



Cayuga Heights Montessori House

Parent Handbook

This handbook should be used as a resource for parents, to answer questions which may arise during the course of the year. Please familiarize yourself with the policies and procedures of CHMH. Any further questions can be directed to Ailish.

Cayuga Heights Montessori House

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Mission Statement

To provide the children of our community, ages 2 1/2 through 5 years, with a Montessori program that instills a strong sense of self, a deep respect for others and the world around them, the virtues of peace and dignity, and to awaken in them a lifelong excitement for learning and discovery.

About the school

CHMH provides a traditional Montessori program for children ages 2.5 through 5. We offer the child a unique opportunity to interact with a beautifully prepared environment in a nurturing home-based setting. Our environment is fully equipped with Montessori materials from the Nienhuis material company which are constructed to the highest standards of quality. Our facility includes two charming classrooms, and a large grassy picket-fenced-yard.

Admission

Children are admitted to CHMH if there is an appropriate opening in the program, and after the school has received a completed application form, and the parents have met with the Director for a tour and interview. CHMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, nationality or ethnic origin. We are committed to creating and maintaining a balanced learning environment for your child that is consistent with the philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori. In the event that our program does not meet the needs of a child, CHMS reserves the right to ask that child to leave the program. However, all attempts will be made to meet the needs of each child as long as they are consistent with the teaching philosophy of the Montessori Method.

Application

The application process begins with an observation followed by an interview with the child and his parents. Applications will be processed upon receipt of a completed application form. If there is space in the program, an enrollment agreement will be offered. If not spaces are available the application will be placed on a waiting list.

Enrollment

Enrollment at CHMS is binding for the entire school year. A child is officially enrolled in the program upon receipt of a completed application form, a completed enrollment form and enrollment fees.

If both parents and the program agree that CHMS is not appropriate for the enrolled child, the child may be withdrawn without any further financial obligation.

If CHMS decides that the program is not appropriate for the enrolled child the family is relieved of any further obligation.

If parent should decide to withdraw their child before the completion of the school year for any reason, 60 days written notice must be given to CHMS. The parents remain financially responsible for the tuition for the remainder of the school year, until the position has been filled, and the program is able to replace the income represented by that tuition.

Tuition Policy

Tuition is due in ten (10) monthly installments due on the 15th of each month beginning with September tuition, which is due the 15th of August. Failure to make an installment payment within 30 days of its due date gives CHMH the right to declare the entire unpaid balance of the annual tuition immediately due and payable.

Class Policies and Procedures

Arrival and Departure

Arrival: 8:45-9:00 am

Half-day Departure: 12:00 noon

Full-day Departure: 3:15-3:30 pm

Independence plays an important role in any Montessori program. The child has a strong inner drive towards independence, and once acquired, it leads to self esteem, and the confidence to explore further and discover. This exploration throughout the prepared environment is how the child creates his intellect. Independence begins at the threshold of the classroom and so we ask that the children enter alone, and take care of their belongings unassisted by parents. We also ask that during pick-up time this independence is respected and encouraged by parents.

It is very important that all children arrive by 9:00 o'clock. Children who arrive late enter a community that is coalesced and settled, and are temporarily 'out of sync'. CHMS families who wish to use the public school bus system (for children of kindergarten entry age), should call the transportation department in their home district to make appropriate arrangements. One of our staff will assist with arrival and departure

Parking (Cayuga Hts Police Dept. Parking Recommendations)

- Please park on the CHMH pull over area, with the traffic (facing the stop sign), parallel to the road.
- If there are no spaces available, please wait in line (facing North - facing the stop sign), taking care not to block any driveways.
- Pull as far forward as you can to make room for others.
- Due to our limited parking, we ask that parents depart promptly after signing in/out their child so that others may park for drop off/pick up.
- **Please do NOT park on the opposite side of the road from CHMH and walk across the street. This is very dangerous.**
- Thank you for working together to make sure everyone is safe!

Sign In/Out Sheet

As per OCFS recommendation, we ask that you sign your child in and out daily, recording times of arrival and departure. The sign in/out clipboard will be at the gate during clement weather, and just inside the door during inclement weather

Separation

It can be difficult for parents and young children to separate especially in a setting that is new and familiar. CHMS will be happy to work with parents to make this transition comfortable for them and their child .We encourage parents to visit with their child before the child begins the program, and to begin a gradual phase-in period if that is considered necessary by the parent This could be in the form of shorter days, or less than five day a week attendance for the first week. However, we have learned by experience, that a quick and positive good-bye is easiest on the child. Children can easily sense when a parent is hesitant and uncertain and will respond to this with anxiety and worry. It is important that your child receive the message – both verbally and in body language- that you are happy and confident about leaving them at CHMH, and they will respond by feeling comfortable in forming a bond of trust with the staff and environment. If you experience a difficult separation, please call us at regular intervals to get reassurance that your child has settled down. If your child is unhappy and still crying after five minutes, you will always be called by Ailish. If you have a particular concern about separating from your child during the first few days, please come and talk to Ailish so that we can make some arrangements to help you and your child feel more comfortable.

School Closing Policy

CHMH closely follows the Ithaca City School District's calendar and operates under the same closing policy (see calendar). All school closings will be announced on local radio (WVBR, WHCU, WTKO, WQNY, WSKG and WEOS).

There are no tuition credits for school closings. Make up days will correspond to the Ithaca City School Districts schedule.

Fire Drills

CHMH will conduct random monthly fire drills. The teachers will ensure that all children exit the house safely and quickly and gather at safe designated areas. We will alternate leaving by both exits.

Emergencies

Our world has changed after September 11, 2001. In the event of a national or local emergency the children and staff will proceed to the closest safest area as directed by radio or television emergency directions or by emergency crews.

Please update the blue Emergency Card when needed, and have a emergency plan for picking up your child.

In the event that our building must be evacuated the staff will proceed to one of two close pre-arranged homes, and you will be telephoned to be notified of this situation.

Illness

CHMH follows the State of New York guidelines for dealing with illness in our program. These guidelines will be strictly followed to ensure the well being of all of the children. Please do not send a sick child to school. It is our priority to protect the health of the children under our care, and of course, our own health. It is very stressful to a child who is ill to be away from his home environment, and immediate loved ones. A sick child will recover more quickly when at home. CHMH is not licensed or equipped to care for sick children. If a child becomes ill while at school, he will be moved to a quiet comfortable area, offered liquids, and comforted by the staff. Parents will be called to arrange for the child to be picked up. Please review our Health Exclusion Policy carefully as this will be strictly followed.

CHMH does not administer medications to children. If your child needs to receive medication while at school, we ask that you make arrangements for a designated person to come to the program to administer the medication.

In the event that your child requires emergency medical attention, we must be able to reach a parent or emergency contact at any time of the day. In the event that a parent/contact cannot be reached, or that the emergency does not allow for the time to gain consent, Emergency Medical Services will be called. Please make sure that all emergency information is up to date. **Parents must inform the CHMH staff if their child has received any medication in the past 24 hours.**

Note: Currently there are no children in my program who have special health care needs that require me to give them medication. *Special health care needs are defined by the ADA and are based on individual assessment. As required by the ADA, I will make reasonable accommodations based on the ADA guidelines. If the situation merits, I will develop a plan which will keep me in compliance with ADA guidelines and OCFS childcare regulations. This may include but will not necessarily be limited to: if a child in my care requires a course of medication which must be given during program hours I will request that the parent / other assigned approved individuals will come to the program to administer the medication; if a child in my care develops a serious condition that requires the regular, or episodic, or possibility of necessitating administering of medication during program hours CHMH will request that the parents provide a list of two or more individuals in addition to themselves who can be called upon to administer the medication. The staff at CHMH will draw up an agreement with the parents which will outline an emergency plan in the event that no individual can be contacted to administer the medication. Consultation with Cayuga Hts E.M.T. will be strongly recommended by CHMH.*

Health Exclusion Policy:

When the illness or child's reaction to it requires more than staff can provide or compromises the health and safety of others:

- Oral temperature of 100 degrees F, axillary temperature of 99 degrees F
- Persistent diarrhea
- Undiagnosed rash

- Vomiting two or more times in a 24 hour period, or any vomiting accompanied by symptoms of dehydration or other signs of illness.
- Constant runny nose that is not caused by allergies especially when the nasal discharge is yellow or green.
- Until a medical note requires inclusion – signs and symptoms of illness such as lethargy, uncontrolled coughing, persistent abdominal pain, discolored urine, refusal to eat/drink, irritability, persistent crying, difficulty breathing, wheezing or other unusual signs.

Immunization Policy:

Other than children who are enrolled in kindergarten or higher, no child will be admitted to CHMH unless we have received a written statement signed by a health care provider verifying that the child is able to participate in our Montessori Program, currently appears to be free from contagious or communicable disease, and is receiving health care, including appropriate health examinations in accordance with the American Academy of Pediatrics schedule of such care and examinations. This documentation must state that the child has received age appropriate immunizations in accordance with NY S Public Health Law.

- Any child not yet immunized will be admitted to CHMH if the immunizations are in process and the parent gives us specific appointment dates for subsequent immunizations.
- Any child who is not immunized due to parent’s genuine religious beliefs will be admitted to CHMS upon furnishing a written statement to this effect.
- Any child missing immunizations may be admitted to CHMH if the parent can furnish a letter from a physician licensed to practice medicine provides us with a written statement that such immunizations may be detrimental to the health of the child.

Other than the above exceptions, all children enrolled at CHMH must be up to date with their immunizations in accordance with the current schedule for immunizations by the NYS Health Department

The CHMH staff are Mandated Reporters:

‘In accordance with the provisions of sections 413 and 415 of the Social Services Law, the Group Family Provider, assistant or substitute must report any suspected incidents of child abuse or maltreatment concerning a child receiving child care to the Statewide Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment or cause such a report to be made when the provider has reasonable cause to suspect that a child coming before them in their capacity as a provider of Group Family Care is an abused or maltreated child. Such a report must be followed by a written report within 48 hours, in the form and manner prescribed by the Office, to the child protective service of the social services district in the county in which the child resides’. (OCFS Regulations for GFDC License 416.2)

**Cayuga Heights Montessori House
Daily Routine**

8:45-9:00

Arrival. The children are greeted at the door, and enter the vestibule to organize their belongings, and change into indoor shoes.

9:00 – 12:00

Morning Work Period. The children move freely throughout the Prepared Environment, choosing work, having snack, and enjoying daily Art and Food Preparation opportunities. The teachers offer lessons, and guide the children as they work and interact with each other. Throughout the course of the morning, the children are invited to attend two Group Meetings. Each day, group time includes welcome, calendar, weather report, songs and a lesson. Over the course of the week a more formal lesson in the following areas is also offered: Art, French, Yoga, Music, Movement, Singing, Curriculum Lesson.

Inclement weather, the children may choose to enjoy our “outside classroom”, to have snack, enjoy a water Practical Life activity (clothes, window or baby washing), paint or read under a tree.

12:00 – 12:45

Outside Playtime

12:45 – 1:30

Lunch. (picnic lunch, if possible)

1:30 – 1:45

Storytime

1:45 – 3:00

Naptime/Afternoon Work Period for the older children

3:00 – 3:30

Wake-up, clean-up, afternoon outside play

3:15-3:30

Pick - up

Observations

Classroom observations will begin in October. In keeping with the Montessori protocol, we ask that you remain seated, and refrain from engaging in conversation or activities with the children. The prepared environment is a very special place and has been carefully designed to meet the developmental needs of the children and facilitate their journey towards independent self directed learning and discovery. The presence of parents moving freely through the room can be distracting and can interfere in the atmosphere of independence and concentration in the classroom. We ask that you limit your observation to 30 minutes. Ailish will be happy to telephone you, or meet with you after school to discuss your observation and answer any questions. *All visitors must sign in and out in the CHMH Visitors Log, and include the reason for the visit.*

Nutrition

Snack:

Consistent with other Montessori programs, we request that families send in snack on a 'per week' basis. As part of our Grace and Courtesy curriculum, your child will be responsible for preparing and serving snack during your week. Each family is expected to send in snack every 12 weeks. The procedure will be explained during Parent Orientation at the beginning of the school year.

In any Montessori program, the focus is on the healthy development of the whole child – spirit, intellect and physical wellbeing. Nutrition and healthful living is part of this focus. Please send in a nutritious lunch with your child if they are to stay all day. Please include protein, grains, fruits and vegetables. Candy and or highly sugared foods are not tolerated well by young children, and can make them feel agitated and 'out of sorts'. These foods are not allowed in our program and will be sent home. We can refrigerate and/or heat up lunches if required.

We will send home the uneaten portion of your child's lunch, to help you gauge his/her daily nutrition. Although we will do our best to encourage children to eat all of their lunch, there is only so much we can do, so please prepare a nutritious lunch that your child is likely to enjoy (or at least tolerate), and a 'child friendly' lunch that your child can manage on their own. We appreciate that this can be a challenge!!!

Toileting

Consistent with traditional Pre- Primary Montessori Programs, CHMH does require that the children can independently attend to toileting needs. The teachers are always available to help the children if necessary. Please feel free to send in a container of 'wet wipes' for the use of your individual child.

Outdoor play

The children will go outside to play each day except in the case of extreme cold, extreme heat, heavy rain or stormy conditions. Light rain or drizzle will not prevent us from going outside. Please ensure that your child has the appropriate clothing to for outside play on any given day. Each child should have a complete change of clothes at school at all times which should correspond to changes in growth and seasons. If a child is not able to go outside he should not come to school. We do not have the staff to supervise children inside and outside at the same time.

Clothing

We ask that you send your child in clothing that they can manage *independently* (Velcro sneakers are recommended for children who are in the pre-tying stage), and in which they can comfortably play and explore. Messy art projects will be part of each day, and in any Montessori classroom there is a lot of activity involving water. Although smocks will be worn we cannot prevent the soiling of clothes. All clothing and belongings (including hats and mittens) should be clearly labeled. Each child must have a

pair of inside shoes and a pair of outside shoes each day. For the inside footwear we recommend slippers that fit snugly, but can also be easily slipped on and off. Outside footwear must be season/weather appropriate – sneakers for spring/early fall, snow-boots for winter, mud boots in wet weather, sandals in very hot weather. Flip flops are not allowed as they are not conducive to safe climbing or running.

Clothing, footwear and nap blankets/pillows should be plain and free of distracting images.

Naptime

Napping children should have a blanket and pillow at CHMS each day. These will be sent home periodically for washing. DCC approved nap mats are provided by our program. A signed Naptime Agreement must be in your child's file in order for him/her to nap at CHMH.

Materials

The Montessori materials are irresistible to young children! Sometimes charming little pieces/object find their way to the child's home. Should this occur please inform us (this could prevent many hours of searching the classrooms) and return the object the next day.

Birthdays

At CHMH each child's birthday will be celebrated with the tradition of the Montessori Birthday Walk and the reading of the classic "On the day that you were born We also suggest that you send in pictures representing each year of your child's life for the construction of a simple timeline." This celebration will take place during the 2nd Circle at 11:00. Parents are welcome to come at this time to join us. The celebration of your child's birthday could also include a donation to the class library in your child's name. Proper nutrition is very much a focus of our program and we do ask that you refrain from sending in sugary treats (cupcakes, birthday cake) for your child's birthday celebration. Some children are very sensitive to sugar and can become very unhappy for the rest of the day. We suggest that you send in a healthful snack for your child to share with his/her friends on their special day. Healthful snacks could include: fruit or vegetable breads; fruit or vegetable trays; cheese and crackers; vegetable and peanut butter etc.

We ask that you refrain from passing out invitations at school. Even if every child receives an invitation, it is a distraction for the children, and may lead to sadness if a child cannot attend the party.

Home folders

The Home Folders will be sent home every Friday. They may contain the work that your child did during the course of the week, as well as art work or paintings. Important information will also be sent home in these folders (such as field trip information or upcoming special events) so please be sure to check the Home Folder every week-end and send it back every Monday. There may be weeks when little or no work is sent home. This is not a reflection of the valuable work that your child accomplished during the course of the week. Often in a Montessori classroom, the most important work is intangible, with no *obvious*

'end product'. This is especially true of the younger children, who complete the important work of the creation of the intellect on a daily basis with little or no paper work, with the exception of art. We appreciate your vigilance in returning the folder on Monday. It is necessary in order for us to send your child's work home on Friday,

Show and Tell Friday

On the last Friday of each month, the children are encouraged to bring something of interest from their home to share with the other children. This is a wonderful opportunity for children to practice communicating to a group about something that is important to them. Objects to share should be educational (a book, model of an animal, seashell, rock etc). ***Toys are not allowed at CHMS with the exception of special stuffed "friends" for naptime.***

Field Trips

During the course of the year we will be going on field trips to local areas of interest. You will be informed of these events in a letter that will be sent home in your child's home folder. Parents will be asked to drive on these occasions, and will also be asked to act as chaperone for the children that they are driving for the duration of the field trip. Teachers will not be driving the children.

Classroom Discipline

In every Montessori classroom, the discipline policy revolves around respect: for oneself, for others and for the environment. Gentleness, kindness and respect are virtues that are being constantly emphasized in the classroom, and the children are reminded and encouraged to practice them. The teachers also are consistent models of appropriate behavior in the classroom. If a child is not responding to the teachers request to act in a respectful manner, they will be asked to sit in a quiet area for a short while, and then be invited to return to their activity. The teachers will ensure that the child fully understands why there was concern over his/her behavior, and has an opportunity to discuss, share and collaborate in a solution (if age appropriate). In the event of a persistent/extreme problem, the parents will be notified and requested to attend a conference to discuss the situation and invited to collaborate in resolving the problem.

Parent/Teacher Conferences

Parent/teacher conferences will be held in November and March (see calendar). A written evaluation of your child's progress will be provided at the spring conference. Ailish will be happy to arrange a conference at any time during the course of the year at your request.

CHMH Late Policy

Late Arrivals

It is very important that your child arrive by 9:00. Morning circle may begin early and the children take turns 'leading' the circle every day. In addition to the role of 'meteorologist', the children take turns in preparing snack, and a variety of other morning jobs. These tasks are very important to the children, and it is upsetting to them when they miss their turn. Once the morning work session has begun, late arrivals can be very distracting to the group and can result in breaking the threads of interest and concentration. It should not be overlooked that children who arrive late are initially out of sync with the rhythm of the rest of the class and it can take them a while before they 'catch up'. We know that mornings can be difficult, and we appreciate your efforts to get you child to CHMH on time.

Late Pick-ups

Our program ends at 12:00 for half-day children, and 3:30 for full-day children. Please arrive promptly by these times. At noon we need to prepare for lunchtime, and at the end of the day, the teachers need to prepare the classroom for the next day, conduct meetings, and occasionally attend to commitments such as appointments that require us to leave directly at 3:30. While we understand that occasionally situations arise when you cannot be on time, *we do ask that you telephone to let us know*. Repeated incidences (more than once in the absence of extenuating circumstances) of late pick-ups will result in a late fee. Late pick-ups will be recorded in the Sign-in Sheet, and the fee will be included in your monthly statement. The CHMH late fee rate is: **\$5** within the first ten minutes and **\$1** for each additional minute. (Many child care facilities in the area have this policy.) As with any business we have hours of operation. Should these hours not suit your family needs and you find it very difficult to arrive at dismissal time, an alternative program may be needed.

Cayuga Heights Montessori House

I have read the CHMH Parent Handbook, which outlines the policies and procedures of Cayuga Heights Montessori House. I fully understand these policies and procedures and agree to abide by them.

Name _____ **Date** _____