

International Montessori School of North Raleigh



IMS of North Raleigh

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PARENT / STUDENT HANDBOOK

2009 - 2010

Welcome to IMS of North Raleigh (IMSNR). We are so excited to have you join our “family”.

We recognise that the first six years are critical to the development of one’s life.

“In an open environment, that is in one that is suitable to his age, a child’s psychic life should develop naturally and reveal its inner secret. Unless this principle is maintained, all later attempts at education will only lead one more deeply into an endless maze.”

(Dr. Maria Montessori)

At IMSNR we believe that the experiences / opportunities a child has both at home and at school in the first six years are the most crucial because here his / her self-concept and his / her concept of the world and his / her place in it are set in stone. What he / she will attempt and whether or not he / she will succeed at it are profoundly influenced by these beliefs about his / herself. Although we as Montessori parents, teachers and students are living proof that changes can happen after this crucial period, it is more difficult as learning is now conscious rather than sub-conscious.

For this very reason we at IMSNR have taken great care and consideration in preparing a safe, positive, child-friendly environment together with a curriculum that provides your child with opportunities to learn and grow.

“A Unique Foundation to Exploring the World “

Your child will be introduced to all aspects of the Montessori curriculum PLUS a basic knowledge of Italian, French and Spanish! The staff are committed to pursuing excellence in our school by providing quality teaching and learning experiences as well as adding cultural diversity. We welcome parents and community involvement to assist every child to reach his / her own potential.

Research shows that children achieve greater things when, staff, parents and the community are actively involved in the teaching-learning process. We, therefore, extend an invitation to you to partner with us as we work to ensure your child achieves his / her full potential.

“We are here to offer to this life, which came into the world by itself, the means necessary for its development and having done that we must await this development with respect”.

(Dr Maria Montessori)

Every child is respected and treated as individuals and will learn in an environment of freedom. However, it is a freedom ***within limits*** to ensure the safety of all concerned. For, ultimately, every community member should be willing to accept full responsibility for their behaviour, their attitudes, their experiences, and in short for their lives. Once we have accepted this responsibility, the enormous reward that follows is the freedom to choose and create the type of person we wish to be, and the life we wish to lead.

“It is the child who makes the man, and no man exists who was not made by the child he once was.”

(Dr Maria Montessori)

The following information will help to make this year as smooth as possible for you and your child.

We would like to take this opportunity to once again, THANK YOU for joining the IMSNR family!!

So, what did you do at school today?

I am sure, just like most parents, when asking your child this question, you will hear the usual answer, “nothing.” Or possibly they tell you everyday that they did the same thing such as play dough or spooning beans. Don’t be alarmed. We assure you that your child is very busy at school doing a variety of learning activities designed to support his / her development. Often, young children have difficulty talking about what they do at school. They would have had the opportunity to do so many activities that they often cannot sort out the specifics. Sometimes it’s just that they don’t remember the name of the materials used, such as the trinomial cube, the metal insets, or the addition strip board. In addition to this difficulty you will notice that not many papers come home. This is because at this young age your children are working “hands on” perhaps writing letters in a sand tray or doing math with manipulative materials that will have no paper work to show you their progress.

So how can you find out what your child is doing in school? We suggest :

1. Ask your child questions that are more specific. “Did you do a counting lesson today? Did you build the tower or work with colours?”
2. Volunteer and when in the classroom ask your child to show you his / her favourite activity.
3. Set up a time to observe your child in class.
4. Read a Montessori book.
5. Set up an appointment for a formal conference if you prefer.
6. Play school with your child at home. Children will sometimes show you through their play what they are learning.
8. Be patient. In time you will notice your child’s development.

“Joy is the indication of internal growth.”

Dr. Maria Montessori

As stated earlier, children progress at a greater pace when they are provided with learning opportunities in the environment, together with the active participation of parents, guardians and others around them. Through years of teaching and having children of our own we would like to share a few fun, easy and not so time-consuming activities to do with your child.

- Perform an act of charity or extraordinary kindness.
- Ask your child to help you with dinner / baking cookies etc.
- Ask your child to draw something that they like, have it laminated and use it as a placemat.
- Plan a meal that is different to your culture, say Chinese, Mexican and discuss the meal / culture with your child.
- Read together books that touch the soul and fire the imagination.
- Visit a church or synagogue of a different faith than yours. Meet the rabbi, priest, or minister and learn as much as you can about this other faith.
- Take an adventure to a boatyard and learn what about different kinds of boats, shapes / sizes. Take a photograph of your child next to their favourite boat and put it on the refrigerator.
- Plant a garden, tree, some bulbs around your house.
- Choose a city somewhere in the world where you would like to visit and do some research like what language do the people there speak, foods eaten, traditional dress and so forth.

School hours

Monday to Friday 8.45am to 12.45pm

We offer a year round program - please refer to our calendar at the back of this book.
We also follow the Wake County holidays.

Admission

You would have received an Application Package and once all necessary forms and payments are received your child is guaranteed a place at IMSNR. However, there will be a trial period of 8 weeks. This is to ensure that your child's needs can and are being met at IMSNR. If for some reason the Directress' feels that we cannot meet your child's needs we will contact you to organise a parent conference to discuss. If you cannot make the appointment, you will be given **one** other opportunity. If you do not make either appointments, you will be given written notice that your child will be released in 5 days of your missed appointment. Similarly, should you decide that IMSNR is not for your child - we will require written notice, 60 days in advance of the release date and all payments up to date.

Arrival and Dismissal

Arrival : 8.45am - 9.00am
Dismissal : 12.30pm - 12.45pm

All academic programs begin at 9.00 am - please ensure that your child is at school by then as Circle Time starts promptly and interruptions can be disruptive. There will be a 15 minute arrival transition - 8.45am - 9.00am and, similarly a 15 minute departure transition - 12.30pm - 12.45pm. We ask that parents make this transition as smooth as possible by leaving / collecting their children promptly. Appointments can be made with the teachers for a conference to deal with any concerns you may have.

Only parents or legal guardians will be permitted to collect their child unless written consent is received prior to pick-up time.

Absence and Illness

Please inform us if your child will be absent.

Any communicable diseases need to be reported. Your child should not be brought to school if your child shows signs of :

1. Fever and/or vomiting – please keep your child at home for at least 24 hours until the fever and vomiting has **completely** stopped.
2. Runny nose if mucous is green which shows signs of infection.
3. Rash / spots – a note from your doctor is required stating that this is not a communicable disease.
4. Allergies / eczema – a doctor's note is required informing us of the condition.

If your child gets sick at school :

If your child ever feels ill, we will take him / her to a quiet place in the classroom and let him / her lay down or just sit quietly for a short period. If he / she appears to be fairly sick, or if after a brief stay he / she feels too ill to return to class activities, we will contact you to arrange for him / her to be picked up as soon as possible. Children with a fever of 103 degrees will automatically be sent home. We do understand that this may be difficult owing to work constraints yet all children will get ill from time to time. You will want to nominate a friend or relative on the Emergency Information form in case of emergencies. **ONLY** someone nominated by you and on record will be allowed to collect your child.

Please Note : *IMSNR does not carry medical insurance to cover students' accidental injuries or illnesses. Your child must be covered by your own personal insurance.*

Emergency care :

Most of our staff are trained in first aid and CPR. In the event of any medical situation that requires immediate medical attention, we will want your child to see a doctor right away. Please remember to keep your emergency information form up-to-date and inform the school **immediately** if there are any changes to your address, phone number or contact person when you're not available. We must be able to reach you at **ANY** time during the school day. If your child needs immediate medical attention, and you cannot be reached, your enrolment agreement authorizes us to seek medical care in your name. We will take your child to the emergency room you have nominated on the Emergency Information form. We will, however, continue our efforts to contact you.

Medication

Except under extraordinary situations, we prefer not to administer medication at school.

We, therefore, ask that you please **do not** send in any medication with your child, including aspirin or other over-the-counter drugs, except under a doctor's instructions as explained below.

Antibiotics and other medications should be scheduled so that doses are due during hours when the student is at home. When children are so ill as to require frequent medication, they probably shouldn't be in school. Our Policy is as follows :

When, in the opinion of your child's physician, it is necessary that medication be administered during school hours, a staff member will give it to your child in accordance with the following procedures :

- Any medication brought to school must be left with the staff and it will be locked up.
 - A completed "Permission to Administer Medication" form must be on record at IMSNR before the first day the medication is administered at school. Our staff members are prohibited from providing or administering any medication, including aspirin, to any student except as authorized by you as parent or guardian and the child's physician.
1. **Prescription medicines :** a completed "Permission to Administer Medication" form PLUS a "Physician's Statement" form must be on hand as well as the medicine to be administered which is clearly labelled with the child's name, dosage and frequency of the dose.
 - If medication is to be administered on an on-going basis, the "Permission to Administer Medication" should indicate the duration of treatment.
 - In cases involving long-term medication for chronic conditions, a new authorization form must be filed with the school each year in September. Any medication changes during the school year must be accompanied by a new medication form.
 - We can only administer oral medications.
 - We can accept only the appropriate dose for one day at a time. Medication will not be kept at school overnight, nor will containers of more than one day's dosage be accepted. The original bottle containing the medication must be clearly labelled with the student's name, medication contained, and the time(s) and amount(s) of dosage.

Medication contd

This policy applies to prescription and over-the-counter medications. A new authorization form must be completed for each episode of illness and each new medication. When having the prescription filled, you may request two bottles. If the medication is liquid, please do not dilute it with water.

- As parent (guardian), you are responsible for administering the first day's dosage of any new medication at home.
 - As parent (guardian), you are responsible for notifying the school in person or by telephone on the first morning a new medication is being brought in with the completed authorization form and physician's statement.
 - Whenever possible, medication schedules should be arranged to cause minimal interruption in the student's school day.
 - A copy of the form authorizing us to dispense medication may be obtained from the school office.
 - We will strictly adhere to this policy.
2. **Over-the-Counter Medication** : Absolutely no medications, including aspirin, Tylenol, cough remedies, or other over-the-counter medications will be given or allowed to be taken at school unless authorization is submitted in accordance with the above policy. Any medication sent without the appropriate completed authorization form will not be administered and will be sent home.

Dress Code

We suggest that children dress in outfits that are neat, clean, comfortable, and appropriate for school. They should also be in clothing that they can put on and fasten for themselves : pullover shirts, elastic waistbands, Velcro sneakers, etc. Young children usually cannot manage the shoulder fasteners found on overalls. This encourages independence.

Articles Not Allowed in School

We ask that children please do not bring in **toys**. They are most often lost, fought over, or broken. **Show and Tell** is scheduled every Friday - this is a chance for your child to bring in something from home that is appropriate to what we are learning in the classroom. For example, if our colour of the week is yellow - he / she can bring an item that is yellow. These will be placed on the Display Table and he / she will have an opportunity to **show and tell** at the end of that Friday. All other items will be confiscated and given to the parent / guardian at the end of the day.

Attendance

IMSNR is a five day, half day program. Regular attendance at school is one of the best ways to help ensure student success. Please ensure that your child arrives promptly so they can prepare for the school day to begin. If for some reason your child does miss school, please send in a note explaining the reason for the absence. Phone calls are not necessary unless your child will / has been out for several days.

We ask that you complete all necessary forms - more than one contact number is very important in case of emergency. Should the information change on any of these forms, it is vital that you notify us so we can make the necessary changes. Only persons noted on your forms will be allowed to collect your child / children from school.

Birthdays

Birthdays are especially important to children and IMSNR has a special birthday ceremony in which we tell the class the story of the child's life whilst he / she walks around the sun holding the globe. Each time around the sun symbolises a year of his / her life. Please send in a photograph of your child at each year of his / her life and a special story for each year. Your child would simply LOVE you to join us in this celebration, as well as other people in his / her life. To honour this day we suggest that you also bring a special snack - small muffins, mini cup cakes, cookies, etc. work well, but we do ask that you try to keep sugar to a minimum.

Birthday invitations : we request that you invite *ALL* the children in the classroom - at this age children cannot understand not being someone's friend and it promotes low self-esteem.

Supplies

We ask that you bring :

- an extra set of clothing, including socks, to be kept at school during the year, held in a one gallon zip-lock bag labelled with your child's name
- a light blanket for children who may need to nap

A supply list will be included in your enrollment package.

Your child will be provided with a IMSNR tote bag. This is to be used at all times and we prefer that you do not bring in your own bags.

Snack

A healthy snack will be provided by IMSNR daily with either water or milk. Please notify us of any special dietary needs / allergies so we can plan the snacks accordingly.

Lost and found

Even though we will make every effort to ensure that your child does not leave behind any items, we have designated a lost and found area in the "meet and greet" area. Please check these items regularly.

Family Conferences

At IMSNR we believe that parents and teachers need to work as a team to meet the needs of the children. It is, therefore, crucial for teachers and parents to establish and maintain close communication. Please feel free to ask questions or discuss anything related to your child's progress. We ask, however, that you understand that the teacher's responsibility during school is to the students. Morning arrival, especially, is a very sensitive period when the teachers are greeting each student and setting a calm, pleasant tone for the day. Interruptions need to be kept to a minimum. If you must speak with a teacher in the morning, please make arrangements to meet before school begins. Otherwise you can correspond via a note and the teachers will get back to you by phone or will send a note to set up a conference as needed.

Four family conferences will be scheduled over the year: in October (8 weeks from beginning of the year), January, April and July. Additional conferences will be scheduled upon request for any particular concerns.

Communication between home and school

During the school year the school will send home all sorts of letters, notes, newsletters, and announcements. Students will bring them home in their tote bags every day. They will be sent via email to non-custodial parents. Among them will be:

- Drawings, work done during the day, other papers that your child chooses to bring home and reports
- Flyers and announcements of upcoming special events
- The school newsletter - every week

Please make sure you check your child's tote every day, read, complete and return any necessary literature.

Communication with second families : Whenever parents are separated, divorced, or for some other reason not living at the same address, we want to keep both parents informed of their child's progress and school matters. An exception may be requested by a court order before the child enters school by either or both parents. This would need full consideration of the legal ramifications and other relevant matters, to the effect that dual communication is not needed, desired, or to be pursued. If granted, this exception (documented by a signed court order) would be noted in the child's permanent file and honoured as indicated.

- Invitations to school functions will be sent to both parents.
- Parent-teacher conferences : these will be joint conferences - teachers should not be asked to conduct separate conferences for each parent. It is important that we communicate the same thing to both parents at the same time, as this information / experience can never be duplicated exactly. If either parent is uncomfortable with scheduling joint conferences, he or she should contact the school to discuss the situation.
- Both parents are equally welcomed at all school events.
- Free and open communication among all parties is encouraged so that everyone is fully informed.

Parents' Days

IMSNR will hold a "parents' day" twice a year, in the fall and spring. Parents are invited to come to school for a unique opportunity to become a Montessori child and allow the children to become your teachers. Your own child will be sure to show you his or her favourite work.

In order to give your child your full attention, we encourage you to make child care arrangements for siblings, but also understand this may be difficult.

Volunteer

IMSNR believes in parent / guardian participation and we invite you to share your talents and special interests, such as a musical instrument that you play, a second language that you speak, a craft that you enjoy, or a field that you've studied. Please remember that all visitors and volunteers need to sign in and get a visitor's badge from the school office upon their arrival.

Celebrations

IMSNR will celebrate many traditions / festivals throughout the school year. These are some of the celebrations - (a complete list is on our calendar) :

- **New Families' Reception** : A reception is held for new families just before school reopens. This gives new parents / children an opportunity to meet the staff, other parents and most importantly, other children.
- **Cultural festivals** : culminating our on-going international studies unit, giving the children an opportunity to experience cultural diversity.
- **Thanksgiving** : A time for reflection, giving thanks, and remembering the story of the first Thanksgiving which will be retold. A special Thanksgiving celebration will be prepared.
- **Hanukkah and Christmas** : The stories of these two holidays are retold. Children will learn through rich cultural and artistic projects and activities. The children will perform a small concert for families to celebrate these events.
- **African-American History Month and Martin Luther King's Birthday** : A special month-long focus on the civil rights movement and Martin Luther King. Children will learn about the non-violent campaign for human rights, social justice, and the brotherhood and sisterhood of all humanity.
- **Grandparents' Day** : A traditional family event that occurs in January. IMSNR invites all Grandparents and special friends to share a morning with the children in the classroom.
- **Valentine's Day** : The children share valentines and explore the themes of love, family, and friendship.
- **President's Day** : We celebrate a bit of American history through the lives of George Washington and Abraham Lincoln.
- **Passover and Easter** : The stories of these two holidays are retold. Children will learn through rich cultural and artistic projects and activities.
- **Earth Day** : Celebrating the coming of spring and the importance of stewardship for the Earth. Children will be involved in different art and gardening projects as well as learning about extinct, endangered and threatened wildlife.
- **Founder's Day** : a celebration of the first anniversary of IMSNR as well as a time to reflect on the story of Dr. Montessori's work with the world's children - the history of Montessori method.
- **Graduation** : IMSNR celebrates the graduation of each child into a new year and especially into Kindergarten. The children have the opportunity to say good-bye in words and music, closing with the handing out of certificates of achievement.

Discipline

We follow the Montessori philosophy where respect is given at all times. In keeping with the true meaning of the word discipline, which is to teach, we prefer to model and encourage appropriate, kind, and considerate ways to behave in various situations. By using positive reinforcement whenever possible we are encouraging progress and acknowledge contributions, rather than focusing on the rules and the consequences for breaking them. Maria Montessori did not believe in humiliating a child by using a “naughty chair / corner”. Neither corporal punishment, nor physical or emotional intimidation, are permitted at IMSNR. At IMSNR we use distraction to prevent disruptive / inappropriate behaviour. If a child’s behaviour continues, the staff will observe and then arrange a parent - teacher conference to discuss and work together toward a solution.

Please note : If, after a parent - teacher conference and following the recommended solution to the problem, any child who repeatedly breaks the ground rules / policy or who on even one occasion endangers the health and safety of others, may be asked to leave the school by the Directress.

The work of a child is *play* and it is through play that children learn - in an environment that has freedom *within limits*. Our policy is one of :

R E S P E C T Responsibility for self and others
 Environment - respect for the environment and those around us
 Self - respect for self
 People - respect for others
 Enthusiasm - a joy of learning
 Care of ourselves and the environment
 Truth - honesty

Ground Rules (Classroom Rules) :

IMSNR has thoughtfully and carefully created a system of ground rules that is firm, fair, and consistent, at the same time loving, in order to help children maintain the school’s values and character. We ask that all children adhere and respect them to protect themselves as well as each other. Please review these rules with your child :

- Respect ourselves and each other - be kind and gentle to one another. Please remember that we need to treat others as we, ourselves wish to be treated. Grace and courtesy.
- Everyone has a right to privacy and concentration. Disturbing another child should be kept to a minimum.
- Everyone has a right to their personal belongings - we need to remember that anything that is not ours may not be touched without the owner’s permission.
- Everyone at IMSNR has the right to feel safe and secure - both physically and emotionally. Being angry or upset is acceptable as long as it does not hurt the feelings of another or is insulting / threatening to someone else or is physically abusive. Please talk to your teacher / adult.
- Respect the environment - all apparatus / activities must be performed in the appropriate manner.
- Responsibility for self and others - If something is accidentally lost or broken, please inform the teachers. Honesty is the best policy.

Children in this environment develop self-discipline, social responsibility, independence, creativity and be prepared academically. This is what Maria Montessori calls “a normalised child” - one who develops into a responsible and productive citizen.

“Let us leave the life free to develop within the limits of the good, and let us observe this inner life developing. This is the whole of our mission.”

(Dr Maria Montessori)

Evaluation of Student Progress

IMSNR's curriculum is carefully structured and sequenced and the teachers maintain precise and detailed records of each student's academic progress. Montessori Schools do not compare students against any standard or the performance of others in the class and do not grade. IMSNR will send home written narrative reports twice a year in December and June to review the children's development and discuss how the Montessori program is contributing to their individual growth.

Privacy of Student Files

All student files are confidential records and are kept secure from unauthorized access. Parents or guardians may have access to the child's file by written request to the office at least 24 hours in advance. The file will be viewed in the presence of IMSNR staff, and if there is a disagreement with any item in the file, a note may be inserted into the file with their comments. Parents / guardians must authorise IMSNR to supply a copy of the student's file to an outside professional, such as a psychologist or educational diagnostician.

Fire drills / Emergency

IMSNR will randomly conduct monthly fire drills.

- The alarm will be a special bell, which will ring continuously in the event of a fire or drill.
- When the bell rings the class will dismiss into the designated area and remain in their groups.
- The teachers will ensure that the room is empty and close the doors.
- The teachers will join the class outside the building, take role, and keep this record on file.
- Children and teachers are expected to remain grouped in the designated area until they return to class.

Re-enrollment

Re-enrollment at IMSNR is normally automatic, but is not guaranteed. Decisions are made by the Directress', based on an annual review of each child's progress - PILES, that is physical, intellectual, language, emotional and social development, any special needs (if applicable), along with the attitudes and values expressed by the child and parents. As always, our goal is to help each child and family find the perfect match between the student, home, and school. Re-enrollment packages will be sent out in June and must be completed and returned by July 1st. No child may re-enroll if there is an outstanding balance remaining on his / her account. Similarly, should you no longer wish to be enrolled at IMSNR, please advise us in writing by July 1st. This is to ensure that those wishing to return will be given a place.

Parent / Student Handbook Acceptance Sheet

I, _____, have read and fully understand the IMSNR parent / handbook and agree to the terms therein.

Signature

Date