

**AZALEA CITY MONTESSORI SCHOOL**

**MEMBER HANDBOOK**

**2014-2015**

*“The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind.”*

-Dr. Maria Montessori

*“Education is a natural process carried out by the child and is not acquired by listening to words but by experiences in the environment.”*

-Dr. Maria Montessori

## **Introduction**

This member handbook is intended to be a resource for families, employees, as well as community members, providing information regarding the policies and procedures of Azalea City Montessori Cooperative (ACM). The content of this handbook will be updated as ACM develops and evolves. As ACM is a conjoint project with Child Day Care Association Inc., please refer to their parent handbook for additional information regarding policies and procedures.

## **General Information**

Azalea City Montessori Cooperative is an emerging, member-governed, nonprofit organization. ACM is governed and directed by a nonprofit Board as well as parent members. ACM came to be as a result of the efforts of parents and teachers seeking an alternative educational option for our children. ACM is currently seeking a 501c3 charitable designation.

ACM is a collaborative project in conjunction with Child Day Care Association, Alabama’s oldest continuously operating childcare organization. Child Day Care Association Inc. is located in the Church Street Historic District of downtown Mobile, and operates in the Nina Nicks Joseph Child Development Center, Mobile’s premier DHR-licensed daycare.

## **Philosophy**

## **Mission Statement**

The mission of ACM is to promote and provide an authentic, affordable Montessori education as well as childcare in the City of Mobile, Alabama. All of the projects ACM undertakes must meet the following criteria: provide high-quality Montessori education, be as affordable as possible, and be governed and directed by our volunteer Board and parent members.

## **Goals and Objectives:**

In addition to the preschool classroom, which is set to open in May of 2014 in the Nina Nicks Joseph Child Development Center, we hope to open an elementary classroom in a nearby location for the 2015-2016 school year.

Other future projects include a Montessori toddler community and an extensive parent education program.

## **The specific educational goals and objectives of ACM are as follows:**

Help each child realize his or her full potential

Cultivate a love for learning, and the creative process, along with a passion for knowledge

Foster independence and enhance self-confidence in each individual student

To create a peaceful, supportive, nurturing learning environment and community for students, parents, and staff grounded in respect and compassion for others

Cultivate a strong sense of community between members united by a shared vision and goals for their children

To provide a strong academic foundation for future learning

To promote an enduring sense of wonder in the child

### **Member Rights and Responsibilities**

As a nonprofit membership organization, ACM is governed by a volunteer Board of Directors and our members. All members have rights and responsibilities, which are governed by our bylaws.

### **Board of Directors**

Our founding Board includes the following parent volunteers:

Angela Fedor- *President*

Jesslyn Fox- *Vice President*

Ellen Tynes- *Secretary*

Micah Wheeler- *Treasurer*

### **Advisory Board**

We are actively building an advisory board of experienced Montessorians and experts in the fields of education and child development.

### **Membership**

Membership is open to any family with a child enrolled in one of our programs. Members consist of any family with a child enrolled in one of our programs who is in good standing. Members select our governing Board each year and help determine how funds are spent. Each family is entitled to one vote on all matters open to member voting.

### **Rights**

Vote to elect the Board of Directors at the annual meeting

Vote on use of excess funds at the end of fiscal year

Attend and address the Board at monthly business meetings

Serve on administrative committees, which directly influence classroom and organizational operation

### **Responsibilities:**

Pay tuition in full and on time

Complete 8 hours per year of fundraising volunteer hours

Complete 4 hours per month of classroom volunteer hours. This includes but is not limited to

Lunch/teacher meeting shifts, classroom observation, accompanying field trips or special

Activities, assisting teacher with preparation of materials

Attend one parent education session per year

Serve on one administrative committee per year including Fundraising, Classroom Materials Committee, Curriculum, Community Outreach, and Grievance committees.

Members will be responsible for providing a high-nutrient snack on a rotating basis. (12 times per month). Members will be notified of any student food allergies. As food preparation is considered to be a valuable learning activity such items do not need to cut up (e.g. washed, but unpeeled carrots, washed but unpeeled cucumbers are appropriate choices). Candy and other highly sugared foods are not appropriate and prohibited.

## **Programs**

In keeping with the tenants of the educational philosophy of Dr. Maria Montessori, ACM offers a truly child-centered, multi-sensory environment. The structure and ground rules of each program are based on fundamental Montessori principles, such as respect for others and the classroom environment. The materials offered in the classroom allow for hands-on, intrinsically motivated learning. The classroom has a multi-age grouping, in order to encourage self-lead learning and to promote adaptive social development. Within this structure, each child is able to learn at his or her own pace, and older children can provide assistance to those who are younger and serve as models to them. As this is a cooperative project with Child Day Care Association, Inc. the Montessori classroom operates within Alabama DHR guidelines at all times.

### ***Preschool and Kindergarten***

ACM primary classroom operates Monday-Friday from 8 a.m. – 3 p.m. beginning May 1, 2014. Children requiring early morning or afternoon care are invited to enroll in an extended care program with ACM's partner, Child Day Care Association. The primary class will be instructed by a Montessori certified teacher.

### ***Elementary***

ACM plans to open an Elementary classroom in downtown Mobile for the 2015-2016 school year. ACM's vision includes a co-operative group of parent volunteers including one who is currently earning a Montessori elementary credential. ACM envisions an intimate learning environment where children are able to pursue their own interests while developing a sound academic foundation. ACM's foresees a practical life program that incorporates frequent student-initiated and student-planned walking fieldtrips to the many learning opportunities downtown including museums, music venues, local businesses, halls of government, as well as the City's natural and working waterfront. The school day will include time for art, outdoor exploration, as well as free play during recess. As classroom hours will be spent on schoolwork,

homework will be kept to a minimum. The Elementary program will also be lead by a Montessori-certified teacher. ACM encourages all parents to participate in making this vision a reality!

### **Enrollment**

The classroom will operate through a management agreement between the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative and Child Day Care Association Inc. (which operates at the Nina Nicks Joseph Center). When you enroll your child in the Montessori classroom, your family becomes a member of the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative with the abovementioned rights and responsibilities, and your child will be enrolled as a student of Child Day Care Association.

### **Eligibility**

The Montessori primary classroom is open to any child between the ages of 2.5 and 6 years old that exhibits social, emotional, and developmental readiness. Elements of readiness include being toilet independent, an ability to communicate verbally, some amount of impulse control as well as a capacity to follow directions. Readiness will be determined by a Montessori-certified lead teacher during the interview process. Some children are ready as young as 2.5 but the majority of children are ready closer to 3 years old. Enrollment is on-going throughout the year, on a case-by-case basis.

### **Enrollment Process**

1. Fill out the Azalea City Montessori Cooperative membership application
  2. Contact ACM to arrange a classroom tour and entrance interview.
  3. Submit your \$100 Membership/supply fee to Azalea City Montessori Coop. Once received, you are welcome to register your child at Nina Nicks immediately, or added to the waitlist if one forms.
  4. Complete enrollment paperwork at Nina Nicks Joseph and submit a \$25 registration fee.
- Yearly membership/supply fees are used to purchase materials for the classroom and help support training for our teachers. Checks can be made payable to Azalea City Montessori Cooperative and either delivered in person during the interview or mailed to:  
57 S Hallett St. Mobile, AL 36604. You may also submit your yearly membership/supply fee via secure PayPal

### **Waitlist**

When no openings in the classroom are available, children will be placed on a waitlist list. In the event of an opening, charter members will receive preference for their younger children if a waitlist list forms at the time they become eligible for the Montessori classroom.

### **Tuition**

Tuition agreements are between Child Day Care Association Inc. and individual families\*\*

Tuition for the Primary Montessori classroom (ages 3-6) located at Nina Nicks is as follows:

Preschool/Kindergarten (8-3pm)

5 Days/wk – \$110/wk

3 days/wk – \$75/wk

2 days/wk – \$55/wk

Extended care (7-8am, 3-6pm) – \$30/wk

*Scholarships are available. For more information, please contact ACM.*

\*\*Child Day Care Association Inc. has several programs housed in the Nina Nicks Joseph building. The only program ACM is involved in at Nina Nicks is the Montessori classroom. Please contact Nina Nicks @ (251) 441-0845 for an accurate tuition rate schedule and further information about their traditional daycare and preschool classrooms.

Please note that the price of tuition includes high quality meals

## **General School Information**

### **Daily Routine/Schedule:**

The following outline illustrates the general structure of the school day. The daily routine is based on the needs of the children and when necessary, changes will be made accordingly to best serve the student population.

### **Discipline:**

ACM implements discipline practices grounded in mutual respect, cooperation, and empowerment. When a student is struggling to meet ACM's expectation of positive conduct, the staff and family will make every effort to try to work collaboratively toward a solution.

### **General Classroom Guidelines:**

The following are some basic expectations we have for all members of our community in order to create a safe, supportive learning environment. These will be reviewed in greater detail during orientation.

Walk in the classrooms and hallways.

Use "indoor voices," refrain from yelling across the classroom.

Practice kindness toward others

Be respectful of concentration, by taking care to not interrupt others who are working.

Respect other students' personal belongings

Work together to care for the classroom by returning materials to their proper place on shelves, and by working with the materials as they are intended to be used.

### **Field Trips**

Parents will be notified in advance of any upcoming field trips as well as any associated fees. Parents will be encouraged to assist in some way with planned field trips if able to do so. A signed field trip permission form will be needed for a student to participate in the field trip.

### **Clothing**

Since child independence and self-sufficiency is promoted in the Montessori classroom, parents are asked to ensure that their child is dressed in clothes that are easy to take on and off (e.g. elastic waist band). At the start of the school year, parents are expected to bring two complete changes of seasonally appropriate clothing to be kept at school. These include pants, shirts, underwear, and socks. Please label all articles of clothing including jackets, hats, gloves, etc. Washable and durable clothing are recommended as students

often work with materials in the classroom that may result in staining or soiling of their clothing (e.g. painting, gardening). Please have your child wear closed-toed shoes only. Flip-flops and jewelry are prohibited in the classroom.

### **Parent-teacher Conferences**

Parent teacher conferences are regularly scheduled twice a year, in the fall and in the spring. In addition, a parent may request a conference with a teacher at any time throughout the year, and the teacher may schedule additional conferences on an as needed basis. Overall, communication between parents and teachers is strongly encouraged!

### **Show and Tell**

Show and Tell will take place on a weekly basis, each Friday. Books and other educational material that might be of interest to all students are encouraged. Any items found in nature are also appropriate items for show and tell. Please do not bring toys to show and tell.

### **Absences**

ACM should be notified, preferable in the morning, when a student is going to be absent from school.

### **Orientation ???????**

Orientation will be held one week prior to the start of the school year, during which time new families will be introduced to the classroom procedures and guidelines. This is done to ensure that all students are familiar with classroom guidelines and feel comfortable with the classroom, materials, and with the teacher. This will also provide an opportunity for returning students to reacclimatize themselves to the classroom environment if an extended break occurred (e.g. not enrolled for the summer). There is also a required parent orientation meeting and interview at the beginning of each year to explain the structure of the student's day, review and discuss school policies, as well as address any parental questions or concerns.

**Parent Education:** ACM is working toward developing a series of parent education sessions, which will be offered throughout the school year. The purpose of such sessions will be to familiarize the parents with the Montessori philosophy and discuss ways to support learning at home. These opportunities are also intended to enhance the sense of community within the school. Parental suggestions of topics are more than welcome! Through out the school year we will hold regular community and committee meetings to discuss the state and future of ACM. These meetings are open to all friends and families interested in our school community. All meetings will be announced through our newsletters, website, and on facebook. We greatly value parent input and suggestions and desire close collaboration between ACM and parents in all endeavors.

### **Visitation Policy**

We encourage parents to come observe our classroom! All visitors are required to sign in the classroom visitor logbook and record the date and time of arrival, as well as that of departure once his or her visit is complete. We encourage all members to come and observe in the classroom when able to do so. Please note that having a visitor in the classroom can interfere with the classroom atmosphere, especially in terms of concentration, we therefore ask that visitors remain seated in the place where the teacher

suggests when observing. To the extent possible, all visitors should refrain from engaging in conversation or activity with the children unless otherwise discussed with the teacher. We ask that all visitors respect the children and the classroom. During parent volunteer hours, the teacher will direct the volunteer to the appropriate activities and provide guidance as to appropriate activities, and assistance. We look forward to working with you!

## QUESTIONS

The learning process e.g. introduction of concept through presentation, processing, and mastery, i.e. teaching this to another student.

Evaluation of student progress. Teacher keeps track of individual learning for each child, making sure each is progressing. The teacher maintains careful notes and documentation on each child in accordance with the traditional Montessori curriculum. Evaluation of progress is based on the individual growth of each child.

Curriculum areas (e.g. practical life) They also have a supplement “a glimpse into the day of a Namaste toddler” found on website or hard copy from school office.

Slogan “Honoring the Light in Every Child...”

Orientation for summer and fall? When?

ACM Newsletter how often??

Lending Library?? f videos, DVDs, and

Books that describe the Montessori philosophy of education and are a great resource for current as well as prospective parents.

Discipline policy?

Withdrawal Procedure?

ACM newsletters?

Multi-aging ratios and waiting list?

Breakfast and Lunch included in tuition?

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