



**HEART OF TEXOMA**  
MONTESSORI ACADEMY  
EST 2022

**2025-2026**  
**Parent Handbook**

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**PARENTS SHOULD BE FAMILIAR WITH THE STUDENT HANDBOOK**

## **SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT**

Our mission is to cultivate lifelong learners through the Montessori philosophy, preparing students ages 3 years through 12th grade for academic excellence, personal growth and meaningful contribution to the world.

## **VISION STATEMENT**

Our vision is to be a model Montessori community that offers something truly unique in our region: a school where highly qualified educators provide consistency, depth and authentic Montessori education. We are set apart by our commitment to academic excellence, whole-child development and the intentional choice to be a school – not a daycare – where students are nurtured to reach their fullest potential.

## **THE MONTESSORI PHILOSOPHY**

As a Montessori educational facility, we believe in the power of collaboration. Our goal is to equip students with knowledge and training across various subjects. Our program aims to create a supportive atmosphere that helps each student develop as a whole person. Students are challenged to think and observe, coached to handle facts and interpret ideas, taught to interact appropriately with others, and encouraged to express their feelings and attitudes respectfully. These objectives can only be achieved through a collaborative partnership that involves parents, students, teachers, and the school. Each member of this community is an active participant and must accept their individual responsibilities and work together to ensure the success of our students, staff, and school.

Our philosophy is rooted in the Montessori method, which fosters self-motivated growth for children and adolescents in all areas of their development with the goal of nurturing each student's natural desire for knowledge, understanding, and respect. Our goal is to facilitate the development of the whole student, so he or she may reach his/her full potential and achieve personal success and satisfaction throughout life. We strive to develop critical thinkers, independent learners, and problem solvers of the future. We also believe the relationship between the family and the school is essential for student success, and we strive to keep open communication and partnerships with each of our families.

During the school day, our programs focus on the development of each student's full potential, facilitated by teachers specially trained in the Montessori method and philosophy. Our lessons are based on students' natural curiosity and love of learning, using both concrete lessons and activities through individual instruction. This allows our students to associate abstract concepts with hands-on learning. The three-year age range in each classroom provides numerous benefits that are immediately apparent when observing our classrooms. Our younger students have an opportunity to observe and imitate the older students as they work. In comparison, older students are provided opportunities to reinforce their education and mentor and assist younger students.

Each student also has the ability to learn and develop at their own pace within a classroom that accommodates various levels of abilities and complexities.

## **ACCREDITATION**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will strive to distinguish itself as one of the top Montessori academies in North Texas. We hold a 4-Star Texas Rising Star (TRS) rating, the highest level in TRS, and it was achieved on the first attempt. Our goal is to become a Montessori Accredited School for kindergarten through 12th grade, offering an accredited diploma recognized by colleges, trade schools, and other post-secondary institutions.

## **OUR SCHOOL PROGRAM**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy offers both 5-days-a-week and 3-days-a-week school programs.

- Primary: Ages 3yrs through 6yrs
- Lower Elementary: 1st Grade through 3rd Grade
- Upper Elementary: 4th Grade through 6th Grade
- Middle School: 7th through 9th Grade
- High School: currently in the planning phase to offer 10 through 12 grade

*\*Our school will be accredited by Cognia, offering graduating students a diploma recognized by most colleges, universities, trade schools, and other post-secondary institutions.*

## **Hours of Operation**

The school is open from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., Monday through Friday.

The academic school day is from 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.

The after-school care program is from 3:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m.

## **Compliance**

Every student and family is expected to willingly accept the policy and procedure presented in the Student and Parent Handbook.

## **ADMISSIONS**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy admits students of all race, color, nationality, and ethnic origins to all rights, privileges, programs, and activities made available. The school does not discriminate based on race, color, nationality, or ethnic origin in the administration of its educational and admissions policies, scholarships, loans, and other school-administered programs. Every Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy student is encouraged and expected to participate appropriately in the general privileges, programs, rights, and responsibilities granted to all students.

Students and parents should accept the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy's primary position to provide a Montessori-based education program without bias. Admission to the school constitutes a sincere acknowledgment by students and their parents to comply willingly with the school's regulations in all matters of personal conduct, respect for authority, and the philosophy of

Maria Montessori's educational curriculum.

### **Application Process**

1. The admission application is an online process utilizing our student records app, ChildPilot. We do not accept paper applications. The application will require a non-refundable registration fee. Applications not fully completed and submitted electronically will not reserve a placement in the applied grade level. In addition to the completed application form, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy must also receive previous school records, immunization records, and other documentation as indicated on the application prior to being accepted.
2. Previous school records must include report cards and copies of standardized test scores. Home-schooled applicants must provide the appropriate documentation for all work completed. In addition, the application should include any information that provides insight regarding the student's current level of performance, such as school activities, honor organizations, athletics, community service involvements, and special awards. This information will be used to create an individual lesson plan for your student.
3. If available, financial assistance requests must be made at the time of application and are confidential. Incomplete scholarship forms may delay the admission process. **Only** after all the above requirements are fulfilled will an application be considered complete and ready for consideration.
4. Parents will be notified of the admission's acceptance or denial and advised of the application status if an opening is unavailable.
5. Upon the student's acceptance, parents must sign a tuition and fees notice and pay for the initial month of tuition and fees.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will send out an enrollment survey by the last day of January each year. Families have until February 15th to complete the survey and/or notify the school of discontinuing our program. Once notified, your student's spot will be offered to a student on our waiting list. New family registration will begin in March. Before the start of each school year, we ask that you confirm or update all vital information on student forms, submit any renewed paperwork and/or forms, and sign any board of trustees-approved updated documentation.

*The State of Texas Health and Human Services requires us to have current and updated health information on each student in our school. This is for the safety of all students and staff.*

### **Withdrawal**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy families in elementary, middle, and high school are obligated to commit to a complete academic year of enrollment. If a family withdraws a student before the end of the school year, all tuition fees are still owed for the remainder of the school year.

Pre-Primary or Primary students require a 30-day written notice prior to withdrawal. Tuition will not be refunded if a student is withdrawn after monthly tuition has been paid.

## **Student and Family Support Policy**

At Heart of Texoma Montessori, it is our heartfelt mission to provide a respectful, safe, and enriching learning environment for every child. We are committed to fostering an inclusive community and strive to partner with every family to ensure their child's success.

However, as a private school, we have a clear understanding of our resources and capacity. We are not equipped to provide specialized services that may be required for certain behaviors or special needs. In order to maintain the integrity of our educational environment and the safety of all students, we have a clear policy regarding conduct and capacity.

### **Maintaining a Respectful and Safe Environment: The Four D's**

Our school environment is built on the core principles of respect, safety, and academic focus. When a child's behavior consistently infringes on these principles, it impacts the entire community. To address these challenges, we use a behavioral framework known as the Four D's. We cannot, and will not, accommodate behaviors that consistently demonstrate one or more of the following:

- **Demeaning:** Behavior that consistently belittles, bullies, or shows a lack of respect for other students, teachers, or the school's community.
- **Destruction:** Behavior that intentionally or repeatedly causes significant damage to school property, or the property of others.
- **Dangerous:** Behavior that poses a clear and present danger to the physical safety of the child themselves, other students, or staff.
- **Disruptive:** Behavior that consistently prevents teachers from providing instruction or disrupts the learning of other students, despite interventions.

### **Our Process and Partnership with Parents**

When a student consistently exhibits any of the Four D's, we will take the following steps to partner with you to address the behavior:

1. **Documentation:** All incidents of these behaviors will be thoroughly documented by our staff.
2. **Communication:** We will communicate directly and regularly with parents to inform them of the documented behaviors and to collaborate on potential solutions. We will discuss specific incidents and work together on strategies to correct the behavior.
3. **Behavioral Plan:** We may develop a specific behavioral plan in partnership with you to provide consistent support for your child at school and at home.

### **Dismissal Policy**

If the concerning behaviors are not corrected despite our consistent efforts and partnership with the family, it may become clear that our school cannot provide the resources and capacity to meet the

child's needs. In such cases, and as a last resort, the school administration may make the difficult decision to dismiss the student.

- This decision is never made lightly or hastily. It is the result of a documented pattern of uncorrected behavior and will be reached after multiple conversations and attempted interventions.
- Our goal is always to see every child thrive, and a dismissal decision indicates our conclusion that another educational environment may be better suited to a child's unique needs.

## **TUITION and FEES**

Tuition is due on the first day of each month by check, cashier's check, credit/debit, or cash. If the first day of the month falls on a day school is not in session, tuition will be due upon class reopening. Tuition will be considered late on the sixth (6th) of each month. A late fee of \$5.00 a day will be added to your account for every day tuition is late. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is not responsible for providing reminders of tuition due dates. Please refer to the current Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy tuition schedule for tuition rates. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy tuition is non-refundable. Tuition for the academic year is due from August through May and is based upon the total number of instructional, teacher-in-service, and parent conference days for the school year. Tuition is not determined by the monthly days due to holidays and breaks; some months have more on-campus days than others. For your convenience, tuition is averaged and divided into ten equal payments regardless of the number of days your child is on campus. Tuition credits or refunds will not be made for any reason, including extended illnesses. The school calendar will detail the number of instructional, in-service, and conference days. This number may vary slightly each school year, and a tuition adjustment should not be anticipated.

Enrollment is understood to be for one year of the school year and renewed each year. No fees are refunded. We require 30 days written notice before your student withdraws from school. Once notice has been given, all outstanding tuition and fees must be paid before the last date mentioned on the written notice. Fees for two weeks will be added if a 30-day written notice is not given before your child leaves the school. Failure to notify the school will cause all fees to continue until written notification is given.

*\*Student scholarships may be available each school year. Please speak with an administrator for more information.*

### **Tuition Delinquency**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy depends entirely on regular and timely tuition and fee payments, which are used primarily for operational expenses and staff salaries. In anticipated financial stress, parents should visit or write an explanatory letter to the administration before defaulting on payment.

Parents whose accounts are 60 or more days past due seriously jeopardize the opportunity to remain at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. In such a situation, parents will be required to meet with an administrator to address and discuss the delinquency. Failure to pay overdue accounts will result in the removal of the student(s), and all student progress reports, transcripts, and other applicable records will be withheld until the accounts are settled.

*\*Outstanding balances should be cleared promptly.*

### **Registration Fee**

A \$100.00 non-refundable registration fee is due once per academic year per student, along with registration forms for the academic year. This fee covers administrative costs associated with preparing each student for the upcoming school year. A classroom reservation for existing students will not be finalized until the registration fee is paid. The registration fee is non-refundable regardless of attendance.

### **Deposit**

A \$400.00 deposit will be required to hold a classroom reservation for new students at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. This deposit will be applied to the first month's tuition. If, for any reason, you do not start with Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy on the mutually agreed-upon start date, the deposit will not be applied to the first month's tuition and will be non-refundable.

### **Supply Fee**

A \$150.00 supply fee will be due twice a year, once in August and once in January. This fee covers supplies for various class work, experiments, and other school-related activities. Your account will be billed for this fee through the ChildPilot app.

### **Additional Expenses and Fees**

Additional fees may include, but are not limited to, academic competitions, late pick-up, and/or tuition payment fees. Unpaid fees may result in unenrollment from the school without advance notice. Other expenses that may be proposed throughout the school year are fees related to special activities or costuming for a school celebration or program. Participation will be optional, and any such proposals will be made in a timely manner. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will be mindful to minimize extra expenditures and assure you that any request that asks families to incur additional costs is thoughtfully requested to enhance student enrichment and school spirit.

### **Gifts and Donations**

Gifts for staff members, with a maximum value of fifty dollars, may be accepted. Maintaining full transparency is crucial to prevent potential conflicts of interest or the appearance of influencing their professional duties. Staff members are required to adhere to all school policies and ethical guidelines.

Donations of any amount to the school are tremendously appreciated. If you are interested in donating to a specific purchase, please contact an administrator to discuss your donation. Your donation will be greatly appreciated.

## **GENERAL EXPECTATIONS**

Acceptance to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is an esteemed opportunity, and students are encouraged to aspire to attend while upholding the school's rigorous standards of personal behavior and educational excellence. Both parents and students are expected to follow classroom order and discipline, which is essential for success in the learning environment. In collaboration with parents, the school administration and faculty are dedicated to addressing any instances of student misconduct and aiding parents in effectively and constructively resolving issues.

All students are expected to behave and conduct themselves in a way that promotes a positive learning environment, the physical well-being of all, and opportunities for personal character development. Students should focus on preparedness for learning and enter the classroom ready to work. Students should demonstrate the ability to attend class consistently with the proper preparation, all assigned homework papers completed, and notebook paper, pens, pencils, etc. In addition, students are expected to demonstrate care for their school in the classroom, hallways, restrooms, playground, and throughout the campus at all times. Students should maintain neat and orderly work areas, classrooms, lockers, cubbies, and backpacks.

### **Student Attendance**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy recognizes the significance of consistent attendance throughout all phases of a student's educational journey. However, we also acknowledge that practical experiences can impart valuable life lessons. Parents must provide prior notification regarding a student's absence and the reason for it. We urge families and students who take time away from school during the academic year to compile a report that can be presented to their peers, thereby enhancing their educational experience and sharing it with their peers if they choose. Achieving excellence in education necessitates consistent attendance for ongoing instruction, active student engagement, classroom collaboration, collective learning opportunities, and diligent study, all of which are vital for students to attain their highest academic potential.

### **Student Absences**

Students play an essential role in the classroom dynamics, and individualized lessons are planned daily. However, we do not expect a parent to send their student to school when sick, recuperating, or attending a family death, funeral, religious holiday, educational vacation, or doctor's appointment. Please reference our illness policy in this handbook. Parents must notify the school using the ChildPilot app of any absences and provide a doctor's "cleared to return to school" note for illnesses.

Parents should arrange to pick up missed class work and assignments for elementary, middle, and high school students absent for more than two days. Special project work with set deadlines will be expected to be completed on time unless special arrangements are made with the teacher, including meeting all deadlines promptly. As with all absences, classwork should be completed as soon as possible, and it is the responsibility of the student to do all the work. Schoolwork picked up by parents, special projects, and homework should be worked on at home during long illnesses if the student is able. The student will be expected to continue working according to his/her work

plan upon the student's return.

### **Toys and Trinkets**

Students are not allowed to bring toys or other trinkets to school. Toy guns and other toy weapons are strictly forbidden. If your student needs a special naptime friend, this item will be delivered to the teacher, brought out only at naptime, and put away during the rest of the day.

### **Music, Movies, and Videos**

On special occasions, movies and/or videos may be selected for school events, and we strive to supply wholesome entertainment or academic-related videos that are age-appropriate and within a subject area, holiday, and/or special event. All movies will be G or PG, depending on the age of the audience. It can be difficult to find music with lyrics appropriate for students and not religious in nature. Inappropriate music will not be played, and nursery or instrumental music selections will often be selected.

### **Electronic Devices and Screen Time**

Students are prohibited from bringing any electronic devices, such as cell phones, MP3 players, iPods, or handheld games from home to school. If such a device is brought onto campus, it will be held in the office until dismissal.

- Per licensing requirements, screen time is limited to 2 hours per day and must be educational in nature, relating to the objectives being taught.

It is our daily goal that students have very little to zero screen time while in our care, however, on bad weather days or during certain times of the day (ie morning drop-off, afternoon pickup, etc.) we will briefly use screen time to help us transition to the next activity, but the content will always be age appropriate, educational in nature, and go along with our learning objectives.

### **Naps**

Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the State of Texas, all students aged four and a half years and under will have a nap/rest each day while in care. Primary students will nap from 12:30– 2:30 pm Monday through Friday. Students should bring a small roll-up nap mat for use at nap time. If the nap mat includes a pillow and blanket, they must be attached. All nap items should be clearly labeled with the student's first and last name and will be sent home each Friday to be washed. A book or other quiet, calm activity will be provided for students who do not fall asleep.

### **Outdoor Play**

Outdoor play benefits students beyond the physical activity it provides. It helps them socialize, understand their bodies, engage in imaginative play, and enjoy the outdoors. Maintaining compliance with the minimum standards for the State of Texas, students will have no less than one-half hour of outdoor play in the morning and one-half hour of outdoor play in the afternoon. Students will have the option to participate in organized play, like basketball, soccer, football, hopscotch, 9 square, and more. They will also be encouraged to engage in imaginative and free

play.

Minimum standards for the State of Texas require all students to be allowed outdoors in inclement weather, even if it is to walk from one door to the next. We will refer to the news and Weather channel to determine if it is safe to play outdoors. We will consider the following when going outdoors to play:

- Is the student dressed appropriately for the weather? Parents, please provide layers of clothing during cold seasons to maximize comfort indoors and out. Essential items include jackets, long pants, hats, gloves or mittens, socks, and warm shoes or boots. Be cautious about using scarves and jackets with strings because these can present a strangulation hazard.
- Do all students have water bottles, and are they being kept hydrated?
- If a time limit should be placed on outdoor play due to weather conditions.

We will limit the duration of time outdoors if it is too hot or too cold if:

- The outside temperature is and/or the wind chill is below 32°F.
- The outside temperature is over 95°F.
- If we experience extreme weather, we will use the classroom and/or gym to play.

We ask all parents to provide season-appropriate clothing for their students. It is highly likely that the students will be allowed to play in the rain and will be changed out of wet clothes. At dismissal, wet clothes will be sent home for cleaning in a plastic bag.

### **Water Play**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not participate in water play activities, with the exception of playing outdoors in raining weather. Pools will never be considered.

### **Skin and Sun Protection**

Students are welcome to bring hats, but no sunglasses, to wear outside during playtime. Parents may also supply sunscreen and insect repellent for their students. The parent should apply sunscreen and insect repellent in the morning, and the teacher will apply sunscreen again before afternoon playtime if requested in writing through ChildPilot. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will not provide sunscreen or insect repellent. Because of possible allergic reactions, no sharing of suntan lotion or insect repellent is allowed. Each student will need parents to provide a bottle of their own, preferably in a spray form. All items should be clearly labeled with the student's name. Outdoor activities are to be held in shaded areas whenever possible. Parents are required to sign a form authorizing Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy to apply sunscreen and insect repellent spray.

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## **Student Dress Code**

Beginning **January 2026**, Heart of Texoma Montessori will implement a **school uniform policy** to

promote unity, reduce distractions, and support a sense of belonging within our school community.

### **Uniform Requirements:**

- **Collared shirt in blue, orange, or white**
- **Khaki or navy bottoms** (pants, shorts, skirts, or jumpers)

If a student is granted a **Uniform Exception**, a completed **application must be approved** by administration. Students with an approved exception will follow the dress code guidelines below.

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### **Dress Code Guidelines (for Non-Uniform or Exception Days)**

Students should come dressed for an active day of hands-on learning both indoors and outdoors. Clothing should be **comfortable, practical, and modest**.

If **leggings** are worn, tops must cover the student's bottom. Clothing should be appropriate for the weather, and all outerwear (jackets, hats, gloves, etc.) should be **labeled and sent in a bag** with the student's name.

Please avoid revealing clothing, spaghetti-strap tops or dresses, short shorts, or miniskirts. **Bellies, bosoms, and bottoms** must remain covered at all times.

Footwear should allow for safe, active play—**no flip-flops, clogs, high heels, or open-toed shoes**. **Hats, hoods, and sunglasses** should be removed inside school buildings.

### **School-Observed Holidays and Celebrations**

Our school observed holidays will be posted on our annual school calendar each year. The Montessori curriculum includes learning about the world's diverse people and cultures. Celebrations include birthdays and religious, cultural, and national holidays. The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy respects, celebrates, and discusses many traditions and holidays that may or may not be a part of most families' lifestyles. Staff will not teach a particular religious belief, but provide general, fact-based descriptions and explanations, allowing students to understand other cultures and become more accepting of the diverse world around them.

### **Celebration of Life and Birthdays**

Students will have an opportunity to celebrate their birthday with a Celebration of Life. This activity is optional but encouraged, as it is an exciting day for the student and helps build relationships and familiarity among peers. Parents interested in participating in the Celebration of Life will need to reach out to the lead teacher to schedule the celebration. If the student's birthday falls on a weekend, outside the academic calendar, or conflicts with another school event, the Celebration of Life date should be coordinated with the teacher. Parents are encouraged to discuss a project

with the teacher to demonstrate the student's growth. This may be one of the first timeline lessons a young student will have as they begin to see how things in life progress through time. During the Celebration of Life, the student will be asked to show the project to the class and share their joy about the special moments. Parents (no more than four special guests) may attend their student's Celebration of Life. The student's family may provide the morning snack or lunch for the class. Please consider any food allergies or sensitivities among the classmates. The school can provide this information. Please coordinate all plans with the lead teacher. A student may distribute birthday party invitations during class time, but all classroom peers must be included and invited.

### **Parent–Staff Relationships**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy recognizes that, on occasion, families and staff will become acquainted and develop personal relationships outside of school. Please remain mindful that professional relationships and boundaries must be maintained. Staff may elect not to engage in personal relationships outside of school.

### **Confidentiality**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy values the privacy of each family enrolled in our school and will keep personal and confidential information secure. The school will not give out phone numbers, birthdays, addresses, or family information without their permission. Additionally, staff, parents, and/or guardians at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy are expected to respect the privacy of each student, parent, and staff member.

The school also respects the privacy of our staff and will not share their personal information. Staff members may elect to share some personal information, but are not required to do so.

### **Student Accommodations**

This policy and process supports families and students who may need additional accommodations, to include home language, differing abilities, and cultural backgrounds. Parents have the right to be informed of all procedural safeguards and rights of appeal in a language easily understood by the public and in the parent's primary language. Please notify an administrator if you or your student require accommodations, and we will ensure that we do our part in making sure your needs are met.

Below are ways that our program will partner with families:

1. If specific therapies are needed during the day while the students our care, we will provide space to accommodate sessions.
2. Participation in all comprehensive care meetings if needed.
3. Complete supporting documentation from authorized medical professionals for any accommodations related to the student's physical or developmental needs.
4. Provide materials and resources in parent's/student's primary language when possible.

### **DROP-OFF and PICK-UP POLICY**

The administration office will be closed from 7:30–8:00 AM and 3:00–3:15 PM. The administrators will be out front to assist with pick-up and drop-off. The designated drop-off area is in front of the school using ONLY the FRONT LOBBY Door, which has the school's name on it.

The school reserves the right to refuse any individual onto Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy property for drop-off or pick-up if they have created a problem.

*Only Heart of Texoma staff members will be allowed beyond the lobby between 8:00 a.m. and 2:30 p.m. Parents may visit their student's classroom with an administrator.*

### **Drop-Off Procedure - Time: 7:30–8:00 AM**

#### **Drive-Up Process:**

- Drive slowly, follow the designated traffic flow, and pull up to the first cone or the vehicle ahead of you.
- Staff will assist students from the cars to the building and have the parent check students into ChildPilot using the iPad.
- Students should exit on the side closest to the sidewalk.
- Parents must remain in their vehicles; staff will ensure the safety of students entering the building.

#### **Walk-In Process: Students may not enter the school without administrator or teacher approval.**

- Drive slowly and follow the designated traffic flow.
- Park in a designated parking spot; do not block driveways or access points, and walk your student to the front lobby.
- Ensure you directly supervise your student while exiting your vehicle to the building.
- A staff member will let you in, or you can press the bottom button on the keypad to ring our entry bell, letting staff know you are here.
- Use the iPad/kiosk to check your student into ChildPilot.
- You may escort your student to their classroom or have a staff member assist.

#### **After 8:00 AM:**

- Park in a designated parking spot; do not block driveways or access points, and bring your student into the front lobby.
- Ensure you directly supervise your student while exiting your vehicle to the building.
- A staff member will let you in, or you can press the bottom button on the keypad to ring our entry bell, letting staff know you are here.
- Use the iPad/kiosk to check your student into ChildPilot.
- A staff member will escort your student to their classroom.
- Parents will **not** be allowed past the lobby area after 8:00 AM.

### **Pick-Up Procedure - Time: 3:00–3:15 PM**

#### **Drive-Up Process:**

- Drive slowly, follow the designated traffic flow, and pull up to the first cone or the vehicle ahead of you.
- Display a pick-up sign with your student's name visibly in the vehicle's front window.
- Staff will bring students to the vehicle and have the parent check students out of ChildPilot using the iPad.

- Parents are responsible for buckling students into a car seat if necessary.
- Parents must remain with their vehicles; staff will ensure the safety of students exiting the building.

**Walk-Out Process: Students may not leave the school without administrator or teacher approval.**

- Drive slowly and follow the designated traffic flow.
- Park in a designated parking spot; do not block driveways or access points, and walk to the front lobby.
- A staff member will let you in, or you can press the bottom button on the keypad to ring our entry bell, letting staff know you are here.
- Use the iPad/kiosk to check your student out of ChildPilot.
- You may walk to your student's classroom or have a staff member bring your student to the lobby.
- Ensure you directly supervise your student while exiting the building to your vehicle.

**After 3:15 PM:**

- Park in a designated parking spot; do not block driveways or access points, and walk to the front lobby.
- A staff member will let you in, or you can press the bottom button on the keypad to ring our entry bell, letting staff know you are here.
- *IF STUDENTS ARE OUTSIDE:* a staff member will radio to the after-school teacher that you are picking up your student. A staff member will escort the student to the lobby area.
  - Use the iPad/kiosk to check your student out of ChildPilot.
  - Collect your student's belongings from the hallway.
  - Ensure you directly supervise your student until secured in the vehicle.
- *IF STUDENTS ARE INSIDE:*
  - You may walk to the after-school classroom or have a staff member bring your student to the lobby.
  - Use the iPad/kiosk to check your student out of ChildPilot.
  - Collect your student's belongings from the hallway.
  - Ensure you directly supervise your student until secured in the vehicle.

*\*Students should not enter or leave the facility without a staff member being notified.*

**Carpool Rules**

- No cell phone use during drive-through for the safety of the students.
- Speed should not exceed 5 mph when entering the parking lot.
- Be aware of all staff members who are assisting students.
- Please follow the designated carpool path and correctly enter the drop-off/pick-up area.
- Do not back up while in the drop-off/pick-up lane.
- As traffic allows, please pull all the way forward to allow traffic to advance behind you.
- Please put your car in "PARK" when your student(s) is being escorted to your vehicle, and do not drive off until the car door is completely closed.

- Never leave your car unattended in the drive-through line.
- Students will be released only to persons listed on the enrollment form.

### **Authorized Pick-Ups**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will obtain information for all individuals authorized to pick-up each student. If other subsequent individuals are to receive authorization, they must be added to the student's account by completing the applicable authorization form in ChildPilot. The parent may grant Unexpected and last-minute authorizations by sending a message through the ChildPilot app stating the person's name and phone number. This person must provide their ID before leaving the building with the student.

All authorized pick-up individuals must have the required proper safety seats accessible for each student. The state mandates that all staff members are required to report any endangerment to students, including not having a proper safety seat, smoking, vaping, and/or using corporal punishment on school property.

### **Early Pickup**

If you need to pick up your student early, please send a message through ChildPilot in advance. When picking up early, you must sign them out using the ChildPilot app on your phone or the tablets at the front office, and your student will be brought to you.

### **Late or Non-Pick-Up**

Any late pick-up after 3:15 pm (and 5:30 pm for those enrolled in the after-school program) will be subject to a \$1.00 per minute late fee. If a parent knows they will be late, notification of the expected pick-up time or other arrangements for pick-up must be provided to the school as soon as possible and within the first 30 minutes after the regularly scheduled pick-up time. If the student has not been picked up and the parent has not communicated within 30 minutes of the regular pick-up time, the emergency contacts listed in the student's file will be called. If we cannot contact anyone on the pick-up list an hour after pick-up time, the law requires that we contact CPS, which will pick up your student for safekeeping. ***Our staff members are not permitted to take your student(s) home with them.*** If late pickup becomes routine, the administration may request the family to add the after-school program to their account.

### **Custody Concerns**

*Unless a court order is presented to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, no restrictions will be placed on parents regarding visitation, drop-off, and/or pick-up. In divorce or custody disputes between parents, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy's policy is not to take sides. The primary interest of our faculty, staff, and owners is to ensure the students' well-being. Our policy is that no employee will testify or give an opinion on such matters except under subpoena.*

### **FIELD TRIPS and OFF-CAMPUS ACTIVITIES**

Field trips are an integral part of the academic curriculum. Parents will be informed in advance of any field trips that might be scheduled. In compliance with the state law, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy requires that students use a booster seat when traveling on a school field

trip. Once a student is 4'9" and/or 100 pounds, they may use the adult safety belt if it fits them properly. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy elementary and greater students participate annually in JOLT camp (environmental education). Upper-level students attend for two nights and three days, Wednesday through Friday, usually in May. Lower elementary students attend the day camp on Friday. Parents will be notified in advance, and the applicable paperwork will be collected. Parents will provide transportation to and from the Texas Elks Camp on Lake Texoma. Should any other field trips be planned, parents will provide transportation.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not provide transportation for students. Field trips are a privilege, and students may be prohibited from attending based on their conduct and academic standing.

## **EMERGENCY PROCEDURES**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy practices drills for fire, tornado, lockdown, active shooter, and other emergencies. Students are evacuated to the parking lot or playground for fire, and the classroom bathrooms and storage closets for tornadoes. Students remain in their classrooms during a lockdown situation. Fire drills are practiced monthly, and all other drills are practiced four times a year.

### **Emergency Preparedness**

- Familiarize yourself with emergency exits, fire extinguishers, and first aid kits.
- Participate in emergency drills and follow instructions during actual emergencies.
- Contact emergency services (911) if necessary and immediately inform an administrator or teacher of any emergency or threat of emergency.

### **Incident Reporting**

- Immediately report all accidents, injuries, or near misses to an administrator or teacher.

### **Inclement Weather**

We follow Sherman ISD for severe and inclement weather notifications. If Sherman ISD closes due to inclement weather, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will also close. However, if there is an inclement weather day on which Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy feels the safety of the students and staff members is at risk, we reserve the right to close. All attempts will be made to provide as much advance notice as possible.

### **Parent/Student Reunification**

In case of a school evacuation, the Heart of Texoma will use the Four Seasons Pickleball parking lot for our reunification location. Their building/parking lot is located behind our school. The administration will communicate with parents about any emergency situations through the ChildPilot app.

## **STUDENT ASSESSMENTS**

Our staff completes a progress analysis assessment of each student, using the MRX program, a minimum of two times per year. This developmental assessment helps teachers and parents

understand what their student typically knows and can do at different ages. It is a tool used to track a student's development and identify areas that may need early intervention. The results of this assessment will be shared with parents during scheduled parent/teacher conferences. Any questions or concerns can be addressed during a scheduled parent/teacher conference.

### **Developmental Milestone Policy**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy uses the MRX to screen students on their development. To coincide with curriculum-based assessment(s), we monitor each student's achievement of developmental milestones, share observations with parents/guardians, and provide resource information as needed for further screenings/ referrals, evaluations, and early intervention and treatment. Local resources will be provided to the parents/ guardians, in addition to referral to local agencies specialized in early intervention.

### **STANDARDIZED TESTING**

Academic progress is a priority at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. In April of each year, our staff proctors the Iowa Test of Basic Skills (ITBS) exam for all kindergarten through twelfth-grade students. This nationally standardized exam is conducted in a no-pressure environment to accurately assess each student's academic performance and progression. It will be conducted over the span of one week. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will promptly communicate testing dates and other information before the exam. At the parents' request, results can be reviewed.

### **OPEN DOOR POLICY**

Parents are always welcome to visit Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy during the school day and are advised to follow the appropriate protocol for any school or classroom visit. Parents may also meet with the school administration to discuss successes or concerns. Visits to a classroom can be made at any time. Conferences with teachers and/or administrators **must be** scheduled.

For security reasons, all visitors (including parents) who wish to visit must first sign-in at the front office and obtain a visitor's badge before visiting a classroom or other part of the campus. Parents are advised to respect each teacher's leadership in the classroom and limit any disruption of daily activities. Please note: Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy teachers are on duty at daily dismissal time, and they should not be distracted from providing for the safety of their students.

### **Parent Communication**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy believes communication between parents, students, and the school is vitally important. The school desires and intends to keep the lines of communication open and free-flowing at all times. Official school information is communicated in various forms, including newsletters, MRX, handbooks, school calendars, and the website. However, the **ChildPilot** app is the school's official means of communication. All parents must have access to the application and monitor it often for important information.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy has established a designated line of authority for the appropriate treatment and solution of parent/student concerns. For the school community to

operate in harmony, please use the following procedure to address any concerns:

1. Do not discuss the matter with another parent or individual without attempting to resolve the concern directly with the teacher. An appointment may be necessary.
2. Do not let the concern become a problem, and do not assume anything before attempting to find a solution.
3. Support all attempts of resolution and gather information to clarify all the facts.
4. If you cannot resolve the matter with the teacher, please make an appointment to meet with an administrator. An administrator will make every effort to resolve the concern.
5. The board of trustees may be notified if the concern cannot be corrected at the administration level.

Please remember that students do not always have full access to all the facts or complete information surrounding the concern. Your child's report may be incomplete or possibly emotionally biased. The school has specific reasons for its rules that apply to all students. The school makes every effort to enforce them without favor.

### **Contact Informationn**

It is required that all contact information stay current and up to date. Any changes or updates to this information can be made through the ChildPilot app, by calling (903) 218-2070, or by emailing [admin@texomamontessori.org](mailto:admin@texomamontessori.org) .

### **Resolving Differences**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is dedicated to assisting students, parents, and staff in addressing differences or unresolved issues that may arise. In the event of a dispute, collaboration is essential for all parties involved, students, parents, and staff, to find a constructive resolution. Prior to expressing criticism or engaging in gossip about the school or any member of the Heart of Texoma community, including parents, students, board members, administration, faculty, and staff, we encourage individuals to reflect on their actions and consider whether they have made a genuine effort to resolve the matter. If you feel wronged, it is your responsibility to approach the individual privately and seek an amicable resolution. We urge everyone to communicate with kindness and empathy, considering various perspectives and experiences. Should a mediator be necessary, an administrator will arrange a meeting that includes a neutral party. During this meeting, parties are expected to communicate openly and honestly, maintaining respect and decorum.

### **HEALTH and ILLNESS**

Students new to the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy school environment will almost certainly contract more frequent illnesses than they would at home. Be prepared for this, and be assured that as exposure to illness strengthens your student's immune system, they should become less frequent and less severe.

### **Medication**

Parents are expected to complete and sign a Medication Authorization Form if their student is to receive any prescription medications, inhalers, or breathing treatments while in the school's care. Rx medication must be in the original container, labeled with the student's name, include directions to administer, and be prescribed by a Physician. Over-the-counter medication cannot be administered without an Rx. All administered medication requests must have a start and end date. No medicine should be taken to the classroom by the parents or students.

\*Medication will not be administered through a student's food or drink.

\*\*Heart of Texoma Montessori reserves the right to request or deny any Doctor's notes.

### **Illness Policy**

*Fever:* Students will be sent home if their temperature is higher than these temperatures:

- Temporal temperature of 100.0 degrees or higher
- Oral Temperature of 100.4 or higher
- Under-arm temperature of 99.4 or higher.

Students sent home from school must stay home until symptom-free for **24 hours without using fever-reducing medications** (like Tylenol/ibuprofen). The same policy applies if your student develops a fever at home.

*Vomiting:* Students will be sent home if they vomit **two** or more times. They must stay home until symptom-free for 24 hours.

*Diarrhea:* Students will be sent home if they have **two** or more loose bowel movements. They must stay home until symptom-free for 24 hours.

*Strep Throat:* Students may return to school **24 hours after** the first dose of antibiotics has been given and can participate in school activities.

*Flu:* Students must stay home until symptom-free for **24 hours without using fever-reducing medications** (like Tylenol/ibuprofen).

#### Other reasons for exclusion from care

- Illness prevents the student from participating comfortably in activities (including outdoor play)
- Illness resulting in a greater need for care than the school can provide
- Lethargy and fatigue
- Abnormal breathing
- Persistent cough
- Sore throat
- Rash with unknown cause
- Mouth sores

- Student behavior changes and/or exhibits other signs of possible illness

#### When a student becomes ill at school

- The student will be removed from the classroom
- The student's parents will be called to pick up the student
- If the student's medical status declines quickly, we have the authorization to take the student to the emergency room or call 911
- The student will be given the appropriate attention and supervision until the student is picked up
- Parents have a maximum of 40 minutes to pick up ill students

#### Readmitting a previously ill student

- Fever-Free without fever-reducing medications for at least 24 hours
- No vomiting/diarrhea for at least 24 hours
- Fatigue and malaise are no longer present
- The student has resumed normal eating, drinking, and toileting routines
- 24 hours since the first dose of antibiotics was administered (if prescribed)
- While congestion and coughs often linger, other signs and symptoms should be resolved

### **Immunization Policy**

Vaccination records or exemptions will be kept on file as part of your student's records, per state-mandated minimum standards. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy honors vaccine exemptions, which must be obtained from the Texas Department of State Health Services. If you wish to obtain an exemption, please begin the process at least one month before enrollment to allow for processing time.

More information can be found at <https://www.dshs.texas.gov>

The Coronavirus vaccine is not on the current vaccine schedule for school attendance in Texas. An exemption related to the Coronavirus vaccine is not necessary.

### **Minor/Major Accidents**

Minor scrapes or bruises will be handled at school, and an accident report detailing the accident will be posted in ChildPilot. Head or other serious injuries will be reported to the parent by phone, and a detailed accident report will be given to the parent at pick-up.

#### Procedures for Medical Emergencies

- A staff member will call 911
- Parents will be notified via telephone
- A staff member will accompany the student, should a parent not be available, to the hospital until the parent arrives.
- Parents will receive written event documentation once the situation has been investigated.

## **Vision and Hearing Testing Requirements**

Any child 4 years and older must have a vision and hearing test completed and submitted to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy before their start date or within the first 4 months of enrollment. Please submit the test results to the front office or upload them to ChildPilot for student records. These tests are most often obtained during the child's annual wellness visit with your healthcare provider.

## **Food & Nutrition Policy**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not provide lunch or snacks and encourages healthy, nutritious snacks and lunches. When preparing snacks and lunch foods, please provide a variety of nutritional selections that support a successful school day filled with activity and learning.

Any food allergies must be documented using the TXHHS Allergy and Action Plan form that the school office will provide, and a healthcare provider's diagnosis and signature.

Parents are responsible for packing meals in a secure lunchbox that provides the proper insulation for the food. Please label all lunch boxes, containers, bags, and cups with the student's full name. Please provide utensils and napkins. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy cannot heat or refrigerate food items.

Daily expectations:

- Filled, labeled water bottle/cup with lid: Please do not send juice or milk. Only water.
- Morning snack: recommendations are yogurt, cheese stick, cereal bar, fruit, or vegetables.
- Lunch: please consider nutritious choices and avoid/minimize added sugar
- Afternoon snack: for after-school care students only; recommendations are yogurt, cheese sticks, cereal bars, fruit, or vegetables.
- Please cut high-risk choking foods such as hot dogs, grapes, and olives lengthwise (longways) to eliminate the round shape that could lodge in a child's throat.

If, on rare occasions, a child's snack or meal is not present, the staff will make every attempt to contact the child's parents to make arrangements promptly. If contact and arrangements are not made, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy will provide your child with a snack or lunch from available resources, including fast food, which will be billable to the parent's account. If it becomes routine that a child's food is missing, an administrator will request a conference with parents to address any issues and formulate a plan to ensure their child is fed daily.

Our staff will notify parents if we observe any significant change in a child's eating behaviors and appetite.

## **Nut Allergy Policy**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is **NOT** a nut-free school and recognizes that many nutritional selections contain nuts. All students and staff must report any known (food) allergies. This information will be maintained in their records. Nuts may or may not be restricted from a particular classroom, depending on the information received, and policies will be determined accordingly. An administrator will notify parents if a restriction of peanut or nut items is required for the safety of our students and staff.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to amend this policy to ensure the safety of all persons on campus. All efforts will be made to provide timely notification of our policies and restrictions, but in some circumstances, there may be short notice of any changes/restrictions.

## **Smoking**

Smoking is prohibited anywhere on school property. When entering the parking lot, all smoking must be stopped. This includes but is not limited to cigarettes or any tobacco products, e-cigs, vapor cigarettes, etc.

## **STUDENT BEHAVIOR and EXPECTATIONS**

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy believes that setting limits for behavior is essential for the safety and protection of all students, staff, and the learning environment. Consistency is important in helping students orient themselves in the world. Students have an enormous capacity for social learning, meaning they absorb information and social and cultural “cues”. Awareness of self, others, and the environment are vital qualities for all students to develop and live harmoniously. Discipline is a means by which students are helped to develop that awareness. Students should abide by the following principles.

### *Underlying Principles of Student Behavior Management:*

- We respect ourselves and other people.
- We demonstrate kindness, patience, and age-appropriate expectations.
- We strive to self-manage our conduct and present our most exemplary selves.
- We care for our work and our friends’ work, and our belongings.
- We are respectful of insects, animals, and plants.
- We keep ourselves and our surroundings clean.
- We respect our school building and property.
- We will verbally communicate our feelings appropriately.

## **Student Conduct**

Students are expected to exercise neatness and cleanliness in their use of the building, classrooms, work, playground, and restroom areas. School property and furniture are not to be marked on or defaced in any way. No unauthorized posters, drawings, or pictures may be used to decorate student areas (inside or outside). The school administration reserves the right to periodically check or inspect student lockers or cubbies without prior notice. Students are expected to respect the teacher and other students and refrain from making any unnecessary and annoying disturbances. Mutual respect and maturity should characterize student-teacher and student-peer relationships.

Students are expected to treat all Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy administrators, teachers, and parents graciously, courteously, and with professional respect and respond appropriately and with good manners to administrators and teachers (i.e., to say “yes sir” or “no sir;” and “yes ma’am;” or “no ma’am”).

Students are prohibited from chewing gum anywhere on campus. This rule applies in all classrooms, the library, the gymnasium, the cafeteria, the playground, the parking lot, and the schoolyards.

Students are expected to demonstrate care and respect for all school resources, textbooks, library books, computers, equipment, appliances, and facilities, as well as to care for the property of others. Damages must be reported immediately to an administrator or teacher. Charges may be assessed to students responsible for damaging any Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy property.

Fighting is not tolerated at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. Students who fight may be suspended or expelled.

### **General Discipline Guidelines**

When administering discipline, administrators and teachers shall adhere to the following general guidelines:

- Discipline shall be administered when necessary to protect students, school employees, or property and to maintain order.
- Students shall be treated fairly and equitably. Discipline shall be based on a careful assessment of the circumstances of each case.

Factors that will be considered for student discipline and determining the length of any suspension or expulsion may include:

- The seriousness of the offense and frequency of misconduct.
- Student’s age and attitude.
- Potential effect of the misconduct on another person and/or the school environment.

Serious offenses are those that substantially disrupt or interfere with the orderly process in the classroom, the school, or any school-related activity and may include persistent misbehavior or Level II or higher misconduct. Persistent shall be defined as more than one instance of Level II or higher misconduct.

### **Disciplinary Procedure**

- 1<sup>st</sup> Incident – Student receives a verbal warning from an administrator and/or teacher.
- 2<sup>nd</sup> Incident – Parent notified verbally and/or in writing.

- 3<sup>rd</sup> Incident – Written warning and a one-day suspension.
- 4<sup>th</sup> Incident – The action taken is at the discretion of the Head of School after appropriate consultation with parents or guardians.

### **Levels of Offenses**

Acts of misconduct are categorized into the following four levels of offenses:

#### **Level I—Violation of Classroom Rules:**

- Offenses that generally occur in the classroom and can be corrected by the teacher.

#### **Level II—Administrative Intervention:**

- Offenses that are more serious in nature or a continuation of Level I misconduct.

**Level III—Suspension** - A student may be suspended or removed from the regular classroom and/or placed in an alternative setting for engaging in the following conduct:

- Foul Language
- Fighting
- Continuous disruptive behavior in the classroom
- Display of disrespect towards school personnel, another student, or campus visitors
- Stealing
- Ignoring or disobeying school rules
- Any ethical or racial slurs
- Defacing school property or vandalism
- Offenses that seriously disrupt the educational process in the classroom, in the school, and/or at school-related activities, or a continuance of repeated Level I, II, or III misconduct.

#### **Level IV—Expulsion for Serious Offenses:**

- Offenses for which a student may or shall be expelled under state law include continued serious or persistent misbehavior that violates the school’s Code of Student Conduct.

Staff members will use their professional judgment to determine the most effective way to correct student misconduct. Disciplinary actions apply equally to all students. If the parents, guardians, or students are dissatisfied with a teacher’s decision or explanation, they can meet with the administrator to review the area of concern. If the parents or guardians are dissatisfied with the administrator’s decision or explanation, they can make an appeal to the Board of Trustees.

### **Challenging Behavior Policy**

When a student demonstrates inappropriate or disruptive behavior, it becomes necessary for staff to intervene. The following actions will be taken in addressing challenging behaviors at our school to ensure the safety of everyone. All behavior plans/actions and discussions will be framed around the objective of our program.

- a) The student will be told that his behavior is inappropriate. The teacher will talk to the student

about the behavior and guide the student into using more appropriate ways to communicate.

b) The student will be redirected through age appropriate activities and strategies.

c) Parents will be notified about the behavior through ChildPilot and/or phone call. If repeated incidents occur, head of school and staff will work with families to develop a plan of intervention

d) For incidents involving biting or aggressive behavior, the staff follows detailed policies based on common methods to address these potentially harmful behaviors; see Biting policy.

e) Parents will be kept informed of their student's progress daily or weekly, through conversations at pick up, email, and/or conferences.

It is important that staff and parents collaborate to help resolve any challenging behaviors. We are a team and want what is best for your student.

### **Expulsions**

*Procedure:* Before a student is expelled, the student will have an opportunity for a due process hearing that will include the following:

- At least three days prior written notice of the charges and the proposed sanctions to afford a reasonable opportunity for preparation, including a written invitation for the parent or guardian to attend the expulsion hearing. The notice will also include the date, time, and location of the hearing and the names of all witnesses who will present evidence at the hearing.
- Right to a full and fair hearing before the administration or Board of Trustees;
- Opportunity to testify and present evidence and witnesses in defense; and
- Opportunity to examine the evidence presented by the school administration and to ask questions about the evidence.

*Representative:* At the hearing, a parent or legal guardian should provide guidance to the student. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy may hold the hearing regardless of whether the student, parents, or guardians attend, provided the administration makes a good-faith effort to inform the student and the parents or guardians of the time and place of the hearing.

*Evidence:* The expulsion hearing decision may rely on hearsay evidence from school administrators investigating disciplinary infractions. This means that the school administration may present evidence or statements taken from students and staff without revealing the identity of those interviewed.

*Expulsion Order:* The administration will deliver a copy of the student expulsion order to the responsible parent or guardian for providing adequate supervision for the student during the period of expulsion.

If necessary and not later than the second business day after the date an expulsion hearing is held, the administration will deliver a copy of the expulsion order to the authorized officer of the juvenile court in the county in which the student resides. The administration will also provide the students' and parents' names and addresses, names and addresses of any witnesses, and a complete statement of the circumstances surrounding the conduct to the juvenile board, as required by Family Code §52.041.

*Guidelines for Terms of Expulsion:* An expulsion may be for as brief as five school days up to one full year from the date of the order. The administration will use its best professional judgment, using the factors considered in all disciplinary actions, to set the term of expulsion. In some circumstances, an expulsion term may be longer than one year if, after a review, the administration determines that the student is a threat to the safety of other students or employees or that an extended expulsion would be in the student's best interest.

*Effect of Withdrawal:* Withdrawal from school does not affect the school's authority to schedule and hold a hearing on the student's conduct and enter an expulsion order, regardless of whether the student and/or parents are present. The order of expulsion will be included with the records transferred to a new school district, and that district will be empowered to exercise its authority to honor the expulsion. Disciplinary records will be sent to the next school, and that school has the authority to complete an expulsion process should one not be completed prior to the student's withdrawal.

Students who transfer out of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy to another public or private school, including students who withdraw for the purpose of homeschooling, will be required, upon return to the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, to complete the term of expulsion before being allowed to return to the regular campus, unless the student's records indicate the student served the days of expulsion at another school.

*Effect of Transfer into the District:* If a student transfers into Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy from another school where the student was expelled, we may continue the expulsion under the terms of the order provided by the previous school. If a student transfers into Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy from another school in which the student was placed in the Juvenile Justice Disciplinary alternative education program, we shall continue the term of expulsion at the Juvenile Justice Disciplinary alternative education program under the previous school's order.

*Emergency Expulsion:* A campus administrator may order the immediate expulsion of a student if the administrator reasonably believes that the action is necessary to protect people or property from imminent harm. At the time of the emergency expulsion, the student will be given oral notice of the reason for the action, which must be a reason for which the student could be expelled on a non-emergency basis. Formal due process will occur within a reasonable time thereafter.

*Appeal of Expulsion to the Board of Trustees:* A decision by the administration to expel a student may be appealed to the Board of Trustees. The request for appeal must be in writing and must be received by the school administration within three days of the date of the order of expulsion. The appeal will be heard at the next regularly scheduled board meeting. At the meeting, the Board of Trustees will review the record made at the expulsion hearing and will provide the parent and/or student with an opportunity to make a presentation. The administration may also be asked to speak. No new evidence, including witnesses or documents, will be admitted. The Board of Trustees may set reasonable time limitations for presentations. The student is expelled pending

appeal.

### **Social Media and Online Activities**

All Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy students must be mindful of their character and reputation when socializing online. If communication of any kind posted by a student on the internet or their personal web pages is found to be questionable, offensive, and/or produce a negative reputation for them and/or the school, they may be suspended or expelled from school. Students also understand and agree that Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy shall have the right to monitor or examine any electronic device at the school or any Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy activity. Additionally, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy may monitor or examine any postings on the Internet or other electronic medium, which includes but is not limited to text messages and postings on personal websites, social networking, for example, "Facebook", "Instagram", or other private or public domains. Such monitoring includes but is not limited to all verbiage, pictures, depictions, graphics, and videos.

Possession of pornographic materials in any form is inappropriate and unacceptable for Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy students. Students who use school computers to access the Internet for illicit purposes may be expelled.

### **Drug Policy**

All Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy students are required to abstain from the use of alcohol, any form of tobacco, and any drugs not prescribed for them by a physician. Students at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy are expected to abide by our no-drug use policy, which includes abuse of prescription and/or illegal drugs. The school is required by law to report any abuses or drug violations to the local authorities. No student may sell, distribute, administer, give to, or share any drug or medication with another student. If a physician prescribes any medications for a student, parents are responsible for informing the school, which maintains a record of such prescriptions in the main office. Any abuse or violation of this policy may result in the student's expulsion.

### **Biting**

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy collaborates closely with the parent and the student when misbehavior is harmful to him/herself, other people, or property. Most behaviors are short-term and correctable. Biting can be normal behavior during certain developmental ages. When a student bites, an incident report will be sent to the parents of the student who bit and the student who was bitten. This serves as a notice of the incident and the circumstances surrounding the bite. Due to our confidentiality policy, neither student's name will be revealed by the school. This applies to all incidents/accidents involving other students.

When a student bites, he or she will be sent home for the day if:

1. The student bites more than twice in one day
2. The student bites the face
3. The bite breaks the skin

If a student continues to bite people or themselves despite the teachers' and parents' efforts to stop the biting, the parent may be asked to seek consultation with his/her medical practitioner, have an in-person meeting with school administration, and/or be unenrolled at the discretion of the administration. If unenrollment has occurred, readmission will be considered after 3 months on a case-by-case basis if space is available.

The administration's discretion determines what constitutes continual or chronic biting, which will be handled on a case-by-case basis. The final decision will consider age, the severity of bites, temperament, parents' cooperation, and the lead teacher's opinion. Generally, if a student bites three times in one week, the student will be suspended until a plan for behavior modification is determined. All factors will be considered, and Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to modify this policy and plan at any time to ensure the safety of all people on campus and maintain a comfortable school atmosphere.

## **Bullying**

According to the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, a bully is a person who hurts, frightens, or tyrannizes those who are smaller or weaker. Merriam-Webster Dictionary defines the act of bullying as the "abuse and mistreatment of someone vulnerable by someone stronger, more powerful, etc." Bullying occurs when someone decides to exercise dominance over another person by harming them emotionally or physically. Research has discovered there are three types of bullying.

The three types of bullying are listed below with examples:

- **Verbal bullying** is saying or writing mean things. Verbal bullying includes:
  - Teasing
  - Name-calling
  - Inappropriate sexual comments
  - Taunting
  - Threatening to cause
- **Social bullying**, sometimes referred to as relational bullying, involves hurting someone's reputation or relationships. Social bullying includes:
  - Leaving someone out on purpose
  - Telling other students not to be friends with someone
  - Spreading rumors about someone
  - Embarrassing someone in public
- **Physical bullying** involves hurting a person's body or possessions. Physical bullying includes:
  - Hitting/kicking/pinching
  - Spitting
  - Tripping/pushing
  - Taking or breaking someone's things
  - Making mean or rude hand gestures

While general rudeness and other situations involving conflict can seem like bullying, the situation must meet three requirements to be considered bullying. These three major factors must be present for a situation to be considered bullying:

1. The person who is bullying someone else must be doing it intentionally.
2. The person who is bullying someone must have been bullying this person repeatedly for a significant amount of time.
3. The person bullying someone else must be stronger or in a higher position of power than the target.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy takes bullying seriously. An investigation will ensue if a parent and/or student states a bullying situation has happened at school. Developmentally appropriate action will be taken to ensure that all students feel safe, connected, and valued while attending Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. To resolve a bullying situation, follow these steps:

1. Parent and/or student reports bullying to a teacher and/or administrator
2. The report is first addressed by the classroom teacher
3. If further action is necessary, the parent and/or teacher requests assistance from the Head of School

During a bullying investigation, all parents will be contacted to discuss the situation. If necessary, the Head of School may suspend and/or expel a student for multiple or continual bullying of students.

## **REQUIRED INFORMATION**

### **Child Protection**

All employees of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy are mandated to report to the Office of Children and Family Services if they have “reasonable grounds to suspect” that a student has been physically, emotionally, or sexually abused or neglected. It is highly recommended that the Head of School be notified; however, it is not mandatory. All employees are required to complete one hour of training every year to update themselves on Child Maltreatment and Neglect. The staff meetings and training are used to increase awareness for both parents and staff regarding noticing and the importance of reporting child abuse.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy staff are encouraged to openly discuss ways to prevent such events from happening to students. We encourage an open dialogue with the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy family to help facilitate an open-door policy on reporting child abuse within our community. We also encourage staff to attend seminars to learn more about how they may help increase awareness. We also hold parent seminars to raise awareness in our community.

### **Child Abuse Reporting Policy**

The State of Texas requires that Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy be on the lookout for and report to the state and appropriate authorities all suspected cases of abuse and neglect of a student. All employees are mandated reporters of child abuse and neglect. All incidents or

suspected incidents will be reported directly to the Child Protective Services for investigation. We are not allowed to do our own investigation and are required by law to report anything of a suspicious nature. It is advised that families make the staff aware of any lingering bruising or other visible injury to minimize suspicion of possible child abuse or endangerment. Child abuse is defined as “a violation of a child’s body and mind physically, emotionally, or sexually.” Child neglect is defined as “continued failure to provide a child with the basic necessities of life, including, but not limited to food, clothing, shelter, emotional security, medical and dental care, and adequate supervision needed for the child’s growth and development.”

The following steps are to be taken if a staff member is suspected of child abuse:

- A staff member with a pending situation or investigation should immediately notify an administrative staff member.
- An administrator will check on the complaint, and if they agree that there may be abuse, the staff member will report the incident to Child Protective Services and our state licensing authority.
- We will then follow their advice regarding whether or not to suspend the staff member. If a staff member is found responsible in a case of child abuse, we will take the following steps:
  - We will allow the staff member to appeal the decision
  - The administrative staff will meet with the individual, review the incident, and form an opinion as to its validity and/or consequences to the school and the individual.
  - Based upon the advice of our licensing agent, we will either suspend the staff member or allow them to continue their job until the appeal is completed.
- The staff member will meet with the administrative staff during this time, and steps will be taken to ensure that there are no problems.
- If, after the appeal, the decision is still upheld, we will take one of the following steps based upon the advice of our licensing agent:
  - The staff member will be terminated from their position at the school or
  - We will inform the parents that we have a staff member with a child abuse record. We will also let the parents know what the charge was.

Please note that any authorized person who attempts to pick up a student from Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy must not be under the influence of any illegal substance. In the case of this occurrence, the school will consider this an act of child abuse/neglect, and staff will notify the local police department immediately and, within 24 hours, notify our state licensing representative.

## **Parent’s Rights**

- Enter and examine the facility during its hours of operation and without advance notice.
- File a complaint against the facility.
- Review the facility’s publicly accessible records.
- Review the facility’s written records concerning the parent’s or guardian’s student.
- Receive inspection reports and information about how to access the facility’s online compliance history.
- Have the facility comply with a court order that prevents another parent or guardian from visiting or removing the student.

- Be given the contact information for the facility's local Child Care Regulation office.
- Obtain a copy of the facility's policies and procedures handbook.
- Review the facility's staff training records and any in-house training curriculum; and
- Exercise these rights without receiving retaliatory action by the facility.
- Inspect any video recordings of an alleged incident of abuse or neglect involving their student, provided that:
  - Video recordings of the alleged incident are available.
  - The parent or guardian does not retain any part of the video depicting a student that is not their own.
  - The parent or guardian of any other student in the video receives prior notice from the facility.

### **Students with Special Needs**

If a student needs an adaptation to our regularly scheduled activities program, the parent needs to provide a written instruction plan (IEP) provided by the student's physician or qualified professional affiliated with a local school district or early childhood intervention program. If the student needs adaptive equipment, the parent is responsible for providing such equipment to the school while the student attends the school.

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy's materials and curriculum will be modified, when possible, to support the documented special needs or learning differences to meet these students' social, emotional, and/or academic needs. If an outside contractor/specialist is needed or requested, the Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is open to the specialist providing services on campus as long as they pass the background check, meet the Minimum Standards requirements, and it is at the parents' expense.

Students with special needs (i.e., physical, emotional, social, or learning problems) may be considered for admission on an individual, case-by-case basis. Parents who wish to enroll such students must understand that Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy admits student with special needs only as long as faculty and staff members can meet the prospective student's regular academic needs without impeding the learning process of other students in the class. The Head of School has the authority to make the final decision. Special needs students admitted to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy are admitted provisionally.

The following guidelines are to be followed when considering a student with special needs:

1. Parents of students with special physical needs or handicaps must not expect the school to provide any additional or special equipment.
2. Parents of students with special needs must not expect Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy to provide additional personnel or staffing needs (i.e., if the student is incontinent and needs special care, the parents would be responsible for providing that care).
3. Every student attending Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy must be able to participate in the majority of the school's activities and be able to experience success within the framework of the school's academic and social expectations.
4. The presence of any student with special needs must not detract from the daily program

offered in all classes or negatively affect the high achievement standards expected of other students.

5. Currently, Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy has no specially trained staff hired to handle students with special needs, learning disabilities, psychological or emotional handicaps, or other exceptional requirements.

### **Required Notifications**

- The facility must provide written notice to the parent or guardian of any other students captured in a video before allowing a parent to inspect a recording.
- The facility must provide a parent or guardian with a written copy of the rights no later than the student's first day at the facility.

### **Licensing**

We understand the importance of being in compliance with the Texas (HHS) state licensing regulations in order to ensure a quality environment for your students. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy complies with the applicable state licensing regulations and policies. These requirements cover staff qualifications, facilities, playgrounds, health and safety guidelines, and student/staff ratios. A copy of the minimum standards for Licensed Child Care Centers may be reviewed in the school office. Our recent inspection report is posted in the front office lobby. If you have any questions or concerns regarding licensing or minimum standards rules, please contact the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or Texas Health and Human Services.

Local Licensing Office

550 East 15<sup>th</sup> Street, Ste 120

Plano, TX 75074

512-424-6500

Website: [www.dfps.texas.gov](http://www.dfps.texas.gov) and [txchildcaresearch.org](http://txchildcaresearch.org)

Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 1-800-252-5400

HHS Website: [www.hhs.texas.gov](http://www.hhs.texas.gov)

**HEART OF TEXOMA MONTESSORI ACADEMY**  
**2025-2026**  
**PARENT HANDBOOK**  
**ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF SCHOOL POLICY FORM**

I have read the entirety of the parent handbook and agree to follow all policies and procedures for as long as my student(s) is/are enrolled at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. Failure to sign and return or agree with the contents of this acknowledgment form does not exempt a parent from compliance with the parent handbook policies and procedures.

Print Parent/Guardian 1 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Print Parent/Guardian 2 Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Parent Signature: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

**Please sign and return this form to an administrator. Thank You!**