enrolled. Although instructors of these classes will claim that they teach discipline, they are not educated in early childhood development, and are asking you to pay them to train your child to use their bodies in a manner that is in direct opposition to the kind of behavior allowed at school. All research shows that preschool children have not yet developed their impulse control effectively enough (and should not be expected to) to resist demonstrating what they have been trained and rewarded to do. They are also not well-coordinated enough to

prevent inevitable accidental violence stemming from “play” fighting with untrained “opponents”. More appropriate classes that are encouraged include gymnastics, tumbling, soccer, t-ball, dance, music, theatre, and art. It is also worth noting that continual subjection to violence (animated or otherwise) does influence a preschooler’s behavior and is not recommended.

Special Education Referrals

Students observed by staff to have possible special education and/or medical needs will be referred for assessment. These written referrals are made to the parents/guardians accompanied by contact information to the appropriate agency/professional for the student’s school district or community of residence. Referrals for special needs may include, but are not limited to; behavioral/psychiatric, speech, vision, dental, auditory, developmental, and medical. Once the initial referral is made, parents/guardians have a maximum of 30 days to make appropriate arrangements for the assessment and must tell the teacher the details to keep the student’s file current and to assure progress. Assessment results must be shared with the Director, along with any plans for treatment/follow-up services. If the student is qualified for early Special Education services from their district, the teacher is to be included in any Individual or Family Educational Plan meetings as the child’s regular education teacher.

If it is determined through the assessment process that the student will benefit from special education services and/or devices, the parents/guardians are obligated to pursue these services in order to continue their child’s enrollment at SMS. Examples include the necessity of wearing eyeglasses or hearing aids during class, or participating in auditory or speech therapy. If parents fail to provide necessary, consistent and effective support for needed special education services/devices, they may be asked to find other placement for their child. SMS believes strongly that preschool is a crucial developmental time for students in identifying and dealing with special problems to ensure the lifelong success of that child. Neglecting these needs at this age can be irrevocably damaging to the individual. SMS will work as hard as possible to provide an environment for the special needs child that will promote their educational, physical and social growth to the greatest of their potential. Only in situations where there is lack of compliance/cooperation from parents/guardians, where it is evident that the SMS environment is not effective, or in the event of irreconcilable classroom disruption will SMS make alternative placement recommendations.

Mandatory Reporting

Staff at SMS are trained mandatory reporters for suspected child abuse. This means that if a child appears at school with unexplained and/or suspicious physical injuries, or demonstrating behaviors/information related to physical, emotional, or sexual abuse, a report will be made to the appropriate agency, and you will be contacted. If your child is subject to frequent and profuse bruising or other injuries, this will cause grounds for concern and you will be notified. It may

be a sign of the need for increased supervision, child-proofing in the environment, an evaluation by a vision professional, or all of the above.

Complaints, Student & Parent Rights

From time to time, parents/guardians may have concerns and/or complaints regarding questions about, or their negative perceptions of, activities and/or policies at the school. While this is absolutely your right, unless the concern is regarding immediate and urgent safety issues, we request that parents/guardians respect the staff and the learning environment at the school by not interrupting the program during school hours with these comments. Instead, please feel free to email the Director at hilmosh@gmail.com with any concerns, and if necessary, an appointment may be set up to deal with these issues. Additionally, the state of California Department of Social Services' Community Care Licensing agency has a Licensing Analyst available to listen to any concerns you have regarding what you perceive as violations of state childcare regulations at SMS. The State Notification of Parents and Children's Rights forms (available on line through the school web site.) should be printed out and signed and the section acknowledging notification must be turned in to be kept in the child's file. These forms are also posted prominently on the bulletin board. It is always hoped that parents would try to resolve any concerns with the Director prior to making a complaint to Community Care Licensing, because this option will always trigger an audit visit to SMS and will require extensive effort on the part of staff that will detract from your child's educational program in order to respond.

SMS staff will always try to cooperate with parents in every way possible, keeping in mind the well-being of all students and families, as well as the on-going mission of the Montessori Method. Parents who find themselves frequently feeling dissatisfied or unhappy with many situations in the school may need to re-evaluate their decision to send their child to SMS.

Montessori in the Home

Many parents are concerned that their child may not be making academic progress at the same rate as their friends and be tempted to push them at home with workbooks, CDs, DVDs and the like. Dr. Montessori's research demonstrated that each child works according to their own "sensitive periods" for learning and no amount of pressure is likely to change that, much as you can't teach an infant to walk until they're ready. However, there are many aspects of the Montessori Method that, when practiced at home, can lead to support of the child's potential. There is a book, called "At Home with Montessori" by Patricia Oriti that has details regarding this idea that parents are encouraged to read. Simple activities include preparing your home with an environment that is at child-level with wall hangings, accessible and organized shelves with developmentally appropriate activities, and a shelf in the refrigerator that is allocated for your child. It is also important to remember that while it may be more time consuming to allow your child to do things for themselves such as dressing, in the long run it prepares them to be self-sufficient and confident as early as possible, which creates a successful individual. Additionally, at school your child is required to show respect for others, using words like "please" and "thank-you" consistently and appropriately, not to whine or interrupt, and to

accept consequences consistently for unacceptable behaviors. Your follow-through with these requirements at home will go a long way in terms of creating a well-adjusted, reasonable child.

Parents frequently express the frustration that children who behave well at school can demonstrate less than desirable behaviors at home. This may be due to the fact that in the home, the child does not have as much of a child-centered environment where his/her needs are central, where they constantly feel respected and listened to, where they may have more free, productive choices. Even though the child may not be able to articulate this, as a parent, you can reassure them. Let them know that home *is* different than school because it must meet the needs of all, not just them. But do let them know that within the limitations of meeting everyone's needs, you will try your best to listen, pay attention, and respect them, as they must do for you. Set clear guidelines, expectations and consequences, especially in areas that are different from school, and then work hard at enforcing them consistently. Offer your child activities they can participate in at home that are productive such as chores. A preschooler can set the table, scrub a toilet, clean the rug with a carpet sweeper, wash fingerprints, polish silver, make a sandwich, etc... When a child is active in a productive process, they feel useful and confident and are far less likely to act out.

Also be aware that children model the behaviors they observe and/or hear. At school, staff is trained very specifically to model behaviors conducive to effective early childhood education minus many of the worries of the home, and with the added benefits of peer pressure. But the home is very different in terms of possible influences. A child who is exposed (whether it is directed towards them or not) to criticism, conflict, yelling, destruction, physical threat, cartoons or other negative models will frequently mimic the behavior. Children often will also react to life-changing events by acting out, sometimes months after the occurrence. A preschooler may not react negatively to the appearance of a newborn for six months to a year! The same can be true for the prolonged absence, or death of a loved-one. No child's home will ever be perfect, but by reassuring your child that negativity is a part of life that we can learn to improve/overcome, you will help them develop effective coping skills and understanding.