



Parent & Student Handbook

2023-24

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
GENERAL INFORMATION	
Introduction.....	5
Mission, Goals, Values.....	5
History and Vision.....	5
Montessori Education.....	6
Program Descriptions.....	7
Nondiscriminatory Policy.....	8
Children Requiring Accommodations.....	8
Regulating Agencies.....	9
ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION	
Application & Enrollment Process.....	9
Enrollment Contract & Payment of Fees.....	10
Additional Fees.....	10
Required Documents.....	11
Acknowledgement of Key School Policies.....	11
Student Records.....	11
Confidentiality.....	11
Re-Enrollment Guidelines.....	12
Enrollment Options.....	12
Tuition & Fee Schedule.....	13
Student Attendance and Tardy Policy.....	14
Notice of Absence.....	14
Ensuring a Positive Culture and Learning Environment.....	14
Probationary Period & Behavioral Expectations.....	15
Disruptive, Inappropriate Behaviors & Personal Boundaries.....	15
Termination of Enrollment Contract.....	17
HEALTH & SAFETY	
Immunizations.....	18
Emergencies & Medication.....	18
Illness and Lice.....	19

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse.....	19
Arrival & Dismissal Procedures.....	20
Late Arrivals & Early Dismissals.....	21
Transportation.....	21
Field Trips.....	21
Emergency Preparedness.....	21
Non-Smoking Policy.....	22
Visitor Policy.....	22
Emergency Closing Procedures.....	22
COMMUNICATION & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT	
Family/School Communication.....	22
Phone Calls & Meetings with Staff.....	22
Parent Involvement.....	22
Family Service Requirement.....	23
Observations.....	23
Evaluation of Student Progress.....	23
Parent/Teacher Conferences.....	24
Email Communications.....	24
CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT	
Sample Daily Schedules.....	24
Lunch & Snacks.....	25
Clothes & Personal Belongings.....	25
Discipline Policy & Procedures.....	26
Show & Tell.....	27
Birthdays.....	27
Rest Time Procedures.....	27
Toileting.....	27
Teacher/Student Ratios.....	28
Outdoor Supervision.....	28
Indoor Supervision.....	28
Class & School Pets.....	28
RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL, PARENTS & CHILD.....	29

GENERAL INFORMATION

Introduction

At Topsail Montessori, we are committed to the educational philosophy, pedagogy and principles that Dr. Maria Montessori developed over a century ago, recognizing the potential of young children. We develop this potential by means of a prepared environment, utilizing specially trained teachers and learning materials that allow children to discover knowledge and create meaning for themselves. Topsail Montessori offers programs to children ages two to ten, providing this child-centered style of education to families in our region. The school is non-sectarian and has a nondiscriminatory admission policy.

Our Mission

Our mission at Topsail Montessori is to provide a space where people can connect with others to share in the joy of learning. We endeavor to nurture the mind, body, and spirit of each member of our learning community, child and adult alike. By creating a dynamic environment where learners are challenged to think critically, solve problems creatively, and engage peacefully with one another, we strive to contribute to the world in positive and meaningful ways.

Our Goals

- To nurture each child's creativity, curiosity and passion for learning
- To support the development of independent, self-confident learners
- To foster a strong sense of self and the ability to respect and work with others
- To develop a repertoire of life skills and a strong academic foundation
- To encourage regular practice of self-reflection, self-regulation and peace
- To provide high quality childcare and opportunities for families to connect meaningfully with others

Our Core Values

Respect	Responsibility	Independence
Compassion	Service	Peace
Kindness	Integrity	Teamwork

History and Vision

Topsail Montessori has grown steadily since our opening in 2015. We currently provide full and part time programs for children between 2-10 years old, and we are continually growing to meet the demand for high-quality educational programs in our area. Staff and parents at Topsail Montessori work together to support children to become independent, resourceful problem solvers, developing the skills and mindset to become leaders in our local and global communities.

The Montessori environment provides an ideal setting for this preparation. Montessori classroom communities are multi-age, hands-on and student-centered; there are numerous and varied opportunities for children to engage in real world problem solving, allowing them to develop the skills and experience for productive collaboration. Throughout the year, Topsail Montessori provides opportunities for students and their families to connect with each other and the larger community celebrating achievements, strengthening relationships and sharing our passion for learning!

Montessori Education

Montessori is both a philosophy of child development and a method of applying the philosophy to support children's holistic growth. Montessori classrooms at all levels are dynamic communities of learners and guides. Some basic premises of Montessori for all age levels include:

Student-Centered Environments

Children are respected as unique individuals, different from adults, but not less important or valued. The child possesses an unusual sensitivity and intellectual ability to learn from the environment, so the classroom is tailored to support this potential allowing the child to explore and grow with greater independence. The focus in a Montessori classroom is on the child's experience, and not on the teacher's teaching. Our classroom environments are designed to meet the needs, interests, and abilities of all children within the class. To inspire interest and engagement, teachers modify the selection of educational materials and their physical layout, while differentiating instruction to meet each child's needs.

In a Montessori environment, students work individually, in partnerships and in groups. Whole group lessons are usually held at transitional points during the day to allow children to manage themselves and their time as much as possible. Our classrooms are designed to be as comfortable and inviting as a home, and emphasis is placed on appreciating and maintaining the beauty of the space by teaching children to take responsibility for its care.

Multi-age Community of Learners

Montessori classes are purposefully designed as mixed age groups, typically spanning a three-year age range. In this setting, older children benefit from having opportunities to develop responsibility and leadership skills in an authentic and meaningful way. Younger children benefit by observing more experienced classmates and gaining the confidence to engage in increasingly challenging work as they are ready. Children of varying abilities blend easily in a multi-age setting, because no child feels left behind and everyone learns at his/her own pace. The expert design of Montessori materials and curricula allows children to explore new concepts in concrete ways until they are able to gain understanding abstractly.

Cooperation and Collaboration

Children are encouraged to work independently and with partners. Often a more experienced child will be asked to assist a less experienced child with an activity or lesson. Group discussion and problem solving are encouraged and often facilitated by teachers or older students. In these ways, teachers work to create a sense of community within the classroom, so that children feel a sense of belonging and responsibility toward one another.

Montessori Curriculum

There are five major curriculum areas in Montessori preschool and elementary classrooms: (1) Practical Life; (2) Sensorial; (3) Language; (4) Mathematics and (5) Cultural (including content from Science and Social Studies). Through lessons in Practical Life, children refine coordination and increase concentration. Activities include such things as sweeping, polishing, sewing, hammering and building. Sensorial materials encourage children to organize and classify using concepts like length, color, weight, and texture. In both preschool and elementary classrooms, the Sensorial materials move gradually from concrete to abstract and serve as indirect preparation for Mathematics, Language and Science. Language is emphasized in all areas of the classroom. Children learn the phonetic sounds of the letters when they are introduced to Sandpaper Letters. They acquire specific vocabulary relating to all content areas by using hands-on materials and engaging in self-directed research from an early age. Mathematics and Language lessons isolate one skill at a time, and children are encouraged to progress at their own pace, gaining

confidence through repeated success. Cultural studies provide opportunities to engage in dialogue about the beauty and complexity of our Universe. Children explore the interconnections among life on Earth, learn about traditions and ways of life for people around the world, and find ways to improve their classroom and global communities in meaningful ways.

The Child's "Work"

The term "work" has a very special significance in the Montessori Classroom. It refers to the activities the child engages in, activities which are factors in the child's self-formation. Because of the nature of a child's work and his or her limited language, it is sometimes difficult for the child to explain what is happening. The child's choice of "work" is typically spontaneous and fulfills his or her own desires and needs. It is often helpful for parents to learn about the activities of the child's day by asking what lessons he/she enjoyed or what "work" the child did with friends.

Program Descriptions

Topsail Montessori offers full-time academic programs for children ages 2-10 years and part-time academic programs for children ages 2-4 years old. Listed below is a description of each program. Parents are encouraged to visit our website and contact our administrative office to obtain additional information about program availability and the enrollment process.

Stepping Stones Program

Our Stepping Stones program is designed for children 2-3 years old and nurtures the young child's natural drive toward independence. Topsail Montessori advances each child's growth through a rich, prepared environment where classroom materials are always accessible, attractive, safe, and geared for children's success. Teachers implement curriculum to foster speech and language development, strengthen fine and gross motor skills, promote grace and courtesy, and facilitate independence. Activities are changed regularly in response to children's need for variety and challenge as they grow and learn. This safe, loving, and gentle atmosphere puts children and parents at ease and fosters a natural transition to our larger classroom environments. As three-year-old children demonstrate cognitive, social, emotional, and physical readiness (including 100% toileting independence), they transition into our Primary program when space is available.

Primary Program

Our Primary program serves children ranging between 3-6 years old, *including* kindergarteners. The curriculum and environment are designed to support children's attraction to language, order and movement by facilitating their inherent sense of curiosity and self-direction. Students have a personalized educational experience based on a combination of their own initiative and the nurturing guidance of teachers. The three-year age span within the Primary classroom allows children to develop social, emotional, and academic skills in a supportive and unhurried setting. Older children in the class benefit from helping the younger children, thus reinforcing their own knowledge, and younger children benefit by imitating and internalizing skills modeled by their older classmates.

Elementary Program

Our Elementary program currently serves children in first through fourth grades. Montessori and traditional curricula are blended to support children's intellectual and social-emotional growth as they acquire the skills needed to meet the demands of our ever-changing society. One aspect of our program which distinguishes it from other school-aged programs is that it honors children's need for individual pacing and empowers students to actively participate in decision-making related to their own education. Teachers design individualized work plans that allow students to work independently and in partnerships,

set personal goals, make choices, and develop mastery of essential skills. We promote inquiry, creative problem solving, collaboration, and self-regulation by providing the tools and guidance necessary to ensure students' success.

Before and After School Care

Before and After School Care is available to students of all ages for an additional fee. Before Care is offered from 7:30-8:15am, and After Care is offered from 3:15-5:30pm daily. If your family requires childcare outside of our regular school hours on a consistent basis, you may consider enrolling in our Extended Day and/or Year-Round Programs which offer additional hours of care at a discounted rate. Alternatively, you may pay for these services as you use them if your child is enrolled in our Full-Time School-Year Programs.

After School Classes

After school enrichment classes are also offered at various times throughout the school year. These classes are designed to provide specific enrichment activities for children and reduce the need for families to seek similar opportunities elsewhere. It's our hope that offering these types of classes on our campus will minimize the time and stress involved in transporting your children to other sites for this type of experience. Classes generally fall into one of the following categories: sports & fitness, music, dance & theater, arts & crafts, music, nature explorations, and STEAM/STEM activities. Details about After School Classes (themes, descriptions, days, fees, and sign ups) will be communicated to families with as much advance notice as possible by our Outreach Director to enable families to plan accordingly. Fees for these classes are not wholly covered by extended day enrollment fees; a graduated fee schedule will be provided when information is sent out.

Summer Camps

Our Summer Camps serve children between the ages of 2 and 10 years old. Summer programming is designed to provide children with a range of activities including time for recreation, performance-based arts, academics and hands-on projects. Staff members structure camp activities following weekly themes that guide their selection of content, hands-on activities, and collaborative work. Camp activities vary based on the themes and developmental abilities of each age group. More information about our Summer Camps can be found on our website each spring.

Nondiscriminatory Policy

Topsail Montessori admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available at the school. It does not discriminate on the basis of sex, marital status, sexual orientation, political beliefs, pregnancy, parenthood, race, religion, color, national origin, age, or handicap in administration of its educational policies, employment policies, admissions policies, athletic and other school-administered programs.

Children Requiring Accommodations

When a child struggles to engage peacefully in classroom activities or with others in the learning environment, staff and parents will create a plan to address the child's needs. If Topsail Montessori staff can adequately meet the child's needs with reasonable accommodations and without significantly altering the program, the child will continue to be enrolled. If not, the child will be withdrawn from Topsail Montessori. Our goal is to meet the needs of each individual student, while maintaining an atmosphere conducive to learning for all students. At any time during enrollment, Topsail Montessori reserves the right to withdraw any student from enrollment, ensuring that a positive and peaceful learning environment is maintained for the benefit of all students.

Expenses incurred by the school resulting from the accommodations made for a child to participate fully in the school's programs are the sole responsibility of the child's family. These may include but are not limited to: special equipment necessary to support the child, evaluations and therapies, payment for additional time required of staff to participate in consultation with outside service providers, consulting fees relating to the support of the child, mileage expenses to attend off campus meetings for the child, repair/purchase of equipment damaged by the child, attorney's fees related to the provision of educational services for the child.

Regulating Agencies

Licensing and oversight for all programs is governed by Pender County and the state of North Carolina. Contact information for these governing agencies is listed below:

Pender County Government (Fire, Building & Sanitation Departments):

Pender County Govt. Annex
15060 US Hwy. 17 North
Hampstead, NC 28443
Phone: 910.270.6704
www.pendercountync.gov

Preschool Programs:

North Carolina Department of Health and Human Services
Division of Child Development and Early Education
2201 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-2201
Phone: 919.662.4499
www.ncchildcare.nc.gov

School-Aged Programs:

North Carolina Department of Non-Public Education
1309 Mail Service Center
Raleigh, NC 27699-1309
Phone: 984-236-0110
www.ncdnpe.org

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Application and Enrollment Process

There is a \$100 application fee required of all students. This non-refundable fee is submitted with a completed Application Form to begin enrollment. Once enrollment has been offered, an Enrollment Contract is required with a security deposit equal to one month of the annual tuition; the Enrollment Contract and deposit secure your child's placement. The deposit amount will be retained by Topsail Montessori to secure your child's enrollment and re-enrollment annually as agreed upon by both parties, and it will be returned to you within 90 days of your child's withdrawal provided that your financial obligations to the School have been satisfied as stated in the enrollment contract.

The steps in our admissions process are as follows:

1. **School Tour:** In-person and virtual tours are available. The virtual tours are on-demand via our website.
2. **Application:** Our application is available on our [website](#). It is valid for 2 years and requires a \$100 application fee per child. When an application is received, it is placed in a waiting pool.
3. **Classroom Visit:** When an applicant is a good match for an opening (e.g., same academic program, start date preference), a classroom visit is scheduled.
4. **Decision & Commitment:**
 - The enrollment decision is based on several factors, including the child's classroom visit, fit with the Montessori setting, and a family's commitment to a Montessori education.
 - Once a determination has been made by the School to offer enrollment, a contract will be written outlining the desired enrollment option (year round or school year, extended day or school day), enrollment dates, deposit amount, tuition obligation, and payment schedule).
 - The child's enrollment will be secured upon the School's receipt of the signed contract and deposit payment. If a child is enrolled after the beginning of the school year, a tuition payment may also be required by the first date of attendance.

Enrollment Contract and Payment of Fees

An Enrollment Contract identifying your child's educational program, the hours and date range of attendance, and the tuition amount due is provided to each family upon your child's acceptance to the School. For students who enroll after the start of the school year, tuition will be prorated based on the number of days remaining in the desired program.

Tuition is due and owed in full upon submission of your child's signed enrollment contract. As a courtesy to our families, Topsail Montessori allows School-Year tuition fees to be paid in (1) a single installment, (2) three installments or (3) eleven monthly installments paid by auto-draft. Tuition for Year-Round programs may be paid in twelve monthly payments. Installments count toward tuition for the entire school year; they do not pay for particular months of the school year. Tuition is not refunded or prorated due to absences caused by illness, vacation, suspension, or otherwise.

For families electing to make tuition payments on an agreed upon schedule, payments are due on the 1st of each month and must be paid by the 5th to avoid late payment fees. This applies during absences and vacations. A late fee of \$25 will be assessed on the 6th day of the month unless prior agreement has been made with the administrative staff and a payment plan is agreed upon. Tuition thirty (30) days past due may necessitate termination of enrollment and legal action unless parents communicate proactively with administrative staff to arrange (mutually agreed upon) plans for payment.

Additional Fees

- An application fee of \$100 must be submitted with your child's application
- A tuition deposit (a one-time fee equal to 1 month's tuition) must accompany your child's signed enrollment contract. This is a security deposit, which is not applied towards tuition. It will be refunded when your child's enrollment contract is terminated at the end of the school year and all financial obligations to the School have been met. See the "Termination of Enrollment Contract" section for additional details.
- A \$25 Returned check/ACH fee is charged per occurrence.
- A Late Pick Up fee of \$15 for every 10 minutes after your child's scheduled pick up time is charged and due the following month. Parents who arrive beyond scheduled dismissal times will be invoiced

as late fees are incurred. If you have questions or concerns regarding your financial obligations, please discuss these with administrative staff or Head of School as needed.

- Family Service Hours will be assessed at the end of each school year at a rate of \$10 per hour for each hour of unfulfilled service.
- A Re-enrollment Fee is due in the spring prior to the following school year.

Required Documents

Below is a list of documents that must be kept on record in each student's school file. Some documents are required to be updated annually to ensure the uninterrupted enrollment of your child.

- Application Form and \$100 payment
- Enrollment Contract and deposit equivalent to one month's tuition
- Documentation of receipt of NC Childcare Law and Parent/Student Handbook
- Documentation of receipt of Discipline, Nutrition, & Probationary Period Policies
- Emergency Medical Care Authorization
- Emergency Contact/Transportation Release Form (updated as needed)
- Emergency Health Plan(s) and Medication Authorization
- Current Medical Exam and Immunization records
- Off-site Activities Authorization
- Shaken Baby Syndrome Policy Acknowledgement
- Photograph permission for social media and advertising

Acknowledgement of Key School Policies

Parents are asked to download and thoroughly review the Topsail Montessori Parent/Student Handbook prior to entering into an enrollment agreement with Topsail Montessori. Receipt of the Handbook, along with specific policies related to attendance, behavior, nutrition, and NC Childcare laws will be documented at the time of a child's enrollment to ensure that families agree with Topsail Montessori about the importance of adherence to school policies relating to each area. This documentation demonstrates that families understand school policies and agree to abide by them.

Student Records

Student records may consist of, but are not limited to: attendance, health and emergency information, formal and informal assessments, developmental and academic progress reports, accident reports, and parental authorization for various school activities. Records of individuals are confidential and are open to inspection only by a student's parents or guardians, teaching and administrative staff, NC Childcare licensing specialists, and law enforcement officials. In addition, immunization records are reviewed annually by employees of the NC Department of Health and Human Services and/or Pender County Department of Environmental Health. Parents/Guardians may inspect their child's school records by scheduling an appointment with administrative staff for this purpose. Parents may also submit a signed request to administrative staff to have their child's records released to a third party.

Confidentiality

Topsail Montessori stresses the importance of protecting the rights and privacy of children and families. The practice of maintaining confidentiality of verbal and written information is a basic policy of our school. This practice is in accord with the ethical principles of professional behavior in school settings. For this reason, no volunteer or visitor to the school is permitted to access student or family records at any time other than those records for which written permission to access exists. Additionally, adults who volunteer or visit the classroom and school will not discuss any child's behavior, academic progress, or

any other personal information about children with adults other than staff members. This can create tension and hurt feelings, and it is damaging to the well-being of our school community.

If students are taken off campus (on a fieldtrip, for example), chaperones may be provided with information pertinent to maintaining the safety and well-being of each child in their care. This includes information such as: emergency contact names and phone numbers; allergies, medications, treatments, and emergency care instructions.

Re-Enrollment Guidelines

Enrollment Contracts are valid for one school year. Re-enrollment Contracts will be issued each spring for the following school year. Placement will be reserved for your child the following year provided that Parents and the School are in agreement that Topsail Montessori is a good fit and re-enrollment documents are returned to Topsail Montessori by the re-enrollment due date. The deposit amount for enrolled students will be carried forward from the previous year to satisfy (all or part of) the deposit requirement for the following year. The deposit will be refunded to parents within 90 days of the child's final enrollment date as listed on the annual contract, provided that sufficient notice has been provided and all financial obligations to the school have been met. If a child is withdrawn from Topsail Montessori mid-year, his/her deposit will not be refunded, unless the Head of School agrees to an exception (e.g., family moves out of the area, has provided 30-days' notice and has satisfied their financial obligations).

Enrollment and Re-enrollment are conditioned upon the following terms:

1. Recommendation by teachers and Head of School is required for re-enrollment.
2. Re-enrollment in a different program may require that an additional deposit amount be submitted. When combined with the original deposit, the sum must equal 10% of the new program's annual tuition.
3. Fees must be paid in a timely manner.
4. Enrollment and Re-Enrollment Contracts serve as promissory notes for the balance of the year's tuition in those cases in which parents choose an installment payment plan in lieu of full payment prior to the beginning of the school year. These Contracts constitute agreements to pay the full academic year's account, including all tuition, fees and expenses of the student.
5. The school is entitled to be reimbursed for any attorney's fees and costs incurred in the collection of any unpaid balance.
6. The student and the student's family agree to comply with the school's rules and policies as set forth in the Topsail Montessori Parent/Student Handbook.
7. The Re-Enrollment Form must be completed and returned to TM by the due date and the deposit must be paid in full to reserve your child's place for the following school year.
8. Transcripts will be held for students until all unpaid tuition and fees are received.

Enrollment Options

Topsail Montessori operates on a four-quarter school calendar. Families who desire care beyond the school day (and/or throughout the year) may elect to enroll in "year-round" and "extended day" programs, which provide a discounted rate and distribute costs equally across all months of the year. Tuition fees for those on school-year contracts **do not** cover childcare provided on non-school days, though families may pay additional fees for care on these days as needed. Please refer to the school calendar to plan vacations and childcare accordingly.

Tuition & Fee Schedule for 2023-24

School-Year Enrollment		
Full-Day Programs		
Stepping Stones (2-3yr)	8:15am-3:15pm	\$975/mo.
Primary (3-6yr)	8:15am-3:15pm	\$875/mo.
Elementary (Grades 1-3)	8:15am-3:15pm	\$875/mo.
Half-Day Program		
Stepping Stones & Primary (3-5yr)	8:15am-12:15pm	\$750/mo.
<p>School-Year Tuition pays for school days between August 18, 2023 and June 5, 2024. Tuition can be paid in 11 monthly installments, 3 payments or 1 payment. (175 days)</p>		
Year-Round Enrollment		
	Stepping Stones	Primary & Elementary
Extended Day A (8:15am-4:30pm)	\$1405/mo.	\$1220/mo.
Extended Day B (7:30am-4:30pm)	\$1450/mo.	\$1315/mo.
Extended Day C (7:30am-5:30pm)	\$1500/mo.	\$1405/mo.
Extended Day D (8:15am-5:30pm)	\$1475/mo.	\$1340/mo.
Full Day Year-Round (8:15am-3:15pm)	\$1250/mo.	\$1175/mo.
<p>Tuition for Year-Round Enrollment includes school days and summer camps from June 10 through August 9, 2024 and is paid in 12 monthly installments. (225 days)</p>		
Additional Fees		
Discounted Sibling Rate	\$850/mo. for older siblings (full day programs only)	
Before Care (7:30-8:15am)	\$10/day or \$175/mo.	
After Care (3:15-5:30pm)	\$25/day or \$450/mo.	
Application Fee	\$100 (one-time fee)	
Special Education Supplement	\$500/mo.	
Late Pick-Up Fee	\$15 per 10 minutes	
Family Service Hours	25 hrs. for 1 st child, 10 hours for each additional child	

Student Attendance and Tardy Policy

Attendance at Topsail Montessori is important for several reasons. Your child will not receive the full benefit of the Montessori educational program if he/she is absent frequently. An inconsistent schedule is disruptive to the child, to the staff and to other children. Topsail Montessori's goal is to provide an exceptional educational experience to all students in our school community. Ensuring that your child is present and on time each day is essential to achieving this goal. Please be respectful of everyone's need for consistency and make every effort possible to enable your child to be present and on time each day.

If your child is absent or tardy in excess of **10 times per quarter or 20 times per year**, you will be invited to discuss any extraordinary circumstances with the Head of School. The success of Topsail Montessori depends on everyone's commitment to adhere to this and other school policies. If you are not sure that your family will be able to adhere to our Attendance and Tardy Policy, please carefully consider whether Topsail Montessori is a good fit for you. Excessive tardiness and absenteeism may be grounds for withdrawal.

Notice of Absence

When there is a change in your child's attendance due to planned and unplanned absences, please be sure to communicate this to your child's classroom teacher via email.

Ensuring a Positive Culture and Learning Environment

At Topsail Montessori, we strive to work collaboratively with parents and children to build relationships grounded in mutual respect and shared values. Our intention is to grow a loving, dynamic, peaceful and supportive community of learners who share a common set of values and commitment to our collective success. With this in mind, we are committed to ensuring that the families and staff members who are part of the Topsail Montessori community behave in ways that support this goal.

Because our child-centered approach seeks to accommodate a wide range of individual differences, it is only on rare occasions that a child's behavior may demonstrate that his needs are not being met, and the family may be asked to find a more suitable setting. Examples of behaviors that may warrant a child to be withdrawn from Topsail Montessori include:

- A child endangers him or herself, other children, or adults
- A child is destructive to the environment
- A child is disruptive to the learning environment or disrespectful of others' needs
- Accommodations required for the child's success place an undue burden on the classroom community, resources and/or finances of the school

Examples of parent behaviors that may warrant a child to be withdrawn from Topsail Montessori include, but are not limited to the following:

- A child is excessively absent or tardy (10 per quarter/20 per year)
- A child is repeatedly not picked up on time
- Failure to satisfy financial obligations (tuition and related fees) in a timely manner
- Disrespectful or unprofessional behavior directed toward staff or students
- Unwillingness to work cooperatively and respectfully with staff members to resolve problems
- Gossip, rumors or similarly hurtful behaviors that create problems within the TM community

We want to create a positive and peaceful community for learning and to surround ourselves and the children we serve with love, kindness, and beauty. If it becomes evident that a child or family is not suited

to the Topsail Montessori approach or philosophy, we reserve the right at our sole discretion to terminate a student's enrollment at any time.

Probationary Period & Behavioral Expectations

The first **90 days** of a student's enrollment at Topsail Montessori are considered a "Probationary Period." During this time, children will be supported and guided by staff to make choices that will enable them to assimilate into the school and classroom community. Ground Rules for acceptable behavior and consequences for unacceptable behavior will be established in a clear and consistent manner, so that a child is given multiple opportunities to practice independence and decision making within the classroom and across school environments. The Ground Rules are as follows:

1. Respect all living things.
2. Respect the environment.

Demonstrating behaviors that are aligned to these guiding principles is the goal for all staff, students and visitors to Topsail Montessori. Children who succeed in a Montessori environment are generally those whose families value these principles and reinforce them at home. If a child is overstimulated, destructive, careless, or unwilling to take responsibility for his or her actions and independence at home, it's unlikely that he/she will be successful in a Montessori school.

It's essential that parents understand and agree with the philosophy of Montessori education to ensure that their child's success is likely in this type of environment. Montessori teachers provide children "freedom within limits," which means that children are empowered to direct their own learning to the extent that they are able. For example, a child may only begin a new work once he has put away his current work (respecting the environment by keeping it orderly, respecting living things by allowing another child to find and use the materials). If a child doesn't behave respectfully toward others or toward the environment, he may not enjoy the freedom of making choices about *what* he works with, *where* he works, and *who* he works with. As children learn the Ground Rules in a Montessori classroom, they become able to self-evaluate and support their peers in making decisions.

When a child behaves in a way that contradicts the Ground Rules, the teacher will address the child respectfully, directly, and specifically to help the child become aware of the expectations. The teacher will support the child in the process of determining how to better handle and correct the situation. She/he may facilitate this conversation between students if it's appropriate, so that children in the community can help to find solutions. This process empowers children to develop communication skills and build relationships based on mutual respect and tolerance. A child's willingness to accept responsibility for his or her own behaviors, acknowledge how the behaviors impact others in the community, and solve problems in a peaceful way provide the foundation for a healthy learning community and (ultimately) successful integration into the larger society.

Disruptive, Inappropriate Behaviors & Personal Boundaries

Topsail Montessori is committed to providing a safe, healthy, peaceful, and non-threatening environment for all children, staff and visitors. This requires knowing what to do when situations arise which jeopardize the safety and wellbeing of our community members. The purpose of this section is to clearly outline the procedures that will be followed when disruptive or inappropriate behaviors are exhibited on campus.

“Disruptive Behavior” refers to acting in a manner that interrupts the process of learning, restricts the movement and/or engagement of any person or group, or serves to verbally or physically intimidate any member of the School community, including staff, students, administration, parents and family members.

Disruptive Behavior Procedure (Adult):

1. Visitors exhibiting Disruptive Behavior may be asked to leave Campus.
2. If a visitor refuses to leave Campus after a verbal request has been made, staff will phone the police for assistance.
3. Visitors who have exhibited two or more instances of Disruptive Behavior will be asked to notify the School 24 hours before arriving on Campus.
4. If the police are called to assist the School with an adult exhibiting Disruptive Behavior, the individual will be permanently barred from Campus, and the School will seek a restraining order against this person.

“Inappropriate Behavior” refers to any verbal remarks, physical contact, gestures or other behaviors that cause a member of the School community feel unsafe, uncomfortable, intimidated, or harassed. Inappropriate behaviors include, but are not limited to, invading other’s personal boundaries, remarks about a person’s body or physical appearance, reference or exposure to sexual acts or intimate body parts, exposure to stories or pictures that make the observer or listener uncomfortable, unwanted touching of intimate and non-intimate areas of another person’s body.

Inappropriate Behavior Procedure (Child):

When a situation occurs involving inappropriate behaviors related to children interacting with other children, the following steps will be taken:

1. A staff member will remove the alleged child offender from his/her classroom environment and call the parent to have a meeting by phone or in person.
2. A meeting will be held with the offending child, his/her parent(s), relevant staff members and an administrator. Documentation of the incident & action steps will be recorded & retained by all parties.
3. The parent will take the offending child home and discuss the situation, providing clear expectations for appropriate and inappropriate behavior. The child may return the following school day and will be expected to verbally acknowledge the change in behavior expected with the administrator and supervising teacher.
4. The parent of the alleged child victim will be called to explain the situation.
5. Depending upon the outcome of this conversation, steps will be taken to resolve the issue. Ideally, this resolution will satisfy both sets of parents and school administration.
6. Parents of children in the related classroom will be notified via email that an incident of concern has occurred and an investigation is underway or completed (if needed).
7. Neither parents nor staff members should question a child specifically about a sensitive situation which is under investigation (those related to accusations of abuse or sexual in nature). Trained interrogators are qualified to handle this responsibility and will gather statements impartially without emotional interference or suggestion.
8. Depending upon the seriousness of the incident, the next steps may include:
 - Hold a meeting between children, parents, teachers, and administration
 - List steps & provide support to children to prevent future instances from occurring

- Outline the consequences of future incidents of inappropriate behavior
 - Call Child Protective Services and/or Sheriff for guidance & initiate a formal investigation
9. Documentation of a student's inappropriate behaviors will be recorded and maintained in the school's administrative files. Repeated infractions are cause for withdrawal.

Inappropriate Behavior Procedure (Adult):

Parents who have concerns about our staff members' behaviors are encouraged to communicate with staff directly and try to find ways to resolve the problem honestly and respectfully. If you don't feel comfortable addressing the staff member directly or you don't believe your concerns have been adequately addressed, the following procedure should be followed:

1. Articulate your concerns in an email directed to the Operations Manager and Head of School. The timeliness and specificity of this communication is vital in ensuring that we address your concerns with urgency to protect the safety of children in our care.
2. Your communication should provide specific details about the setting, behavior, circumstances, and your efforts to remedy the situation through direct communication with the staff member.
3. A meeting will be held including relevant staff members, at least one administrator and parents to discuss the concerns and find a resolution.
4. If the behavior warrants an investigation by outside authorities, the staff member will be assigned to administrative duties until the investigation is completed and a resolution is found.

Termination of Enrollment Contract

If at any time during enrollment, it becomes evident that a child or family is not well-suited to the Topsail Montessori learning environment or school culture, and good faith attempts have been made by staff to accommodate the child and family, a meeting will be scheduled including teachers, administrators and parents to discuss the need to find an alternate school setting for the child. Topsail Montessori reserves the right, at its sole discretion, to withdraw a child from enrollment if it deems it necessary to do so to protect the Mission of the School.

If your family has a significant life event which requires you to move out of the area (for example: military transition which requires a move out of the region, change in job location, care for an ailing family member), please communicate with the Head of School at least 30 days in advance to discuss the process of terminating your child's Enrollment Contract.

Parents are responsible for satisfying financial obligations to Topsail Montessori for the duration of the Enrollment Contract. If termination of the Enrollment Contract is approved by the Head of School for extenuating circumstances, parents may be relieved of a portion of their financial responsibility beyond their child's final day of enrollment. Deposits will not be returned for children withdrawn before the end of the school year unless an agreement has been reached with the Head of School in advance.

HEALTH & SAFETY

Our first and foremost priority at Topsail Montessori is to ensure the health, safety and wellbeing of all members in our community. Our mission is a team effort involving staff members, parents and children working together to minimize the chances of events and practices that may be unhealthy or injurious. As a general rule, any child showing obvious signs of illness will not be admitted. Please do not bring a child who has had a fever within the past twenty-four hours. Any child with a fever, vomiting, or diarrhea will

be kept in the Office and will need to be picked up as soon as possible. Parents may authorize the administration of some medications if the required permission forms are completed in advance and kept in the student's permanent school file. See below for specific guidelines related to illness and injuries.

Immunizations

Your child's medical exam and immunization records must be submitted within 30 days of enrollment and must be updated each year. If a student's records are not up to date, he/she will be required to stay home from school until the updated records are submitted.

If a child is exempt from immunizations, one of the following two requirements must be satisfied:

G.S.130A-156. Medical exemption: If a physician licensed to practice medicine in the state of North Carolina certifies that a required immunization is or may be detrimental to a person's health due to the presence of one of the contraindications adopted by the NC Commission for Health Services, the person is not required to receive the specified immunization as long as the contraindication persists. The State Health Director may, upon request by a physician licensed to practice medicine in this State, grant a medical exemption to a required immunization for a contraindication not on the list adopted by the Commission. Medical exemptions can only be requested by a physician licensed to practice medicine in North Carolina. If a physician determines the need to request a medical exemption from a required immunization for a patient and needs assistance, they should contact the North Carolina Immunization Branch at (919) 707-5550.

[Medical Exemption](#) (PDF, 517 KB) (DHHS 3987) Use this form for true contraindications and precautions, i.e. those recognized by the Commission for Health Services

[Physician's Request for Medical Exemption](#) (PDF, 41 KB) (DHHS 3995) Use this form for contraindications and precautions not recognized as valid.

G.S.130A-157. Religious exemption: If the bona fide religious beliefs of an adult or the parent, guardian or person in loco parentis of a child are contrary to the immunization requirements contained in this Part, the adult or the child shall be exempt from the requirements. Upon submission of a written statement of the bona fide religious beliefs and opposition to the immunization requirements, the person may attend the college, university, school or facility without presenting a certificate of immunization. There is no form for requesting religious exemptions in North Carolina. To claim a religious exemption, the parent or person requesting the exemption must write a statement of their religious objection to immunization, including the name and date of birth of the person for whom the exemption is being requested. This statement would then be provided to schools, childcare programs, camps, etc. in place of an immunization record. If a family is requesting a religious exemption for more than one child, a separate statement should be prepared for each child. Statements of religious objection to immunization do not need to be notarized, signed by a religious leader, or prepared by an attorney. They do not need to be submitted to the state for review or approval.

Emergencies and Medication:

- If a serious but not life-threatening illness or injury occurs and the parent or guardian is not able to be reached, the child's Emergency Contacts will be contacted in the order that they are listed. If a life-threatening illness or injury occurs, 911 will be called.

- All medicine is to be handled by adults only (including vitamins, cough drops, sunscreen, etc.). Children are not to carry medicine, nor should it be put in lunchboxes, cubbies, backpacks, etc.
- Parents should provide medication *outside* of school hours if possible.
- If medicine is required during school hours, it must be provided to an administrator or appropriate staff member along with a Medication Administration Form. No medications will be administered without this form.
- Prescription medication is to be brought in its original container with a prescription label including: the child's name, name of medication, dosage, dosage intervals, name of prescribing physician, and date the prescription was filled. Non-prescription medications must be in their original containers, labeled with the child's name.

Illness: Parents are asked to keep their child at home:

- If the child has had a fever at or above 100.5, vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- If the child has heavy nasal discharge, constant cough or sore throat
- If the child is overly tired, affecting his ability to participate fully in school activities
- If the child has yellowish skin/eyes, pink eye, skin rash, lice
- If the child has symptoms of a communicable disease or infection

In order to safeguard the health of everyone at Topsail Montessori, we ask that you help us by checking your child before you bring him/her to school each day and by keeping your child at home when he/she is ill. One contagious child at school infects other children and teachers, and the illness is then transmitted to families when children go home. A family whose child is diagnosed with a communicable disease or condition should promptly notify Topsail Montessori. We will provide notice to other families as needed, while maintaining your family's privacy.

Lice: A child or adult identified as having a nit infestation will be excluded from Topsail Montessori until it's demonstrated that the child has been treated and is nit-free. When a nit is identified by anyone associating with the Topsail Montessori community, the following steps will be taken:

1. The TM community will be alerted to the situation.
2. Every child and staff member will be checked and notified directly if evidence of lice is found.
3. All cloth and fur items will be removed from the classroom and laundered.
4. TM staff will perform regular head checks.

Families are encouraged to establish routine, periodic head checks at home throughout the year. We ask that you promptly advise our administrative staff if a nit or louse is found on a family member, or if a health alert is issued by another program one of your family members attends (gymnastics, karate, local recreation business, etc.). Make sure to treat affected family members with a pediculicide recommended by your family health care provider and take necessary measures to prevent a lice infestation throughout your home.

We greatly appreciate your help in making sure that we maintain an environment that is lice free. Please contact us as soon as possible if you have any concerns regarding lice at home or in school; we would rather err on the side of caution than allow an infestation.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse:

NC State law requires that childcare providers and school staff members report all incidents of suspected child abuse and neglect.

Arrival Procedure

Drop Off times are between 8:15 and 8:45am each morning. It is vitally important for your child to arrive on time each day for school. Classroom teachers initiate classroom activities between 8:30-8:45 daily. Beginning the school day on time allows your child to participate in valuable social interaction and learning experiences that would otherwise be missed. Timely arrival assists in the child's full participation in these experiences and minimizes disruptions to the Montessori educational experience.

The entrance to Topsail Montessori is located at 301 Whitebridge Road. Please use this entrance to facilitate a smooth traffic pattern for arrival and dismissal procedures. Please stay to the right of the driveway and drive counterclockwise to drop your child/children off at the gate or classroom, where he/she will be met by a teacher. Students should enter the supervised area independently and will be supported to transition into their daily routines with teachers' assistance.

Your child's teacher will sign your student in and out each day. Occasionally, a young child will have difficulty when a parent leaves campus. Parents are asked to discuss drop off procedures with children to facilitate independence in this routine. Establishing consistent expectations early on will help your child adjust more easily. Once in the school, children generally settle in very quickly. If for some reason your child does not, we will call you. Please feel free to call the school to make sure your child has settled in; we will be happy to report how your child is doing.

Dismissal Procedure

Pick Up times are between 2:45 and 3:15pm for all programs. Make sure you are on time to pick up your child. Anxiety can build up again at the end of the day. It is important for the child to feel safe and not forgotten. Parents should follow the same traffic pattern as is used for arrival. Parents of toddler students should come to the gate and assist the child in carrying his/her belongings as needed; then walk carefully to your car to buckle your child into his/her car seat. Teachers of older students will escort children to their vehicles while parents remain in the car.

When exiting our driveway to Whitebridge Road, it is *critical* that you come to a complete stop and wait for on-coming traffic. Residents of the Whitebridge community have asked that we remind parents of this, to ensure their safety and that of our families. Don't assume that on-coming drivers will be turning in our driveway. Use caution and patience when driving in and around our property, including the intersection at US Highway 17 heading north and south.

Please be aware that your child will only be released to individuals listed on your child's Emergency Contact Form. You may add or delete names as needed. If changes occur while the child is in school, please call or email the school with this information. Special dismissal instructions that differ from the child's usual routine must be put in writing with all information clearly specified (date, child's name, full name of the authorized adult picking up for that day, signature of parent/guardian). For example, children who will be leaving school with another Topsail Montessori family must have signed permission and written instructions provided by a parent or guardian. We encourage you to update your child's Emergency Contact form as needed rather than repeatedly writing individual authorizations.

Picture ID will be required of any persons unknown to staff. The picture ID will be verified with the Emergency Contact Form or written Permission Slip. If a family is involved in a custody dispute, we must have a legal document on file to prevent any parent from taking his/her child from the School. If any

parent or authorized person is suspected of being under the influence of drugs or alcohol when they attempt to pick up a child, law enforcement officials will be contacted.

Late Pick-Up Fee

A \$15 late pick-up fee will be charged for every 10-minute period a child remains at school without a parent/guardian after his/her program ends (12:15/3:15/5:30pm). Fees for late pick-ups are invoiced and payment is required the following month.

Late Arrivals and Early Dismissals

One of the fundamental goals of all Montessori programs is to promote independence and self-help skills among our community of children. Our teachers work daily on this philosophy and reinforce constantly the attitude that “I can do it myself.” It is extremely important, as a child-centered program, that we support this effort as we start and end each school day. We thank you in advance for cooperating and supporting this important Montessori principle by adhering to the following procedures:

If you arrive after the scheduled Drop Off time (8:45 AM), we ask you to (1) park your car; (2) bring your child to the front door or fenced playground area where his/her classmates and teachers are gathered; and (3) allow your child to go to his/her room independently.

Parents checking children out of school early (before 2:45pm) should (1) provide prior written communication to the child’s teacher or administrative staff indicating the time you plan to pick up your child and a brief explanation of why; (2) park your car when you arrive; (3) wait outside your child’s classroom for a staff member to bring your child to you and sign your child out.

Transportation

Topsail Montessori provides transportation for K-4th grade students to attend field trips, participate in volunteer service activities, and explore regional locations that support their educational pursuits in the classroom. We have two school vans (one 15-passenger and another 7 passenger) that are used for these purposes. Parent Volunteers may provide transportation and chaperone assistance as needed to attend off campus events and activities.

Field Trips

Classes often take nature walks throughout the property surrounding our school; parents must sign an “Off-Premise Permission Slip” to authorize children to walk outside the gated area of our campus. For any trips requiring transportation beyond our campus, lead teachers provide parents with a “Field Trip Permission Form” to submit in advance of the trip. This allows staff to coordinate with businesses and families to make necessary arrangements in advance. It also relieves Topsail Montessori staff and parent volunteers of any personal liability for transporting students.

Emergency Preparedness

Fire, Tornado & Lock Down Drills are held monthly or quarterly (as required) at varying times throughout the school day to provide children and staff opportunities to practice and become comfortable with each procedure. Parents are provided a copy of our “Emergency Response Plan” at the beginning of each school year outlining Topsail Montessori’s procedures for a variety of emergency situations.

Non-Smoking Policy

Topsail Montessori is a smoke free environment. Smoking and vaping are prohibited in the school, on the playground and on all school property.

Visitor Policy

Topsail Montessori maintains a safe environment for children, staff and visitors. When visitors arrive during the school day, a staff person will meet them at the front door and admit them into the building if they have scheduled an appointment in advance. Administration reserves the right to ask visitors who come to campus without an appointment to return at a later, prearranged time. Visitors touring the classrooms during the school day will be accompanied by staff at all times. In some situations, visitors may be asked to sign in and wear a visitor's badge during their time on school grounds.

Emergency Closing Procedures

A school calendar is provided to each family and is available on our website. Changes to the calendar will be communicated by email, including school closings related to inclement weather and city/county/state emergencies. Topsail Montessori closings and delays typically follow Pender and New Hanover County Schools' schedules. If an emergency occurs during school hours, the proper authorities will be called and children will be kept in the safest location possible until the event is over. Should it be necessary to send children home, parents will be contacted.

COMMUNICATION & FAMILY INVOLVEMENT

Family/School Communication

The school promotes communication with families using a variety of methods: handwritten notes, phone calls, Parent-Teacher Conferences, emails, text messages, and face-to-face interactions. Families are encouraged to communicate important information in writing, so all staff members who work with a child can easily share it. Staff members will respond to parent inquiries within 24 hours.

At Topsail Montessori we encourage collaborative partnerships between teachers and families to help children participate successfully in the Montessori environment. Efforts will be made to reconcile differences between a family's approach to education and that of the school in ways that honor both Montessori philosophy and the family's culture and values. Families are encouraged to work proactively with TM staff to find mutually agreeable solutions that address challenges as they arise.

Phone Calls and Meetings with Staff

Administrative staff can be reached by phone between 9:00am and 2:45pm. Please leave a message if needed, and we will return your call as soon as possible. Teachers are available by phone on weekdays between 7:45-8:15am and 3:15-3:45pm. Calls to teachers during school hours will be returned at the end of the day. **Please help us maintain our focus on the children throughout the school day by arranging appointments to meet or talk with your child's teacher outside of school hours.** If you plan to volunteer or observe in the classroom, please refrain from engaging staff in lengthy conversations, as this prevents us from maintaining focus on the children.

Parent Involvement

We believe that parents are a child's most important educators. Topsail Montessori values the importance of family in children's development, and we seek to create partnerships with parents and extended family members to positively impact our students' educational experience. We hope to engage in ongoing

dialogue with families and believe that we can provide a more meaningful, holistic experience when we collaborate to support children.

We seek families who are interested in “hands-on” participation in their child’s school. We encourage participation in our school’s daily affairs as well as special events. This could take the shape of listening to children read, facilitating gardening or craft projects, greeting families in the car lines during arrival and dismissal times, decorating for a special performance, compiling information for administrative purposes, cleaning classroom materials, etc. We ask that you inform your child’s teachers of your skills and availability, and we will communicate throughout the year about specific volunteer needs.

We invite parents to observe in their child’s classroom at least once during the school year. This will provide an opportunity to observe what a typical day looks like and provide conversation points to talk with children about their work. Please communicate with your child’s Lead Teacher to arrange observations and classroom visits ahead of time to facilitate planning.

Family Service Requirement

Topsail Montessori strives to build a school community with a shared commitment to learning and service. Our families support this aim by participating in efforts to teach the children and to beautify and grow our school. By taking part in school-based activities, we build relationships and increase our collective commitment to the school’s mission and vision. Parent participation in the classroom, on field trips, at community events and in fundraising is essential to our school’s success and fosters a vibrant and strong school community. For parents whose schedules don’t easily allow on-site volunteering, activities that parents can do at home (e.g., laundry, helping with lesson preparation) are also available.

To ensure that we achieve a high level of parent involvement, Topsail Montessori requires each family to contribute 25 hours of service per year for the first enrolled child and 10 hours of service for each additional child. While the act of service is the most desirable avenue for our partnership, we do understand that this may not be possible for everyone. Families who are unable to fulfill this service requirement will be asked to submit a donation equivalent to \$10 per hour of required service in lieu of unfulfilled hours by the end of the school year.

Observations

Observing the class is the best way to gain a better understanding of what goes on in a Montessori environment, as it becomes possible to see a variety of children engaging in a wide range of activities. We welcome parents, college students, teachers, and others interested in education to observe our classrooms at Topsail Montessori. Please communicate with your child’s Lead Teacher to arrange observation times in advance. Those who are not yet part of the Topsail Community may contact the office to schedule an observation time. Communicating with teachers and/or administrators in advance enables us to ensure that observations are scheduled during optimal “work cycle” times when the children are engaged in typical classroom activities.

Evaluations of Student Progress

The Montessori curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced based on the developmental needs of children. Teachers maintain evaluative records of each student’s progress and share these with parents throughout the school year using conferences, progress reports and Transparent Classroom (a digital database). Digital and physical work samples are kept to document students’ progress and are discussed during Parent/Teacher conferences twice a year. Additional conferences are held at a parent or teacher’s request at any point during the school year.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/Teacher conferences are scheduled each fall and spring. Please make every effort to attend these conferences. It is vital that parents and teachers have these opportunities to discuss children's successes, identify challenges and set goals for continued learning. In person conferences are best, but teachers can facilitate virtual conferences if needed as well.

Email Communications

Whole school emails and newsletters are sent by administrative staff members to provide families with important information about upcoming school events and communicate about procedural items. Teachers also send emails and newsletters to their classroom parents to ensure that they are communicating proactively about curriculum and information relating to classroom activities.

CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

Sample Daily Schedules

Below are sample daily schedules for our Stepping Stones, Primary and Elementary classrooms. All times and activities are subject to change based on weather and special circumstances. Specific lesson plans are created by classroom Lead Teachers and will either be posted weekly or made available to parents by way of students' weekly work plans.

Stepping Stones Classroom Schedule

8:15 – 8:45	Arrival/Routine Care/Inside Play
8:45 – 9:00	Clean Up/Transition to Circle
9:00 – 9:15	Morning Circle
9:15 – 9:30	Group Snack
9:30 – 10:30	Morning Work Cycle
10:45 – 11:30	Outside Play
11:30 – 11:45	Clean up/Routine Care
11:45 – 12:00	Circle Time
12:00 – 12:30	Lunch/Half-Day Dismissal
12:30 – 2:30	Rest Time
2:30 – 3:15	Dismissal/Outside Play

Primary Classroom Schedule

8:15 – 9:00	Arrival/Outside Play
9:00 – 9:15	Transition: store belongings, wash hands, restroom
9:15 – 9:30	Circle Time: Greetings, Songs, Calendar and Cultural Lesson
9:30 – 11:45	Morning Work Cycle
11:45 – 12:30	Class Meeting/Half-Day Dismissal/Outside Play
12:30 – 1:00	Lunch Time
1:00 – 2:30	Rest & Quiet Work Period
2:30 – 2:45	Class Jobs/Transition Outside
2:45 – 3:15	Dismissal

Elementary Classroom Schedule

8:15 – 8:30	Arrival/Morning Work
8:30 – 11:30	Work Cycle & Snack

11:30-12:00	Class Meeting & Cultural Lesson
12:00 – 1:00	Lunch/Recess
1:00 – 1:30	Drop Everything and Read (DEAR)/Book Clubs
1:30 – 2:30	Cultural Lessons, Research & Projects
2:30 – 3:15	Class Jobs & Meeting/Dismissal

Lunch and Snacks

Parents provide snacks and lunch for their children each day. Please have your child’s name printed on his/her lunch box, water bottle and food containers. Lunchboxes should be durable, water-tight, and free of commercial characters. **Please pack reusable water bottles and food containers (including utensils) to reduce packaging waste in our effort to have zero waste snacks and lunches.** Children have more enjoyable lunch/snack times when their food is nutritiously balanced and manageable, with child-sized portions and containers. We ask that you avoid sending sweets and foods with minimal nutritional value. Specific requirements related to snack and lunch foods are included in the Topsail Montessori enrollment documents. Uneaten food will be returned home so that you will have an indication of your child’s appetite, as well as likes and dislikes.

The NC Department of Health and Human Services provides a guideline to healthy meal components titled, “Meal Patterns for Children in Child Care Programs.” You were provided this and the “Topsail Montessori Snack Policy.” Please review these documents to ensure that you are sending the appropriate amount and kinds of foods for your child to enjoy each school day. We ask that you familiarize yourself with these expectations to assist us in making sure that children are prepared to learn and grow each day.

Clothes and Personal Belongings

Children are most comfortable in simple, durable, and washable clothes which do not restrict their activities and are easily managed. Young children should have simple outfits, without buttons, snaps, belts, or suspenders, so that they may be removed quickly. Please do not allow your child to wear clothing with commercial characters or clothing that will be distracting to others. To avoid losing clothing, we request that you label all removable clothing, backpacks, lunchboxes, and other belongings brought to school. Topsail Montessori is not liable for lost personal belongings.

Topsail Montessori promotes a philosophy and policy of non-violence. T-shirts depicting action figures, violent acts, violent cartoon characters, and so on are not appropriate school clothes. Weapons and toy weapons are not appropriate for children to bring to school. Children commonly pick up sticks on the playground and will sometimes pretend that they are weapons. When this occurs, our teachers will remind the child that this behavior isn’t appropriate for school and redirect the child to find another activity.

Every child needs a change of clothing to be kept at school. Please place extra clothing in a labeled zip lock bag; it will be stored at school and replaced as needed. Please avoid fancy shoes and shoes with lights. Suitable indoor shoes should be kept at school in your child’s cubby, and he/she will change to outdoor shoes prior to going outside or going home. Soft-soled, slip-on shoes or slippers work best. Outside boots and shoes will not be worn in the classroom.

The Montessori experience teaches children to be independent, self-assured and able to do things for themselves. To facilitate this independence, please provide your child with clothing that is manageable. If your child is in the last stages of toilet training, pants with an elastic waistband are an excellent choice; the child can pull these down easily without adult help. Belts, zippers, snaps, buckles and overalls can

lead to frustration and wet pants. Similarly, if your child cannot yet tie shoes, Velcro closures and slip-on shoes can be easily managed with independence and are a good choice.

Students may use backpacks to carry personal belongings. Cellular phones and other digital devices are **not** to be brought to school, as they create unnecessary distractions and complications. If a student brings a digital device to school, it will be taken by the teacher and stored in the Administrative Office; the parent/guardian may retrieve the device from the teacher.

Children may not bring random personal belongings to school. Things like toys, special pencils/journals, stickers, purses, (etc.) create problems and are a distraction to the classroom community. If a child brings these kinds of personal items to school, they will be taken and stored by the classroom teacher until they are retrieved by a parent or guardian. Children can share these items with friends when they have playdates at home, but they are unnecessary and unhelpful in the classroom. Please discuss this rule with your child; it will help minimize disappointment if students understand and follow this rule. Children who take naps (2-5 year old preschool students) may bring a “lovey”, special blanket or stuffed animal for nap time.

Discipline Policy and Procedures

A central focus of all Montessori programs is to help children cultivate inner discipline, which develops over a period of many years. The basis of discipline is respect: respect for oneself, for others and for the environment. Our classroom teachers help children develop an awareness of their behaviors and an understanding of how their actions affect the rights of others. It is a high priority at Topsail Montessori that we provide clear expectations for students’ behavior and enforce these expectations in a calm & consistent manner. We work closely with parents to support a child who struggles to meet behavioral expectations, ensuring that we all facilitate his/her success consistently at home and at school.

When a child has difficulty following the rules of the classroom community, the response will be developmentally appropriate. Common approaches to discipline include personal attention, distraction, substitution of an alternate acceptable behavior, and removal from the situation. Ideally, discipline issues can be resolved with natural consequences. For example, if a child throws paint he must clean up the mess; if a child disrupts another classmate’s work she must apologize and help reorganize the classmate’s materials.

Acts of aggression from a child will result in a loss of privileges for that child. Having the child sit and watch other children controlling their actions and bodies in an appropriate manner is often an effective tool. Sometimes, having the child engage in an activity that redirects the child physically and emotionally is also effective (reading, drawing, sorting, walking, listening to a story, etc.). This allows him/her to calm down and prepare to discuss the situation with a teacher. In order for the child to regain lost privileges, he/she is supported through the process of acknowledging mistakes and identifying alternative, acceptable behaviors. Staff will carefully and clearly explain to the child why his/her behavior was unacceptable and offer suggestions as needed about what he/she could do to meet his/her needs instead.

If a child disregards the rules of the classroom community, the teacher seeks the underlying causes to help the child meet his own needs while finding a constructive alternative. If the behavior occurs repeatedly, the teacher will communicate with parents to discuss the issue and arrange a conference to discuss and agree upon an intervention. The Head of School may be involved in this conference as needed, and the team will work collaboratively to create a plan to resolve the problem. If the situation does not improve within a defined time period, the Head of School will recommend that the child be withdrawn from the school to find a more suitable educational setting.

Show and Tell

Children are encouraged to share items of educational value with their classmates. The item may include science and nature materials, books, and songs. Living animals brought for sharing must first be discussed with the Lead Teacher. Pictures of pets are welcomed. Toys or other store-bought personal treasures are not to be brought for Show and Tell. As a guide, things the child creates or things that have meaningful educational value make good choices for Show and Tell. Please discuss this policy with your child to avoid disappointment at a later date. There will be a Show and Tell process in each classroom to facilitate scheduling and planning. You may discuss this process with your child's teacher to gain clarification as needed.

Birthdays

Our "Celebration of Life" ceremony is a Montessori tradition that is repeated each year on each child's birthday. The celebration takes place in the classroom on (or near) a child's birthday and is usually held at the end of the school day or another transition time to allow parents to attend. Please request a description of this ceremony from your child's Lead Teacher as your child's birthday approaches. We hope you'll join the class in this special celebration!

You may bring a special treat that does not have high sugar content (store-bought cakes or cupcakes with icing, for example, are not acceptable choices). Treat suggestions include: carrot cake, angel food cake with fruit, muffins, 100% fruit juice popsicles, frozen yogurt, ice cream sandwiches, or watermelon. Please do not bring party invitations unless all children are included, and make sure that if you provide party favors or presents you have enough for all children in the class.

Rest Time Procedures

Toddler and Primary students are given the opportunity to nap or rest daily. Children who finish napping will choose quiet work or be given lessons by a teacher. Children who are napping will do so in the classroom. The following are guidelines for naptime: Full Day, preschool aged students will be provided a cot and sheet. Cots will be placed on the floor a minimum of 18 inches apart. Parents will provide a small blanket and a small pillow (or lovey). These items must be able to be stored in your child's cubby along with a change of clothes, so please send a *small* sized blanket and pillow only. Sheets are provided by the school and are washed weekly by parent volunteers; personal items are sent home at the end of each week to be washed as well.

Toileting

Toileting independence is part of the child's work in the Stepping Stones Program. Teachers support the child's natural progression from diapers to underwear and partner with you throughout this process. Pull-ups hinder the child's progress in toileting independence and should not be used. The child doesn't feel wet when wearing the pull-up, thus doesn't develop the body awareness between the sensation and the need to use the toilet.

Preschool aged children must be able to use the toilet independently and reliably prior to being admitted into the Primary program. Children who are in the final stages of toilet training will be enrolled in the Stepping Stones program until they consistently demonstrate that they can manage their toileting needs with sufficient independence. Children in our Primary program are expected to take care of themselves appropriately when they have an accident. For this reason, it is important that your child be supported at home to undress him/herself and change into clean clothing with a high degree of independence.

If your child has a toileting accident during the school day, dirty clothing will be sent home in a plastic bag that day. Please make sure to send a set of clean clothes to replace the clothes kept at school the following day.

Teacher/Student Ratios

Our ratios and group sizes are as follows:

Ages of Children	Staff Child Ratio	Maximum Group Size
2 to 3 years	1:10	20
3 to 4 years	1:15	25
4 to 5 years	1:20	25
5 years and older	1:25	25

When age ranges are mixed, the teacher/student ratio for the youngest child is applied.

Outdoor Supervision

Children at Topsail Montessori go outside daily unless the weather is too wet or temperatures are below 28 degrees Fahrenheit. Please help us by making sure that your child has the proper clothing for outdoor play. No child will be allowed out-of-doors without clothing that is appropriate for the length of outdoor time planned in the current weather conditions. Typically, outdoor time lasts for at least 30 minutes.

Children will not be outdoors without adult supervision. Children will use the restrooms prior to outdoor time and be supervised by an adult when/if they need to use the restroom during outdoor play. During an emergency, one teacher will remain with the children while another staff member handles the situation.

Fence gates will remain closed while preschool aged children are in the playground area; only adults may open them. Staff will maintain awareness of all children and activity by walking and watching all children and areas of the playground space.

Indoor Supervision

Children will be supervised and accounted for, even while sleeping. Staff members are aware of the total number of children in their care at all times. During an emergency, one staff member will stay with the children while another staff member handles the situation.

Staff members are expected to exercise emotional control, not to show annoyance, nor raise their voices to a child, caregiver or any other person. They are expected to maintain a positive attitude toward all others regardless of circumstances or personal preferences.

Class & School Pets

Topsail Montessori follows NC Childcare regulations relating to pets and pet care. We currently have chickens, goats, a beta fish, guinea pigs and parakeets, and we will certainly add new critters to our community in the future. Children participate in the care and handling of classroom and school pets under the guidance and supervision of school staff. Proper hand washing procedures are followed after handling animals. If a child has a known allergy to any pet, the child's Lead Teacher should be notified in writing.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE SCHOOL, PARENTS & CHILD

Responsibilities of the School

- To provide an environment that is clean, safe, and attractive, while meeting the standards set by affiliated professional and governmental agencies
- To provide a program that is stimulating and developmentally appropriate
- To hire teachers who are exceptional in their capacity for guiding and caring, and who possess excellent professional skills
- To remain committed to professional growth and openness to new ideas

Responsibilities of the Parent/Guardian

- To familiarize yourself with the basic Montessori philosophy, particularly with regard to the approach to the child and the child's individual needs
- To bring the child to school on time and notify the school if your child will be absent
- To promptly fulfill financial and legal obligations to the school
- To participate in scheduled school events; Montessori education involves the development of the individual's sense of responsibility to others and to the community in which he/she lives, as well as her/his individual potential and personal freedom. In keeping with this, the school encourages each parent to spend time on campus participating as volunteers and/or attendees in events and projects that benefit the school community as a whole. This parent involvement demonstrates the parents' commitment to the Montessori education of their child.
- To keep the school advised of family situations and changes in the attitude or behavior of your child at home. The school and home each sees limited and sometimes dramatically different facets of the child's personality. It helps us to understand changes in attitude and behavior at school by relating them to those taking place in the home.
- To advise the school at least 30 days in advance regarding any change in enrollment
- To read the notices and newsletters sent home in order to keep abreast of current activities and needs of the school and classroom
- To periodically observe in the classroom and have formal conferences with your child's teacher at least twice yearly
- To complete and maintain updated forms. Promptly complete and return all other forms, permission slips, etc. as they arise.

Responsibilities of the Child

- To develop a sense of purpose and personal responsibility by engaging in school activities that will enable him/her to learn and contribute positively to the Topsail Montessori community
- To adhere to behavioral expectations (showing respect for self, others and the environment) which contribute to the peaceful functioning of the classroom and school