HEART OF TEXOMA
MONTESSORI ACADEMY
EST 2022

2026 - 2027
Parent Handbook

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SCHOOL MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to cultivate lifelong learners through the Montessori philosophy, preparing students ages 18 months 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 & PROGRAM QUALITY

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is committed to providing a high-quality educational experience grounded in best practices, accountability, and continuous growth.

HOTMA is proud to hold a **Texas Rising Star (TRS) 4-Star rating**, the highest level awarded through the Texas Rising Star program. This designation reflects our commitment to strong instructional practices, safe learning environments, and ongoing professional development.

Looking ahead, HOTMA is pursuing **Cognia accreditation**, with the goal of full accreditation beginning in the **2026–2027 school year**. Cognia accreditation is an internationally recognized standard that focuses on continuous improvement, instructional quality, and student success.

As part of this process, families may see:

- Continued focus on academic growth and student progress
- Ongoing professional development for teachers
- Periodic review of curriculum, instruction, and school policies

Accreditation supports our mission to provide a thoughtful, consistent, and high-quality Montessori education while ensuring we continue to grow and improve in service of our students and families.

**Our school will be accredited by Cognia, offering graduating students a diploma recognized by most colleges, universities, 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.

- Pre-Primary: Ages 18m through 3y
- Primary: Ages 3y through 6y
- Lower Elementary: 1st Grade through 3rd Grade
- Upper Elementary: 4th Grade through 6th Grade
- Middle/High School: 7th Grade through 12th Grade

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 5:30 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.

Admissions Process

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy follows a comprehensive admissions process designed to ensure that our program, staffing, and resources are an appropriate fit for each student and family.

Step 1: School Tour

All admissions begin with a campus tour. Families are encouraged to bring their child(ren) to the tour whenever possible so that we can begin getting to know the student and answer family questions about our program and expectations.

Step 2: Request to Apply

After completing a tour, families may request to apply by scanning the QR code provided in the tour packet. Submission of a request to apply does not guarantee admission or placement.

Step 3: Admissions Review & Pre-Screening

Once a request to apply is received, the Head of School will contact the family to guide them through the next steps of the admissions process. Depending on the student's age, developmental level, and classroom placement, this process may include one or more of the following:

- Pre-screening questionnaire
- Admissions Readiness & Support Capacity Form
- Admissions observation visit

- Admissions assessment or placement test
- Review of previous school records and standardized test scores (when applicable)

These steps allow the school to determine whether we are able to support the student successfully within our current program structure.

Step 4: Admissions Decision

Parents will be notified of the admission decision once the admissions review is complete. Admission may result in:

- Acceptance
- Conditional acceptance
- Deferred admission
- Denial, if the school determines it is unable to meet the student's needs at that time

If an opening is unavailable, families will be advised of waitlist status.

Step 5: Enrollment & Documentation

Upon acceptance, parents must complete all required enrollment documentation electronically through **ChildPilot**, including:

- Student records and prior school documentation
- Immunization and health records required by the State of Texas Health and Human Services
- Tuition and fee agreements

All applicable registration fees, admissions costs, and the **first month's tuition** must be paid before a student may attend.

Step 6: Start Date Confirmation

Parents must provide a **firm start date** so that teachers can prepare for the student's arrival. The Head of School will confirm the start date, at which time the student will be **officially admitted** to Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy.

Annual Enrollment Confirmation

Each year, the school will distribute an **Enrollment Survey** by the last day of January. Families have until **February 15th** to complete the survey or notify the school of their intent to discontinue enrollment. Once a family notifies the school, the student's spot may be offered to a student on the waiting list.

New family registration begins in March. Prior to the start of each school year, families are required to review and update all student information, submit any required renewal paperwork, and sign any Board-approved documentation.

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.

**Please see Four D policy below*

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

All tuition and fees are managed electronically through **ChildPilot**. Families are required to maintain an active payment method on file in ChildPilot at all times. Accepted payment methods include **eCheck (ACH)** or **paper check.**

Tuition Billing

- Tuition is **processed automatically on the 1st day of each month**.
- If the 1st falls on a day the school is not in session, tuition will still be processed on the 1st.
- Tuition is considered **late if payment is not successfully processed by the end of the**

3rd day of the month.

Late Fees and Non-Sufficient Funds

- A $40 late fee will be applied if tuition is not paid by the 3rd day of the month.
- Beginning on the 4th day of the month, an additional $5 per day late fee will be charged until the balance is paid in full.
- Any returned or failed payment (including insufficient funds) will incur a $50 NSF fee.
- Tuition and all applicable late fees must be paid in full before the student may attend school.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is not responsible for providing reminders of tuition due dates or failed payments. It is the family's responsibility to ensure that payment information in ChildPilot is accurate and up to date.

Tuition Structure

Tuition for the academic year is due from August through May and is based on the total number of instructional days, teacher in-service days, and parent conference days scheduled for the school year.

Tuition is not calculated by the number of days in any given month. Because some months include more instructional days than others, annual tuition is averaged and divided into ten (10) equal monthly payments for family convenience.

Tuition is non-refundable. No credits or refunds will be issued for absences, holidays, school closures, extended illness, or withdrawal from the program.

Tuition Rates and TEFA

For the most current tuition rates, fee schedules, and payment policies, families should refer to the school's website.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy participates in the Texas Education Freedom Account (TEFA) program, as applicable. Families who intend to use TEFA funds are responsible for understanding program requirements, timelines, and eligibility criteria as determined by the State of Texas.

Receipt or approval of TEFA funds does not replace the family's responsibility to ensure tuition is paid in full and on time. All tuition and fees remain due according to the school's billing schedule. Any delays, denials, or changes in TEFA funding do not alter payment obligations to the school.

Families utilizing TEFA funds must coordinate directly with the school to ensure proper documentation and processing. Failure to comply with TEFA requirements or payment timelines may result in delayed attendance or withdrawal in accordance with school policy.

Financial Obligations

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy depends on timely tuition and fee payments to support school operations, staffing, and program delivery. Tuition and fees are a contractual obligation of enrollment.

All tuition and fees are managed electronically through **ChildPilot**, and families are required to maintain an active payment method on file at all times. Specific tuition rates, fee amounts, billing schedules, and payment details are outlined in the **Tuition & Fees Schedule**, which is provided during tours, enrollment, and annual re-enrollment and is also available upon request.

Tuition Delinquency

Families experiencing anticipated financial difficulty are expected to communicate proactively with school administration **before** an account becomes delinquent.

Failure to maintain a current account may result in one or more of the following actions, at the school's discretion:

- Assessment of late or administrative fees
- Temporary suspension of attendance
- Required meeting with administration
- Withholding of student records, progress reports, or transcripts
- Withdrawal of the student from the program

Accounts that remain unpaid after required notice may result in unenrollment. Tuition and fees continue to accrue until all withdrawal procedures are completed in accordance with school policy.

Registration, Deposits, and Fees

Certain non-refundable fees are required as part of enrollment and re-enrollment, including but not limited to:

- Annual re-enrollment fee
- Enrollment deposits for new students

- Supply fees assessed during the academic year

These fees support administrative preparation, classroom materials, and program resources. A student's enrollment or classroom placement is not finalized until all required fees are paid.

Specific amounts, due dates, and descriptions of fees are detailed in the **Tuition & Fees Schedule**.

Additional Fees

Additional fees may be assessed for services or circumstances including, but not limited to:

- Late pick-up
- Returned or failed payments
- Optional enrichment activities or special events

Participation in optional activities will be communicated in advance. The school strives to minimize additional expenses and ensures that any requested fees are thoughtfully considered to support student enrichment and school community experiences.

Unpaid fees may result in suspension of attendance or withdrawal without advance notice.

Gifts and Donations

Families are welcome to give gifts to staff members. We ask that all gifts be given in the spirit of appreciation and not as an attempt to influence professional responsibilities. Staff members are required to follow all school policies and ethical guidelines, and no family or student will receive preferential treatment based on gift-giving.

Donations to the school, in any amount, are deeply appreciated. If you would like your donation to support a specific project or purchase, please contact an administrator to discuss the details. Your generosity helps support our programs and strengthen our school community.

To further support the mission and growth of Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, a nonprofit organization, **Friends of HOTMA**, has been established. This organization helps provide additional support for school initiatives, classroom resources, and community programs. **Tax-deductible donations may be made through Friends of HOTMA.** Please contact school administration if you would like more information about contributing through this organization.

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 lovey or blanket, 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 1 hour 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

In order to maintain 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?
- Should a time limit be placed on outdoor play due to weather conditions?

We will limit the duration of time outdoors if:

- The outside temperature is and/or the wind chill is below 32ºF.
- The outside temperature is over 95ºF.
- If we experience extreme weather, we will use the Community HUB 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

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not utilize pools, wading pools, or standing bodies of water at any time.

During the **summer program and field day**, students may participate in **supervised sprinkler play** or similar water activities designed for cooling and outdoor enjoyment. These activities are limited in scope, closely supervised by staff, and follow all safety guidelines appropriate for the age group.

Families will be notified in advance of scheduled summer sprinkler days and should ensure students are dressed appropriately.

Skin and Sun Protection

Students are welcome to bring hats, but not 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.

Student Dress Code

Uniform Requirements:

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

  See uniform shopping guide for more details.

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.

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 Cultural Studies

At Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, the Montessori curriculum includes ongoing study of the world's diverse people, cultures, and traditions of the world. As part of our cultural curriculum, students may learn about a variety of religious, cultural, and national holidays throughout the year.

The Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy respects and values the diversity of our families and community. Staff do not teach or promote any particular religious belief. Instead, lessons are presented in a general, respectful, and fact-based manner to help students develop understanding, appreciation, and acceptance of the diverse world around them.

Classroom celebrations and cultural activities may vary by program level and classroom community. Any relevant information families need to know regarding classroom celebrations or special activities will be communicated directly by the classroom teacher.

Celebration of Life and Birthdays

Students may celebrate their birthday with a Celebration of Life, a Montessori tradition that honors the child's growth and development over time. Participation is optional but encouraged, as it supports relationship-building and helps children understand the progression of time through a simple timeline lesson.

Parents who wish to participate should contact the lead teacher to schedule the celebration. If a student's birthday falls on a weekend, outside the academic calendar, or conflicts with a school event, the date should be coordinated with the teacher.

Families are encouraged to work with the teacher on a simple project or timeline that reflects the student's growth and special moments. During the Celebration of Life, the student will share this project with the class.

Up to four special guests may attend. Families may provide either a morning snack or lunch for the class. For consistency and equity, no additional decorations are permitted, ensuring that all students experience celebrations in a similar and inclusive way. Please be mindful of food allergies or sensitivities; the school can provide this information. All plans must be coordinated with the lead teacher in advance.

Birthday invitations may be distributed during class time only if all classmates are included.

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.

All interactions between parents/guardians and staff are expected to be respectful, professional, and constructive, whether in person, by phone, or through written communication. Disagreements or concerns should be addressed calmly and through appropriate channels.

Abusive, threatening, harassing, or disrespectful language or behavior toward staff—including raised voices, personal insults, intimidation, or hostile communication—will be taken seriously and addressed promptly. The school reserves the right to limit or redirect communication, require meetings to occur in writing or with administration present, or take further action as necessary to ensure a safe and respectful environment for staff and students.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is committed to fostering a school community built on mutual respect, collaboration, and trust. Maintaining professional and respectful communication is essential to supporting the well-being of students and staff alike.

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.

Curriculum Goals

Our curriculum is designed to support the whole child. We provide developmentally appropriate, engaging learning experiences that foster independence, curiosity, and confidence.

Our curriculum goals include:

- **Supporting whole-child development** across cognitive, social, emotional, physical, and language domains.
- **Providing developmentally appropriate activities** based on observation and each child's individual needs.
- **Creating intentional, well-prepared environments** that encourage exploration, problem-solving, and hands-on learning.
- **Promoting positive social–emotional growth**, including cooperation, communication, and self-regulation.
- **Respecting and reflecting diversity**, helping children build cultural awareness and empathy.
- **Partnering with families** through communication and involvement in the learning process.
- **Maintaining consistent routines and expectations** to support safety, comfort, and confident independence.

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 student is in our care, we will provide space to accommodate sessions.
2. We will participate in all comprehensive care meetings if needed.
3. We will complete supporting documentation from authorized medical professionals for any accommodations related to the student's physical or developmental needs.
4. We will provide materials and resources in parent's/student's primary language when possible.

DROP-OFF AND PICK-UP POLICY

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy prioritizes student safety, smooth transitions, and minimal disruption to instructional time. All families and guardians are expected to follow established drop-off and pick-up procedures.

Campus Access

To protect instructional time and maintain a calm learning environment:

- Families or approved adults may escort students to classrooms only during designated arrival times.
- After 8:00 AM, adults are not permitted beyond the front lobby unless approved by administration.
- Classroom visits must be arranged in advance and coordinated through administration.

Drop-Off Procedures

Drop-off occurs between 7:30–8:00 AM.

- Families may use the carline or walk-in option, following staff directions.
- Students must remain supervised until they are safely transitioned to staff.
- Staff will assist students into the building and ensure proper check-in.
- After 8:00 AM, students must be brought to the front lobby and will be escorted to class by a staff member.

Pick-Up Procedures

Pick-up occurs between 3:00–3:15 PM.

- Families may use the carline or walk-in option.
- Students will be released only after proper check-out through ChildPilot.
- After 3:15 PM, students transition to after-school care and must be picked up following after-school procedures.

Carline Safety Expectations

To ensure safety for all students:

- Follow posted traffic patterns and staff instructions.
- Drive slowly and remain attentive at all times.
- Cell phone use is not permitted in the carline.
- Vehicles must remain in park while students are entering or exiting.
- Never leave a vehicle unattended in the drive-through lane.

Failure to follow carline procedures may result in restricted use of the carline.

Authorized Pick-Ups

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy collects authorized pick-up information for each student through ChildPilot. Students will only be released to individuals listed as authorized pick-ups.

If additional individuals need authorization, they must be added to the student's ChildPilot account by completing the applicable authorization form.

Unexpected or last-minute authorization may be granted by a parent or legal guardian through a message sent in ChildPilot, including the individual's full name and phone number. All authorized individuals must present a valid photo ID before a student will be released.

All authorized pick-up individuals are required to have appropriate child safety seats available for each student, as required by state law. Staff are mandated reporters and are required to report concerns related to student safety, including but not limited to improper safety restraints, smoking or vaping on school property, or corporal punishment on campus.

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 pick-up after 3:15 PM (and 5:30 PM for students enrolled in the after-school program) will be subject to a $5.00 per minute late fee.

If a family or legal guardian knows they will be late, notification of the expected pick-up time or alternate arrangements must be communicated to the school as soon as possible and within the first 30 minutes after the regularly scheduled pick-up time.

If a student has not been picked up and no communication has been received within 30 minutes of the scheduled pick-up time, the emergency contacts listed in the student's file will be contacted. If no authorized individual can be reached within one hour of the scheduled pick-up time, the school is required by law to contact Child Protective Services (CPS) for the student's safekeeping. Staff members are not permitted to transport students off campus or take students home.

In the event of an emergency, families may contact the school prior to the 3:00 PM dismissal time to request that their student attend after-school care on a drop-in basis, subject to availability and staffing. Approval is not guaranteed and is dependent on adequate after-school supervision. Drop-in after-school care is intended for occasional emergency situations only and will be billed at the established drop-in rate.

If late pick-up becomes routine, administration may require the family to formally enroll the student in the after-school program.

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 behind the school at a safe distance for fire and the classroom bathrooms and storage closets for tornadoes/lockdowns. 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

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy generally follows 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, Heart of Texoma will use the Leap of Faith Church (5615 FM1417, Sherman, TX 75092) parking lot for our reunification location. 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 and shared at **parent/teacher conferences.** 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. Any questions or concerns can be addressed during **parent/teacher conferences**.

Developmental Milestones & Screening

At Heart of Texoma Montessori, we monitor each child's growth in all areas of development—social, emotional, physical, cognitive, and language. To support families and ensure we are meeting each child's individual needs, we use the **Ages & Stages Questionnaires (ASQ)** as our developmental screening tool for pre-primary and primary aged students. **MRX** is utilized for elementary, middle and high school students.

These screenings help us understand each child's developmental progress and ensure we are providing the most supportive, developmentally appropriate environment possible.

STANDARDIZED TESTING

Academic progress is a priority at Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy. In the spring semester of each school 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 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 drop off and dismissal times, as such 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 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 Information

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 .

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 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, with time 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 physician'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.

Nutrition Policy

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy does not provide lunch or snacks and encourages healthy, nutritious meals and snacks brought from home. Parents are responsible for providing a daily lunch for their child that supports a full day of activity, concentration, and learning.

Meals and snacks should be well-balanced and, when possible, include the five major food components: fruits, vegetables, grains, protein, and dairy. Providing a variety of nutritious foods helps support children's growth, development, and overall well-being.

Nutrition is an essential element of early childhood development. Families are encouraged to make thoughtful food choices and to involve children in healthy eating habits that promote lifelong wellness.

Parents are responsible for packing meals in a secure lunchbox that provides proper insulation for food safety, as the school is unable to heat or refrigerate food items. Please label all lunchboxes, containers, bags, and cups with the child's full name, and include necessary utensils and napkins.

Any food allergies must be documented using the TXHHS Allergy and Action Plan form provided by the school office and must include a healthcare provider's diagnosis and signature.

For additional guidance on healthy nutrition for children, families may refer to the following resources:

- USDA MyPlate for Kids: https://www.myplate.gov/
- Nutrition for Kids (Mayo Clinic): https://www.mayoclinic.org/healthy-lifestyle/childrens-health/in-depth/nutrition-for-kids/art-20049335
- Harvard Kid's Healthy Eating Plate: https://www.hsph.harvard.edu/nutritionsource/kids-healthy-eating-plate/
- HealthyChildren.org Nutrition: https://www.healthychildren.org/English/healthy-living/nutrition/Pages/default.aspx
- Nutrition-Related Family Engagement Ideas: https://www.cceionline.com/october-2022-newsletter-exploring-health-foods-nutrition-related-family-engagement-ideas/
- Navigate Life Texas: https://www.navigatelifetexas.org/en/

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is committed to supporting families in fostering healthy habits that contribute to each child's success in the classroom and beyond.

Oral Health & Family Resources (Parent Handbook Version)

At Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, we support children in developing healthy habits, including good oral hygiene. Oral health is an important part of overall well-being and can impact a child's growth, development, and long-term health. Families are encouraged to promote consistent oral care routines at home and schedule regular dental check-ups for their child.

For more information on children's dental health, please visit:

- https://www.mouthhealthy.org/
- www.themightymouth.org

- https://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/browse/series/healthy-habits-happy-smiles

Health Benefits Resources

The state of Texas offers programs to support families in meeting children's health and basic needs. Through Your Texas Health Benefits, families may apply for:

- SNAP (food assistance)
- TANF (cash assistance for families with children)
- Health care coverage (medical, dental, hospital visits, and prescriptions)
- Support services (including mental health and caregiver support)
- WIC (nutrition support for pregnant/breastfeeding women and children under 5)

Outdoor Play & Physical Activity Policy

Children participate in a minimum of two daily opportunities for outdoor play, weather permitting, allowing for the use of both small and large muscle groups. All children 18 months through pre-kindergarten age engage in at least 60 minutes of outdoor play each day.

In addition to outdoor time, children are provided with opportunities for active play through both group and individual activities indoors and outdoors. Outdoor play is scheduled when weather conditions are safe. Outdoor time may be limited or adjusted if the heat index exceeds 95°F, the wind chill falls below 45°F, or during precipitation.

Nut Allergy Policy

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 Policy

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

At Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, students are guided to care for themselves, others, and their environment with intention and respect. This includes maintaining cleanliness and order in the building, classrooms, work areas, playground, and restrooms. Students are expected to use materials and spaces responsibly and to take pride in contributing to a well-prepared environment.

School property, materials, and furnishings are to be used with care and respect. Students may not alter or deface school property. Any damage should be reported promptly to a teacher or administrator so that it can be addressed appropriately.

Students are supported in developing respectful, cooperative relationships with peers and adults. Grace and courtesy are foundational to our community, and students are expected to demonstrate kindness, consideration, and self-regulation in their words and actions. Interactions between students and teachers are based on mutual respect and a shared commitment to a positive learning environment.

Personal and shared spaces, including cubbies and lockers, are part of the school environment and may be reviewed by administration as needed to ensure safety and care of the environment.

Students are expected to demonstrate care and responsibility for all school resources, including books, materials, technology, and equipment, as well as the belongings of others. When damage occurs, it is important that it is reported and addressed. Families may be responsible for repair or replacement when appropriate.

To support focus and respect for the learning environment, gum is not permitted on campus.

Physical aggression is not consistent with the values of our community. Students are guided in developing peaceful conflict resolution skills and appropriate ways to express strong emotions. Incidents involving physical harm will be addressed seriously and may result in further action,

including suspension or dismissal, depending on the circumstances.

Discipline, Guidance, and Enrollment Continuation Policy

Our Philosophy

At Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy, discipline is viewed as a process of guidance. Our goal is to support students in developing independence, responsibility, and respect for themselves and others while maintaining a safe, peaceful, and productive learning environment for the entire school community.

Guiding Principles

When behavioral concerns arise, decisions are made using professional judgment and are based on:

- Student safety and well-being
- Impact on the learning environment
- Developmental appropriateness
- Patterns of behavior over time
- The school's ability to reasonably support the student's needs

Disciplinary decisions are made on a **case-by-case basis** and are not based on a rigid, one-size-fits-all approach.

Our Commitment

Our intention is always to guide, support, and partner with families to help each child succeed. We believe discipline should reflect respect, consistency, and a shared commitment to the well-being of all students.

The 4 Ds of School Conduct

Behavior falling into the following categories is not tolerated:

1. **Destructive** – Causing damage to materials, classroom environments, or others' work
2. **Demeaning** – Using words or actions that insult, belittle, or emotionally harm others
3. **Disruptive** – Interfering with instruction, concentration, or the peaceful functioning of the classroom

4. **Dangerous** – Actions that pose a risk of physical harm to oneself or others

Staff intervene immediately when behaviors in these categories are observed.

Response to Behavioral Concerns

When challenging behavior occurs, the school will take appropriate steps which may include:

- Clear communication with the student
- Redirection and guidance using developmentally appropriate strategies
- Increased observation and support
- Communication with families or guardians
- Collaborative planning to support the student

Documentation and follow-up occur as needed.

Challenging or Persistent Behavior

While HOTMA is committed to working with each child and family, there may be circumstances in which behaviors persist despite intervention and collaboration.

A student's continued enrollment may be reconsidered if:

- Behavior is dangerous, destructive, demeaning, or repeatedly disruptive
- Behavior persists despite reasonable interventions and family collaboration
- Behavior significantly interferes with the learning, safety, or well-being of others
- The school determines it is unable to reasonably meet the student's needs within its program

"Persistent" behavior is defined as repeated or ongoing conduct that negatively impacts the classroom or school community.

Suspension or Disenrollment

Suspension or disenrollment is considered a **last resort** and is not punitive in nature. Decisions

are made collaboratively by administration, classroom teachers, and when appropriate, the Board of Trustees.

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy reserves the right to suspend or disenroll a student at any time if it is determined that:

- Continued enrollment is not in the best interest of the student, or
- Continued enrollment compromises the safety or learning environment of the school community

Families will be notified of concerns and decisions in writing.

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

Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is built on a culture of respect, kindness, and responsibility. We believe every child deserves to feel safe, valued, and included. To date, HOTMA has not experienced significant bullying concerns, and we are committed to protecting this positive school culture as our community continues to grow.

Our expectation is that students treat one another with dignity at all times. While children may experience normal conflict, disagreement, or social challenges as part of development, bullying behavior is not acceptable at HOTMA.

Bullying may include verbal, social, or physical behaviors that intentionally harm, intimidate, or exclude another student. This may include repeated teasing, name-calling, spreading rumors, threats, intimidation, or physical aggression.

As new students enter our community, we recognize that not every child comes from an environment where respect and peaceful conflict resolution are consistently practiced. We are committed to guiding students through this transition and teaching appropriate social behavior through modeling, redirection, and clear expectations.

However, bullying is not tolerated. If bullying behavior is persistent, severe, or compromises the safety or emotional well-being of others, the school will take appropriate action. This may include increased supervision, behavior planning, suspension, or reconsideration of continued enrollment, in accordance with the school's 4 D Behavior Policy.

HOTMA is committed to maintaining a safe and respectful learning environment for every student.

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.

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 Learning Differences and Support Needs

1. Heart of Texoma Montessori Academy is committed to supporting children as individuals and

recognizes that students may have a range of learning styles, developmental differences, or support needs. Admission and continued enrollment of students who require accommodations are considered on a case-by-case basis.

2. Families are encouraged to share relevant information regarding a student's needs during the admissions process or as needs arise. If a student requires accommodations to participate successfully in the program, documentation from a qualified professional (such as a physician, therapist, or early childhood intervention provider) may be requested to help guide appropriate support.
3. When possible, HOTMA may make reasonable modifications to classroom materials, routines, or instructional approaches to support a student's social, emotional, and/or academic growth. However, HOTMA is not a special education program and does not provide specialized instruction, therapeutic services, or one-on-one support beyond what is typical in a Montessori classroom.
4. If a student requires adaptive equipment, personal care, or specialized services, families are responsible for providing such equipment or arranging for services. With administrative approval, outside specialists may provide services on campus at the family's expense, provided all background check and licensing requirements are met.
5. Admission and continued enrollment are contingent upon the school's ability to meet a student's needs without compromising the safety, learning environment, or educational experience of other students. All students must be able to participate meaningfully in the majority of the school day and activities within the structure of the Montessori program.
6. Students requiring significant accommodations may be admitted on a provisional basis, with ongoing review by administration. The Head of School retains final authority regarding admission, placement, and continued enrollment decisions.

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 15th Street, Ste 120

Plano, TX 75074
512-424-6500
Website: www.dfps.texas.gov and txchildcaresearch.org
Abuse/Neglect Hotline: 1-800-252-5400
HHS Website: www.hhs.texas.gov

HEART OF TEXOMA MONTESSORI ACADEMY

2026-2027

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!