

# ST. JAMES CATHOLIC MONTESSORI CENTER HANDBOOK

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

## **PHILOSOPHY...**

*At St. James Catholic Preschool we will provide a safe, loving atmosphere where children can develop physically, intellectually, emotionally, creatively, socially, and spiritually. We will provide opportunities to learn in many different developmentally appropriate ways.*

*We are a Catholic Christian Preschool, and will provide opportunities to learn to appreciate all of God's creations. We will learn about God through song, prayer, and day-to-day activities. We will strive to instill a positive self-image in each child, and will gently guide him/her in making good choices. We want your child's first school experiences to be positive ones, and will always make this our number one priority.*

## **Background & Philosophy**

St. James Catholic Preschool was founded in 2000-2001 to provide a quality educational preschool program. We encompass the philosophy and educational approach expressed by Dr. Maria Montessori. The staff views each child as an individual with a unique background, personality, maturity, and intellect. We encourage a 'whole family' approach at St. James by providing opportunities for parents and staff to work together, share, and to learn from one another.

## **Location/mailing address**

St. James Catholic School  
1010 Belmont Avenue  
Augusta, KS 67010  
(316) 775 5721

## **Tuition**

When you sign an enrollment agreement for your child, you are committing to paying tuition for 9 months, beginning in August/September and ending in May. Tuition for the first month will be paid at Final Registration and can be paid in full, by semester, quarterly, or in 9 monthly payments paid on the first day of each month after.

In order to maintain services over the entire year, it is essential that the annual income from fees be assured. For this reason it is understood that families with children in this program that are delinquent for more than 30 days and failing to have consulted with the principal and or teacher will be asked to obtain services elsewhere. It should also be understood that no reduction or remission of fees can be allowed for absence due to holidays, vacations, snow days, illness, or just not being able to get your child to school. A two-week notice is required for the child's withdrawal from the program to give St. James time to fill the spot they will be vacating.

**YOUR DEPOSIT WILL NOT BE RETURNED.**

## **Fees**

Fees for the coming year are:

Preschool (All Day) – Registration fee-**\$200.00** – Tuition-**\$550.00** per month per child.  
4/5 year olds (5-day) – Registration fee-**\$120.00** – Tuition-**\$185.00** per month per child.  
2/3 year olds (5-day) – Registration fee-**\$120.00** – Tuition-**\$185.00** per month per child.

A NON REFUNDABLE \$10.00 DEPOSIT WILL BE MADE UPON ENROLLMENT  
AS A HOLDING FEE

## **Classroom Observations**

Parents are welcome and encouraged to observe their child's class. Seeing the children at work/play is the best and only real way of understanding what they are experiencing. Arrangements should be made in advance with the teacher so as to avoid congestion on any one day. Observers must be seated and ready no later than 7:50 a.m. for the morning/full-time session and by 12:00 p.m. for the afternoon session and agree to abide by the observer's policies. Unscheduled observations (only by parents/guardians of registered students) must remain as unobtrusive as possible to prevent classroom disruption. Playground observations are available any time.

## **Parent Involvement**

Parents are encouraged to participate through volunteering in the classroom with special projects or parties. Volunteers are also needed to help on fund-raising events and activities, as well as to help with the annual auction and occasional work days. If you are interested in volunteering, please let the teacher know.

## **Conferences**

Conferences for student evaluation are held one time during the year in the fall. They are scheduled on a Friday and require mandatory attendance for all parents/guardians. Students are not allowed at the school on conference days and arrangements should be made for alternate care during the fifteen minute period. Parents wishing to discuss their child's progress or other aspects of the school outside of conferences may do so after school, if the issue is urgent.

## **Student's Well-Being**

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

## Arrival and Dismissal

The child's arrival at school each day is one of the most important elements to insure effective integration into the school program. It is essential that scheduled times be observed to avoid class disruption and to ensure the student's participation as a member of the opening activities. Parents need to support the child's independence by encouraging the child to manage their own coats, sharing items, etc...from the car and into the building. The same is true for picking up the child. Arriving adults cause students to transition into the next part of their day. Adults arriving too early will cause the eclipse of the learning activities and are unnecessarily disruptive and antithetical to the Montessori Method. **LATE PICK UP OF A MORNING STUDENT CAN AFFECT THE AFTERNOON PROGRAM. THERE IS A LATE FEE OF \$10.00 PER TEN-MINUTE INCREMENT AFTER THE PICK-UP TIME (MORNING)**, and emergency contacts will be called to pick the student up if parents are not available after ten minutes. If the parent is late in the afternoon, the student will be sent to Guardian Angels and charged the appropriate rate. Morning arrival is between 7:40 and 7:50 a.m. Early arrival is discouraged as it disrupts teacher prep time. Early arrivals will need to wait on the hallway until the door is unlocked. Parents/guardians must give the child a hug and a kiss good-bye, and then leave the building. Students will greet the teacher with a hand shake. The student needs to carry their own things into school from the car and must put them away where they belong. Often when adults linger in the classroom during the morning greeting time, it distracts the student and can prevent them from integrating effectively into the morning's activities. Morning students must be picked up at 11:00 a.m. and afternoon students dropped at 12:00 pm. Earlier arrival will disrupt the entire program, so attention to scheduling is important. Afternoon Dismissal is at 3:15. Students often want to continue playing with their friends after school, but must do so off the school grounds. While it may be tempting to encourage further activities on the playground among friends, the school's insurance policy is only in effect when teachers are supervising. All adults must be careful in the parking lot and on the road leading to the school to drive slowly and cautiously. Students **MUST** hold the adult's hand in the parking lot **AT ALL TIMES**. Courtesy in parking and backing out is essential, no matter how much of a hurry you may be in. Please, no parking in front of the entry doors.

## Separation Anxiety

Some children may experience separation anxiety upon arriving at school. This is age-appropriate and should subside a short time after the child enrolls, although can reoccur occasionally due to tiredness, illness, insecurities, etc...If your child is having problems separating from you, the Teacher's Aide will assist by gently holding the child and soothing them while you leave. Although the child may protest loudly, it is important to remember that in 99.9% of cases, within minutes (often seconds) of the adult leaving, the child will join in the regular program and completely recover from their anxiety. If the child protests prior to entering the school, reassure them that you will be back in a few hours and that although you love them more than anything, now is the time for them to have fun at school while you must attend to your own activities. Part of the preschooler's job at this stage of development is to experiment with how/if they can control what happens to them. Their tears and/or explosive behavior are designed to elicit your immediate action to do what they want. As infants and toddlers, this was a

## **Separation Anxiety Continued**

necessary means of communication, but by preschool, it is developmentally appropriate for children to gain autonomous confidence and the ability to understand and abide by boundaries and limits, as well as to use words, rather than crying. Do not over-dramatize or draw out the process of separation no matter how upset your child is. Be loving and firm and your confidence will aid your child in more readily accepting your departure. If the adult's demeanor reflects the child's level of distress, they are allowing the child to be effective in their attempt at manipulation. Very few children may experience delay in this area of development. In these rare cases, a plan is established whereby the parent can attend class as an observer with the child for a short time the first few days. Gradually, over a period of a week or so, an attempt will be made to assist the child in the separation process. If this is unsuccessful, the child may need more time developmentally before they are ready to attend school.

## **Toileting**

**CHILDREN 2 1/2 WHO ARE NOT POTTIE TRAINED WILL BE PUT ON A TRAINING PROGRAM DURING THE FIRST SEMESTER.** Bring a bag of pull-ups to be kept at school, label with your child's name.

**CHILDREN THREE YEARS OLD AND UP MUST HAVE DEMONSTRATED THE ABILITY TO USE THE TOILET REGULARLY FOR ALL WASTE FUNCTIONS BEFORE THEY CAN ENROLL IN THE SCHOOL.** Children who have yet to gain full mastery of toileting abilities will be assisted by staff to achieve more effective skills. In the event of accidents, children will be assisted to change and clean themselves, and to put soiled clothing in plastic bags in their cubbies. For this purpose, all students should have at least one complete change of clothes in their cubbies at all times clearly marked with initials. All children should wear clothing that is easy for them to use when toileting. Coveralls and belts, as well as tight-fitting waist bands are discouraged in favor of elastic waists. No paper-product underpants are allowed. If a child continues to have problems toileting for a prolonged period, medical referrals may be made.

## **School Closings**

In the event that weather necessitates the closing of school, St. James Preschool will abide by the decision of the Augusta Public School system (USD 402). The announcement of school closing will be made on channel 3, (KSNW-TV) channel 10, (KAKE-TV) and channel 12 (KWCH-TV).

St. James Preschool will also abide by the St. James Catholic School Calendar. When days off are scheduled, there will not be a Preschool class that day.

## **Emergencies**

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

## **Siblings/guests**

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

## **Nutrition**

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

## **Snack**

Your child will learn table manners by setting his place, serving his own food and cleaning his own place. We use glass cups and plates and silverware. Your child will be responsible for bringing snack for the week. Snack will be provided by the school.

## **Lunch**

For those students that will use the all day program a lunch will be provide by the school cafeteria. A lunch menu will be sent home every month. The meals will be served family style.

## **Brushing Teeth**

Your child will be brushing his teeth after lunch. Please bring toothbrush, personal cup and favorite toothpaste.

## **Afternoon Naps**

Those students that are enroll on the all day program will be given a resting time. They can take a nap or just lay down quietly. If your child give up naps she will come back to the classroom for the afternoon session. Each child needs a crib fitting sheet, blanket and pillow. Also a hair brush and comb for brushing their hair after they wake up.

## **Personal Items**

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

## Clothing

Please have your children dress in practical, comfortably fitting, age-appropriate clothes that they can manage themselves, and that allow them to participate in all activities. This means that shoes for students under four should not have laces, and that coverall connectors, snaps, button-fly pants, and tiny zippers/buttons are out. We also don't allow shoes or boots with any kind of elevated heel (including cowboy boots), and discourage open-toed sandals, and clogs because of uncomfortable interaction with wood chips on the playground. We usually go out to play in all weather, so please help your child to select appropriate seasonal garments. Rain boots may be brought for outdoor play, but must be accompanied by indoor shoes. Because children often become attached to certain items, it is advised that you put away seasonal outfits (such as rain boots in summer or sleeveless tops in winter) where they are not available for viewing/argument. It is also advised that children select their clothes for school the night before to minimize indecision time during rushed morning hours.

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

## Grooming/Personal Care

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

## Health/ Absences

When a child will be absent from school please call as soon as possible. If the absence is due to illness, please include information regarding symptoms for purposes of tracking infectious disease and public health reporting. If the child displays symptoms such as tiredness, lethargy, sore throat, skin rash, watery eyes/nose, redness of the eyes, excessive mucus, coughing, fever, vomiting or diarrhea, please keep them home. The rule for returning from illness is 24 hours from the time the symptom ceased. If a child exhibits symptoms of illness while at school, a parent/guardian will be called to come get them. It is **mandatory** that all students be given all vaccinations appropriate to their age. This is not only to protect the child from illness, but also to protect the greater school community, which may include pregnant mothers, unborn/newborn siblings, and family members with lowered immune system conditions such as cancer. For these community members, contracting chicken pox is extremely serious and can be fatal. If a child must leave school during regular hours (i.e. doctor's appointment, vacation), the teacher should be notified in advance by writing it on the school calendar. St. James Montessori Center is not a drop-in childcare program. To benefit fully from the program, it is important for children to attend as regularly as possible.

## **Medication**

If your child is taking medication during the school day, please bring it with written, dated and signed (by parent/guardian) instructions and permission for dosing in the original prescription container (if prescribed) or the original over-the counter container. **Administration of Medicine Forms** will need to be filled out and returned to the school office. **We cannot give your child any medications unless we have one of these on file and signed by the doctor.**

## **Celebration of Life**

A Celebration of Life is a wonderful way to celebrate a birthday by honoring a child's life and accomplishment. If possible, please find a picture for each year of their life and write a short life story to be brought in to school for this celebration [the photo(s) will be returned]. We ask that you let your child participate in selecting picture(s) and writing his or her life story for this celebration. Parents are encouraged to stay and record the event, or to just enjoy. Special treats may be sent for your child's birthday celebration; however, we ask that goodies with refined sugar be avoided. We suggest cookies, muffins (made with unrefined sugar), fruit, pizza, etc...

## **Discipline, Violence and Bullying Policy**

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

## **Special Education Referrals**

Students observed by staff to have possible special education and/or medical needs will be referred for assessment. These written referrals are made to the parents/guardians accompanied by contact information to the appropriate agency/professional for the student's school district or community of residence. Referrals for special needs may include, but are not limited to; behavioral/psychiatric, speech, vision, dental, auditory, developmental, and medical. Once the initial referral is made, parents/guardians have a maximum of 30 days to make appropriate arrangements for the assessment and must tell the teacher the details to keep the student's file current and to assure progress.

## Special Education Referrals Continued

Assessment results must be shared with the Principal, along with any plans for treatment/follow-up services. If the student is qualified for early Special Education services from their district, the teacher is to be included in any Individual or Family Educational Plan meetings as the child's regular education teacher. If it is determined through the assessment process that the student will benefit from special education services and/or devices, the parents/guardians are obligated to pursue these services in order to continue their child's enrollment at St. James. Examples include the necessity of wearing eyeglasses or hearing aids during class, or participating in auditory or speech therapy. If parents fail to provide necessary, consistent and effective support for needed special education services/devices, they may be asked to find other placement for their child. St. James Preschool believes strongly that preschool is a crucial developmental time for students in identifying and dealing with special problems to ensure the lifelong success of that child. Neglecting these needs at this age can be irrevocably damaging to the individual. St. James will work as hard as possible to provide an environment for the special needs child that will promote their educational, physical and social growth to the greatest of their potential. Only in situations where there is lack of compliance/cooperation from parents/guardians, where it is evident that the St. James environment is not effective, or in the event of irreconcilable classroom disruption will the teacher make alternative placement recommendations.

## Montessori in the Home

Many parents are concerned that their child may not be making academic progress at the same rate as their friends and be tempted to push them at home with workbooks, CDs, DVDs and the like. Dr. Montessori's research demonstrated that each child works according to their own "sensitive periods" for learning and no amount of pressure is likely to change that, much as you can't teach an infant to walk until they're ready. However, there are many aspects of the Montessori Method that, when practiced at home, can lead to support of the child's potential. There is a book, called ***At Home with Montessori*** by Patricia Oriti that has details regarding this idea that parents are encouraged to read. Simple activities include preparing your home with an environment that is at child-level with wall hangings, accessible and organized shelves with developmentally appropriate activities, and a shelf in the refrigerator that is allocated for your child. It is also important to remember that while it may be more time consuming to allow your child to do things for themselves such as dressing, in the long run it prepares them to be self-sufficient and confident as early as possible, which creates a successful individual. Additionally, at school your child is required to show respect for others, using words like "please" and "thank-you" consistently and appropriately, not to whine or interrupt, and to accept consequences consistently for unacceptable behaviors. Your follow-through with these requirements at home will go a long way in terms of creating a well-adjusted, reasonable child. Parents frequently express the frustration that children who behave well at school can demonstrate less than desirable behaviors at home. This may be due to the fact that in the home, the child does not have as much of a child-centered environment where his/her needs are central, where they constantly feel respected and listened to, where they may have more free, productive choices. Even though the child may not be able to articulate this, as a parent, you can reassure them. Let them know that home **is** different than school because it must meet the needs of all, not just them. But do let them know that within the limitations of meeting everyone's needs, you will try your best to listen, pay attention, and respect them, as they must do

## **Montessori in the Home Continued**

for you. Set clear guidelines, expectations and consequences, especially in areas that are different from school, and then work hard at enforcing them consistently. Offer your child activities they can participate in at home that are productive such as chores. A preschooler can set the table, scrub a toilet, clean the rug with a carpet sweeper, wash fingerprints, polish silver, make a sandwich, etc. When a child is active in a productive process, they feel useful and confident and are far less likely to act out. Also be aware that children model the behaviors they observe and/or hear. At school, staff is trained very specifically to model behaviors conducive to effective early childhood education minus many of the worries of the home, and with the added benefits of peer pressure. But the home is very different in terms of possible influences. A child who is exposed (whether it is directed towards them or not) to criticism, conflict, yelling, destruction, physical threat, cartoons or other negative models will frequently mimic the behavior. Children often will also react to life-changing events by acting out, sometimes months after the occurrence. A preschooler may not react negatively to the appearance of a newborn for six months to a year! The same can be true for the prolonged absence, or death of a loved-one. No child's home will ever be perfect, but by reassuring your child that negativity is a part of life that we can learn to improve/overcome, you will help them develop effective coping skills and understanding.

# ST. JAMES CATHOLIC MONTESSORI CENTER



**2016 - 2017**

Approved by the St. James School Council  
on May 10, 2016