

Dear Montessori Parents,

On behalf of the faculty, staff and Board of Trustees, I would like to thank you for entrusting your child's education to the Wyoming Valley Montessori School. My staff and I are committed to validating that trust by providing a safe, healthy and academically challenging environment, one in which your child is sure to flourish. We begin our 47th year with the same enthusiasm and commitment to the Montessori principles on which our school is anchored. At the same time, we know that as a school community, we must continue to grow to meet the many challenges of the 21st century. Our commitment to develop the type of learner who will have the vision and skills to meet any challenge has not and will not ever waver!

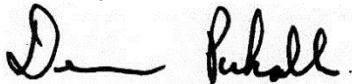
Accredited by both the American Montessori Society and the Middle States Association of Schools, the Wyoming Valley Montessori School has a track record of developing students who are not only academically excellent but who are curious about the environment in which they live. Students are encouraged to be independent, self-confident and take on the role of leadership when appropriate. This foundation, based on the teachings of Maria Montessori, will lead to a life-long love of learning, an appreciation for the environment and a commitment to helping the community.

To fulfill our mission of being a truly exceptional school, we must all work together as a community to build a strong bond between the home and school – one that is essential for student success. This being said, it is vital that you become as involved, as much as possible, in the school community so as to help your child thrive both in and out of the classroom.

I am confident that by working together we can meet any challenge, achieve our common goals and help your child to reach their fullest potential. Please remember, our doors are always open if you have any questions during the school year. Don't hesitate to stop by.

On behalf of the school I would like to welcome you and your family to the Wyoming Valley Montessori School. We hope we will be a valued part of your family's life for your time here at WVMS

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Dennis J. Puhalla". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "D" and a long horizontal stroke.

Dennis J. Puhalla  
Head of School

# **School and Program Structure**

## **History and Governance**

The school was founded in 1970 by a group of parents dedicated to the educational principles of Dr. Maria Montessori. An enrollment that began with 20 pre-school children working with one teacher has grown to over 125 children, aged 18 months to 12 years, and a staff of around 30. Head teachers receive Montessori teacher training and certification through American Montessori Society or American Montessori Institute and licensure from the Pennsylvania Dept. of Education and/or Dept. of Public Welfare. All staff members participate in ongoing professional development and evaluation.

WVMS is operated by a non-profit corporation, Wyoming Valley Montessori Association, Inc., and governed by a Board of Trustees elected by the members of the corporation. Voting membership is granted to all custodial parents and legal guardians of enrolled students. The Annual Meeting and election of directors and officers is held in May. The Board sets general policy for the school and supports the operational management and educational direction of the Head of School. Board and staff regularly review the school's long range goals so that our curriculum and policies reflect the highest standards of educational practice and the needs of our community.

Financial records are reviewed by an outside accounting firm. Copies of these reviews and monthly financial statements are available upon request to the Head of School. Minutes of the meetings of the Board of Trustees are posted online at our home page, [wvms.org](http://wvms.org), under the Docs & Materials link.

## **Accreditation**

WVMS is accredited by the American Montessori Society and the Middle States Association of Colleges and Schools, Commission on Elementary Schools. The school is licensed by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, Private Academic Schools Division, and the Pennsylvania Department of Human Services.

## **Toddler Program**

Toddler Program: 18 to 36 Month Olds

The Toddler Program allows very young children to be together in a positive, productive, educational environment. It offers them the opportunity to establish social relationships and learn how to meet and solve problems when they arise. The ratio of adults to children is kept low (1:5) so that toddlers feel comfortable away from parents. There is active physical play, and there are times of quiet concentration. Expressing ideas and needs, listening and remembering, sensory development and coordination, and following verbal directions are important elements of the program. Toileting and personal care are

also addressed. A sense of accomplishment and self-worth begins here and continues throughout the entire Montessori curriculum. Children entering the Toddler Program must be 18 months by September 1.

## **Primary Program**

The goal of Montessori early childhood education is to cultivate the child's natural desire to learn. The Primary Program has been designed to meet the young child's social, academic and emotional needs. Three year mixed age grouping allows children at varying stages of development to learn from one another and gives continuity from year to year. The materials in the classroom are appealing to 3 to 6 year olds and are grouped into distinct areas related to practical life activities, sensorial exercise, mathematics, language arts, and cultural studies. Because young children are naturally curious about the world around them, they are introduced to geography and the customs of other countries and to methods of scientific exploration. The visual arts, crafts, creative music, movement, and dramatics are woven into the classroom schedule. Non-competitive, child centered physical activities are presented at recess time. Field trips are chosen to complement the curriculum.

Third year Primary students, those who are five years old as of September 1, are considered Kindergarten students and follow basic work contracts. Art, P.E., foreign language, library and music classes with specialist teachers begin in the third year.

Primary children must be fully toilet-trained by the start of school. Staffing does not allow for children wearing either diapers or pull-up training pants or who need regular assistance in the bathroom.

## **Elementary Program**

In the Elementary Program, the classroom continues to promote cooperative learning, responsibility, and social interaction. Self-motivation and independence are promoted in an engaging and challenging academic atmosphere. The guidance of the teachers serves as a source of inspiration and encouragement. Montessori elementary education encourages students to do their own research, analyze, and come to their own conclusions - in short, to trust their own ability to think and solve problems. Teachers prepare individual student work contracts weekly for both classroom work and homework. Children learn to manage work time while advancing at their own pace. Different learning styles are recognized and information is presented in a variety of ways in individual or small group lessons.

Classroom resources, a mix of advanced Montessori hands-on-materials and traditional resources are grouped into three main subject areas: language arts, mathematics, and cultural studies, which include the historical, geographical, and physical study of our world. Students attend foreign language, music, art, library, and physical education classes given by specialist teachers. Foreign language conversation, grammar, and

vocabulary are complemented by multi-cultural studies. Students sing in Music, performing for the school community and in public. Art instruction is presented with an interdisciplinary approach that places equal emphasis on creative expression and visual literacy. Library use and research skills are taught. Field trips are planned to enrich academic studies and enhance the sense of community within each class.

The transition from 6-9 to 9-12 Elementary is characterized by the introduction of academic material and concepts at increasingly higher degrees of abstraction and complexity, with increased emphasis placed on the integration of information. Children learn to be good and caring citizens. Classroom community meetings are a forum for both compliments and concerns, training young people in successful conflict resolution and fostering a sense of interdependence as well as independence.

## **Admissions Policy**

WVMS admits students without regard to race, color, gender, religion affiliation, or national or ethnic origin. The Head of School's decision is final in the application process.

## **General Information**

### **Class Placement**

In an effort to create model educational environments true to the philosophy of Dr. Montessori, children are grouped in multi-age classes with as even a distribution as possible of gender, age, and/or current academic level.

Classroom placement is determined by a committee comprised of the Head of School and the Director of Admissions. All parent concerns and requests must be sent to the Director of Admissions in writing, at the time of contract renewal, for consideration in this process. While all such requests will be considered, the School cannot guarantee that they will be honored, due to the complexity of the placement process. Parents will be notified of their child's class placement prior to the beginning of the school year.

### **Student Phase-In**

The first week of each year is known as Phase-In, a time of gradual introduction to the school environment. Shorter classes are scheduled for all students, both new and returning. Regularly scheduled classes begin after the acclimation period. This careful attention early in the year helps children adjust to school routines and feel safer and more secure. All new students enrolling in the Fall also start with a phase-in. Parents are

welcome to stay in the building during phase-in sessions. Childcare is not offered during Phase-In Week.

AM Childcare opens	7:30 a.m.
Toddler & Primary AM Classes	9:00 a.m. - 11:30 a.m.
Toddler & Primary AM/PM Classes	9:00 a.m. - 3:00 p.m.
Elementary Class	8:30 a.m. - 2:45 p.m.
Primary Extended Morning Care	11:30 a.m. - 12:30 p.m.
Toddler Extended Morning Care	11:30 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.
PM Childcare	2:45 p.m. - 5:30 p.m.
Toddler & Primary Early Dismissal	11:30 a.m.
Elementary School Early Dismissal	11:45 a.m.

## Visitors

All visitors including parents must check in at the school office before entering the classroom areas. A sign-in log must be completed, and then a “visitor” or “volunteer” pass will be issued.

## Parent Orientation

Back-to-School Night is Thursday, September 7, 2017. All parents, new and returning, should attend. Staff, Trustees, and Parents’ Association volunteers will welcome families. Teachers will present important information about the coming school year. This event is just for parents; childcare will be available with advance reservation.

## Parent Education Classes

We will be holding several parent education meetings throughout the year. You as the parent are requested to attend at least two of these information sessions. We will be discussing specific information about child development, Montessori principles, philosophy and educational methods. We will be bringing you all together as groups, as well as having you work with your child’s teacher in their specific environment. Some examples of the parent education classes include Back-to-School Night and Parent Night. The planned topics will be posted in advance.

## Arrival and Dismissal

Parents should always park in our lot at arrival times and escort children to their classrooms or pull up to the Gate to drop off older students. **Do not use the Market Street entrance, which is locked at all times.** Only district school buses may drop off and pick up along Market Street. While access to Childcare is available from 7:30 a.m., all other doors are locked except from five minutes before until five minutes after class

arrival and dismissal times. The Great Room and Market Street entrance doors are locked during the school day but monitored by camera at all times.

Children who arrive late miss an important part of the class day. Arrival and dismissal times should be closely followed. Not only is promptness important in a child's life, but tardiness is disruptive to classes in session, and children who arrive or are picked up late can feel awkward. **Students arriving at the school after classes have started must proceed to the office to receive a tardy slip to gain entrance to the classroom.**

If parents are late for pick-up at dismissal time, children will be taken to Childcare, and parents will be charged in accordance with applicable billing rates. Since the time before class is needed for teacher preparation, early arrivals should join Childcare until classrooms open.

Any change to a child's regular dismissal routine as provided via the Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pickup form within ParentsWeb must be made in writing to the teacher/office or input in ParentsWeb's Periodic Review webform. Telephoned changes of dismissal will be accepted only in the event of an emergency. Phone calls are not desired as authorization for release of a student to a person not listed on the Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pickup form. For our students' protection, we will not release a child to anyone other than a parent or authorized person so listed nor allow any child to ride in a car driven by anyone other than a parent or an authorized person without a parent's written permission.

Because we must know the whereabouts of our students at all times, parents who pick up before regular dismissal time must notify either the Head Teacher or the school office of the child's departure. If a child leaves early and is brought back to school to be dismissed as usual, parents must directly notify the Head Teacher or the school office of the child's return.

## **Attendance and Absences**

Students are expected to attend school daily. On the day of the absence the parent must call the school office by 10:00 a.m. to indicate the reason for the student's absence. This procedure should be followed each day. If there is a pro-longed illness one phone-call with specific dates will be sufficient. Absences not cleared within 24 hours will be marked truant.

The attendance definitions are:

Excused Absence - Absence followed by receipt of a statement that documents an acceptable reason for the absence.

Unexcused Absence - Absence followed by receipt of a statement that does not document an acceptable reason for the absence.

Truancy - Absence for which the school received no phone excuse within 24 hours of the child's return to class.

For the purpose of the Attendance and Absence Policy, three (3) lateness's to school can equal (1) absence. Lateness is excused only in the case of a doctor's appointment that cannot be scheduled after school hours or other extenuating circumstances.

Examples of excused absences include: 1) personal illness; 2) funeral; 3) required legal appearance; 4) family emergency; 5) prior approved absence which has been deemed beneficial for the student by the school administration. Examples of unexcused absences include vacations and missing the bus. Please note that these examples do not include all possibilities. Parents/guardians are encouraged to plan family trips and vacations outside of the school year or on breaks.

Our school follows the Pennsylvania Department of Education's recommended policy for unlawful absences. Habitual truancy negatively impacts a child's school performance and increases the likelihood of juvenile delinquency. An intensive and timely response to truancy is critical in those cases where a clear pattern of habitual truancy is evident. Please refer to [www.education.pa.gov.us](http://www.education.pa.gov.us) for policy.

Truancy letters will be sent by the school office to parents/guardians of students who are absent for three days and who do not provide statements documenting acceptable reasons for the absences or if absences are unexcused. Habitual truancy will result in letters sent to the parents/guardians, Magisterial District Judge and/or Children and Youth.

If your child attends only three days of the week, there may be some school events or classroom activities scheduled on days when your child does not attend. Your teacher will notify you in advance if your child may participate. Since maximum ratios of students to adults are maintained at all times in the classrooms, you may be asked to accompany your child and/or to attend only for the duration of the special event.

## **Change of Address or Telephone Number**

Immediately report any change in a mailing address or telephone number to the school office by note or by directly updating on ParentsWeb. Also, please notify the school if you will be away from home for an extended period of time and provide the name of the person caring for your child.

## **Parking**

Private cars should use the school parking lot. For your safety, please enter the lot from Market Street and exit via the driveway next to the Upper Elementary Annex out to Chestnut Street (a one-way street that goes back to Market Street). Please be considerate of other parents by not blocking the flow of traffic into and out of the lot. Unattended cars must be parked in a marked pull in space and locked. Please do not leave your

children or other precious valuables unattended in your car while it is parked in the school parking lot. WVMS cannot be responsible for any vandalism or thefts that may occur.

## Bus Transportation

Parents of children Kindergarten-aged and older may arrange transportation through their local school districts (see contact information below). Buses bringing students to WVMS are under the jurisdiction of local school districts that have contracted with private bus companies. Contact the district transportation office if you have a problem with a schedule or a driver. While riding a school bus, WVMS students must follow the school district's and/or bus company's rules of conduct.

Any change to a child's regular bus dismissal must be made in writing to the teacher. **It is the parent's responsibility to notify the school district transportation office or driver whenever the child will not be riding on the bus.** A district's insurance does not cover pupils from outside the district. Therefore, students may not ride on any buses except those from the district in which they live unless the receiving driver agrees and has written permission from the parents.

Crestwood Area	(570) 474-9512, Ext. 340
Dallas Area	(570) 675-5201, Ext. 229
Greater Nanticoke Area	(570) 735-5066
Hanover Area	(570) 831-2303, Ext. 503
Lake Lehman	(570) 675-2165, Ext. 2546
Northwest Area	(570) 542-4126
Pittston Area	(570) 654-2415 or (570) 655-4105
Wilkes-Barre Area	(570) 826-7116 or (570) 826-7188
Wyoming Area	(570) 655-3733, Ext. 2346
Wyoming Valley West	(570) 288-6551, Ext. 10801

## Required Forms

Depending on program level, certain forms must be submitted online through RenWeb's ParentsWeb Online Enrollment process before a child can be admitted to class:

- Enrollee Information (All students, yearly)
- Publicity Release (All students, yearly)
- Household Information (All students, yearly)
- Grandparent Information (All students, yearly)
- Emergency Contacts and Authorized Pickup (All students, yearly)
- Medical and Health Information (All students, yearly)
- Pennsylvania State Book Request (Kindergarten & Elementary students, yearly)
- Medical Release and Parental Permissions (All students, yearly)
- Extra Services (All students, yearly)



- Department of Human Services Agreement (All students, every six months)

Other forms need to be downloaded from ParentsWeb and submitted prior to the first day of class:

- Private Physician's Report (Kindergarten & Elementary students, yearly)
- Private Dentist's Report (Kindergarten & Elementary students, yearly)
- Child Health Report (All students, yearly)
- WVV School District Emergency Information Record (Kindergarten & Elementary students, yearly)
- WVV School District Health History (Kindergarten students, yearly)

\*NOTE: Updated immunization records provided by Physician are also required for all students yearly. There is no standard form for this requirement.

## **Student Health**

Wyoming Valley West School District provides nursing services bi-weekly. The WVV nurse maintains annual records of school-aged children's height, weight and vision. Hearing is checked in Kindergarten and grades 1, 2 and 3. Toddler and Primary students have the option to receive vision screening. Teaching staff are certified in First Aid Basics by the Center for Public Safety Training.

PA State Law requires school-aged children's immunizations be documented. Students Kindergarten age and older must meet these requirements to attend school. Pennsylvania's school immunization requirements can be found in 28.Pa.CODE CH.23 (School Immunization). Contact your healthcare provider or call 1-877-PA-HEALTH for more information.

The school requires parents of Toddler and Primary students below Kindergarten age who have not received recommended immunizations to sign an exemption form and waiver. Please contact the school office for more information.

Do not send your child to school on days when any of the following symptoms are present: fever (temperature over 99 degrees), rash, persistent hacking cough, discolored or heavy discharge from the nose or mouth, diarrhea, nausea, vomiting, sore throat, or red eye accompanied by any discharge. Parents will be contacted if a child complains of or staff becomes aware of any of these conditions. Any case of a communicable condition or disease, such as pink eye, lice, or chicken pox, should be reported to the school immediately. With head lice, a "no nits" policy prohibits children from returning to class after treatment until examined and passed as nit-free. By law, any suspected child abuse will be reported.

## **Medication**

Any medication to be taken regularly by a student at school must be ordered by a physician and supplied by the parent. Ask your doctor to sign a clearly written order. Parents must sign the medication log in the school office and give the medication directly to the staff member to administer it. Only a 1-day dosage of any over-the-counter or prescription medication not given on a regular basis will be accepted by the school each day and only with a parent's written authorization.

## **Accidents or Illness**

Parents are notified immediately in the event of any serious accident or illness. The school office must have accurate, contact information. Complete the required Online Enrollment forms prior to the first day of phase-in. Notify the office immediately if any of your telephone contact numbers change. If parents cannot be reached, the school will contact any other authorized individual named for the child. We suggest that all parents, prior to the start of school, discuss their emergency back up plans with the family, friends, or neighbors identified as contact persons.

## **Student Behavior and Discipline**

One of the goals of the Montessori program is to help the child reach a level of inner discipline. Discipline is achieved by directing the child towards a meaningful or engaging activity. When the child is engaged with or concentrating on a task of his or her choice, he or she is in essence showing disciplined behavior. Discipline is not a matter of the adult controlling the child, but rather of the child directing his or her own energy into productive, practical tasks. When the child is busy with a satisfying task, he or she does not engage in antisocial behavior.

Besides providing the proper environment for keeping a child constructively engaged, the Montessori classroom has ground rules set up to protect individual rights and to preserve the classroom cohesion and order. The rules are easy to understand and are few in number for the young child to grasp. When an individual's rights have been infringed upon or an action is disorderly or unsafe, the adult takes positive steps for correcting the actions. The adult acts not out of anger or an authoritarian posture, but in an effort to avoid power struggles and in an effort to teach a concept to the child that the child may not grasp. Often "misbehavior" is a result of the child having not arrived at an understanding of the appropriate behavior or having not arrived at the developmental stage that allows the child to control his or her own impulses. The Montessori philosophy of education forbids the corporal or physical punishment of a child, as well as verbal abuse or humiliation. Threats are not used as a method of controlling a child's behavior. Disciplinary action may involve:

- Positive example by the teacher.
- Natural and logical consequences.
- Reiterating the rule objectively (i.e. "Pencils are for writing on paper, not the table.")

- Counseling with the child (i.e. “It’s okay to be angry but not okay to throw things.”)
- Set specific limitations for the child (i.e. Instead of “Don’t mistreat the book!” Show the child how to handle a book. “Look how carefully I am turning the page, and when I’m finished I will put it gently on the shelf.”)
- Providing a concrete consequence for an action (i.e. “If you choose to throw the puzzle pieces, you may not use the puzzles for the whole day.” – teacher would remove the puzzles if necessary.)
- Time in the “Peace Area” of the room to sit by quietly by oneself and gain control. (The Peace Area is a corner of the room which contains peaceful pictures, books about peace and cooperation, and soft music.)
- Removal from the classroom under supervision. This step would be reserved for defiant, disorderly, violent, or persistent misbehavior that disturbs or causes harm for others.

The teaching of self-discipline (responsibility for a person’s own actions) is a goal of the Wyoming Valley Montessori School. To ensure that students exhibit appropriate behavior and performance, it is the school’s responsibility to implement a program for teaching a system of essential rules and to administer just and constructive corrective measures. Should corrective measures be necessary, the following will be considered:

- Student’s age
- Ability-functioning level
- Seriousness of the offense
- Frequency of the inappropriate behavior
- Circumstances and intent – including family circumstances and/or home environment situations
- Potential effect of the misconduct on the school environment
- Relationship of the behavior to any disabling condition

There is no list of rules that can be all-inclusive. Anytime student behavior is disruptive, illegal or inconsiderate of others, the student will be subject to disciplinary action. These rules apply while in school or on school property, on school-sponsored field trips, and while in attendance at extra curricular activities that a direct relationship exists between the conduct of the student and the school’s educational function.

The first offense will result in counseling by staff and notification of parents. The second offense will result in immediate notification of parents and a parent-teacher conference to come up with a solution for the problem. The same disciplinary action holds true for profanity or vulgar language, inappropriate touching, bullying, and deliberate abuse/breaking of individual or school property. If a child must be removed from the classroom 3 times, the child will be suspended for one school day. The parents, teacher, and a school official will meet to come up with a corrective plan of action.

If a child must be removed from the classroom for a fourth time, a pediatric evaluation is required to rule out physiological sources of the problem. A suspension is required to

take care of this evaluation. Upon obtaining a medical/psychological evaluation and counseling, a specific time frame will be set for correcting the behavior. If the behavior is not corrected within the set time frame, the child will be removed from school.

If behavior seems to be a result of a physical or psychological condition, the teacher, director, and parents will work together to determine what professional sources of help might be consulted. Parents will be notified of any behavior, which is unusual or atypical for their child, or which is unusual or atypical for the developmental stage the child is in.

Behavioral challenges must be managed by medical and/or counseling therapies in order to stay in school. The family, child, and school must all cooperate together to change the behavior affecting the student's ability to learn.

Unusually violent or unusually inappropriate behaviors may result in immediate suspension or expulsion at the discretion of the Head of School.

## **Childcare**

Childcare Contact Phone Number (570) 262-8819  
(for before and after school hours)  
School Office Hours 8:00 a.m. – 4:00 p.m. (570) 288-3708

Childcare before and after class is offered as a service to families. Childcare opens on Tuesday, September 5, 2017. Arrangements for regular use must be made in advance on the Extra Services form. Fees are billed monthly.

Supervised care for all students is available before school from 7:30 a.m. at a cost of \$7.00 per hour or a flat rate for regular use. The minimum charge for morning care is \$7.00. There is no charge for Primary students coming at 8:30 a.m. with older siblings or for students brought by school bus before 8:30 a.m. Elementary students arriving before 8:15 a.m. will be charged. Childcare is available from afternoon dismissal until 5:30 p.m. Parents will be billed at an hourly rate of \$7.00 or a flat rate for regular use of afternoon care. Late fees apply for pick-up later than 5:30 p.m.

Facilities and staffing requirements make it necessary for us to limit the size of the Childcare groups for the safety and well-being of those attending. Therefore, students who do not regularly attend Childcare as reserved on the Extra Services form will be admitted only by advance reservation on parent conference days, November 16-17, 2017 and March 22-23, 2018. Childcare will close at 4:00 p.m. on September 7, 2017 (Back to School Night), the evening of the Winter Concert (TBD), March 7, 2018 (Parent Night) and evenings of the Year End Programs (TBD). Childcare is not offered for early dismissals on October 6, 2017, October 27, 2017, November 22, 2017, December 22, 2017, January 12, 2018, March 28, 2018, May 25, 2018 or the last day of school. Childcare for children three and older will be by reservation only during Back to School Night and, if offered, on Concert and Program Nights.

Childcare is closed when school is closed on Labor Day; Columbus Day; Veteran's Day; during Thanksgiving, Winter and Spring Breaks; Martin Luther King Jr. Day; Presidents' Day Break and Memorial Day.

In the event of a delayed start, Childcare will open at 9:00 a.m. If the school must dismiss early, closing time for Childcare will be communicated with the dismissal notice.

An extended Morning Care option is available to Toddler and Primary morning session students. As lunch space permits, Toddlers may stay until 12:00 p.m., and Primary students may stay as late as 12:30 p.m. Late fees apply for late pick-up. See Extra Service form for more information.

Parents will be charged for late pick-up for any Afternoon Childcare, Extended Morning Care, and after 11:30 a.m. morning session dismissal. The fee for late pick-up is \$10.00 for each quarter hour or portion thereof, over and above any regular charge.

## **Weather Related Delays and Closings**

If school must be closed or delayed due to inclement weather, the announcement will be made directly via RenWeb email and ParentAlert text. Information will also be posted on the school's voicemail and website ([www.wvms.org](http://www.wvms.org)) and given to television stations WNEP, WBRE/WYOU. Make up days due to weather closings will be made up at the end of the year. All programs hold class on make-up days.

Every effort will be made to limit a delay to 1-1/2 hours so that the morning session is not lost. If you rely on your local school district's busing and its delayed opening schedule differs from Montessori's we will expect your child to arrive in accordance with the other district's schedule. Whenever weather conditions necessitate a delayed start, all parents should use discretion as to whether or not to send their children to school, especially parents of our youngest students attending morning sessions only. Childcare is available from 9:00 a.m. on delayed start days. When school must be closed for weather, Childcare is closed.

## **Weather Related Early Dismissals**

Early dismissals are sometimes necessary when road conditions are likely to deteriorate. Announcements will be made on radio and television. Children riding buses will be released when their buses arrive only if the school office has first been able to contact a parent to be certain that someone will be home to receive them. If a parent of a bused student cannot be reached, the child will be held in Childcare without charge until picked up by an authorized person. If the school must dismiss early, closing time for Childcare will be communicated with the dismissal notice.

In the unlikely event that an emergency situation would make evacuation of the school or immediate area necessary, parents will be notified immediately. Depending on the

circumstances, children and staff have three evacuation options: to go to (1) Wyoming Seminary's Carpenter Athletic Center on Maple Street or (2) the Church of Christ Uniting at Market Street and Sprague Avenue until parents arrive or (3) to remain together in the main building until parents arrive.

## **Scheduled Early Dismissals**

When the calendar shows an early dismissal, all Toddler and Primary classes will be dismissed at 11:30 a.m. and all Elementary classes at 11:45 a.m.

## **Clothing and School Supplies**

Play clothes are best for school: simple, washable, sturdy and easy for children to manage themselves. When selecting your child's clothing and shoes, be sure that she or he can fasten and unfasten them without adult help. Sneakers or rubber-soled shoes are recommended. Primary and Elementary students bring a backpack or schoolbag each day. Please clearly mark your child's full name on all clothing, boots, lunch boxes, and other items that come to school. The Lost and Found is kept in the Great Room. Unclaimed items are disposed of in June.

Primary and Toddler students keep a complete change of clothing at school, including underwear and socks. Items should be brought to school during Phase-In Week in a clear plastic bag labeled with the child's name. Parents must make sure that extra clothing is weather and size appropriate throughout the year. Parents of children in diapers and/or those who will be napping during the day will receive information from teachers on other items needed. A list of required school supplies is given to parents of Elementary students at the beginning of the year. Notice will be sent home when an item needs to be re-supplied.

Children go outside for recess everyday unless there is rain or extreme cold and should be dressed with appropriate coats, hats, mittens, boots, etc. We recommend each child brings a pair of "indoor" slip on shoes when boots are worn to school. Kindergarten and Elementary students must wear sneakers to P.E. class.

## **Dress Code**

WVMS adopts a dress code that is accepting of diversity. Students are expected to dress for school in a manner that is modest, does not disrupt the instructional process and is conducive to the academic atmosphere. Clothing should be appropriate for the day's activities, whether in school or out in the community. Violations of the dress code will require the students to change or may result in the student being sent home.

The following types of clothing and accessories are prohibited:

- tube tops, spaghetti strap tops, beaters, backless or revealing low cut shirts, midriff

baring shirts, and bra straps showing.

- short shorts, skirts above mid-thigh or skirts with slits higher than mid-thigh. Young ladies' shorts and skirts should be the length equal to end of their open hand when the arm is fully extended at their side.
- swimsuits and sheer or "see through" fabrics.
- low hanging shorts or pants not secured at the waist with a belt.
- mesh muscle shirts or lace see through tops.
- automotive, bicycle or animal chains.
- clothing with inappropriate lettering or slogans on the front back or back of shirts.
- clothing with reference sex, alcohol, drugs or gangs.
- no writing across the seat of the pants.

Students wearing inappropriate clothing must change into acceptable clothing or go home. Unacceptable accessories will need to be removed and taken home.

## **Lunches and Classroom Snacks**

*Food allergies should be noted on the Medical and Health Information section of the Online Enrollment packet.*

Children eating lunch at school should bring a well balanced, nutritious meal in a reusable lunch box, clearly labeled with the student's name. For an add-on, yearly charge, fresh milk in half-pint cartons is available daily. Also for an additional charge, pizza from Tommy's Pizza Corner is available on Wednesday when school is in full session. Milk and Wednesday pizza service should be requested in advance on the Extra Services form. Additional hot lunch services by MVD, LLC may be offered as well.

Children are encouraged to be self-sufficient during lunch-time, so be sure to pack items that your child can open independently. We do not permit trading or sharing of food. The school can neither provide refrigeration nor warm or microwave food for students. We ask that you use reusable and/or recyclable containers whenever possible and avoid disposable packaging except in lunches packed for field trips. Since glass jars and bottles can be dangerous, please do not send any glass containers to school.

It is our philosophy to teach your child how to establish healthy eating habits and to learn to be respectful of their own bodies both inside and out. We as teachers do this not only by teaching about health and nutrition in the classroom, but by consistently modeling these healthy eating habits. As a Montessori parent please keep this in mind when packing your child's lunch.

Feed your child what you would eat yourself. A balanced meal includes proper portions of protein, natural sugars and carbohydrates. Foods sent to school in your child's lunch that are considered unacceptable will be sent home with your child uneaten. Healthy eating habits start early and your support is crucial to the nutritional education of your child. Candy, gum, soda, and highly sugared foods (such as pre-packaged cakes) are not permitted at school and will be sent home unopened. Please do not bring "fast food" meals to your child at lunch time.

The school will provide all snacks in the classroom, that is, all snacks that are offered during the work cycle. Parents will not be asked to contribute money toward snacks nor provide food projects. Snack purchase will be coordinated by the administrative team after consulting with classroom teachers. Snacks provided will be allergy-safe foods.

The school will provide all food/drink during all school events. The administration will be responsible for insuring that this food complies with student allergy limitations. During special events such as Fall Festival or Chinese New Year, some exceptions may arise. If so, parents of children with allergies will be notified and those families can then decide if/how their child will participate in the event.

For classroom holiday celebrations, no food or candy will be allowed. Non-food items such as pencils, erasers and stickers are acceptable for distribution.

## **Toys in School**

Children may not bring toys or video/electronic games of any kind to school. Students may not turn on cell phones during the class day.

## **Birthday Celebrations**

Birthday observances at Montessori are a celebration of a child's life, not a party, so food or special favors are not necessary. The moment of your child's birth, the beginning of her or his own life timeline, is very important. Children tell their own "life stories" in small ceremonies to which parents may be invited. If a parent would like to request a particular safe snack item for that day, they can place a request with the classroom teacher who, in turn, will consult with the school administration. You may wish to consider instead a gift for the whole class to enjoy beyond your child's birthday such as fresh flowers, an art print, or some small object that will add to the beauty of the classroom. Teachers will be happy to offer ideas.

We understand that home birthday parties are important social events in the lives of children. Given Montessori's unique mixed-age class groupings, we urge you to consider inviting, if not your child's entire class, all classmates of the same gender and/or age to avoid hurt feelings. Invitations or gifts for home parties may not be distributed at school unless the entire class is included.

## **Extra-Curricular Activities**

After-school programs such as art, bowling, or music lessons may be scheduled. The Parents' Association often schedules outings and family get-togethers during the year.

## **Academic Information**



## **Staff-Student Ratio**

The school practices vertical grouping and assigns to each class a balance of ages, an 18-month span for children in Toddlers, a three-year mixed-age grouping in Primary and Elementary. The overall ratio of children to teaching staff in each classroom is appropriate for the age level: Toddlers, 5:1; Primary & Elementary, 12:1.

## **Student Assessment and Parent Conferences**

Teachers in the Montessori environment instruct students and design lessons and materials to promote children's self-assessment and self-correction as important life skills. Students learn from the earliest years that learning is a partnership with their teachers. Assessment is the hourly, daily, and weekly appraisal of student progress at WVMS. A Montessori teacher, through frequent one-on-one work with each student and regular individual, personalized assessment of student performance, can identify and address emerging issues and concerns to maximize social and emotional progress and ensure intellectual engagement for each child. Parents are alerted quickly to such concerns, rather than waiting for report cards. Montessori teachers keep careful records of these performance-based assessments, and share them and examples of student work with parents at formal conferences scheduled for November 16-17, 2017 and March 22-23, 2018. Additional conferences are arranged as needed. Parents are asked to observe their child's class prior to each scheduled conference. Children Kindergarten-age and older receive a year-end report. Children in Toddler and PreK may receive one as well at the discretion of the Head Teacher. All student records are confidential. Parents may review them, add comments and authorize their release to other schools. Letter grading is not used at WVMS. Standardized tests are given in 3rd through 6th grades to provide additional evaluation and comparison with national norms. The school reserves the right to withhold transfer of academic records until a student's tuition account is paid in full.

## **Homework**

Homework is gradually introduced to the children in the Elementary Program as a preparation for home study in their academic careers. It is used primarily to promote independent work habits, to practice new skills, and to reinforce new lessons. The Elementary homework schedule varies and is based on individual and group work within subject areas.

To help children benefit from homework parents should create the proper conditions for concentration and study. Having a separate, quiet work space equipped with necessary supplies helps a child focus on schoolwork. Keeping distractions to a minimum is essential; other family members reading or working quietly at the same time is helpful.

### **Homework Policy**

The WVMS school board supports the belief that homework is an integral part of any educational process and is essential to student learning. The board therefore, requires that each teacher assign homework whenever it would be conducive to learning of their subject material.

1. The frequency and amount of homework shall be determined by the teacher and Head of School.
2. Homework assigned to be done outside of regular school hours is to further a child's interest and understanding of subject material.
3. Homework should provide practice on material that has been previously explained or taught in the classroom.
4. Homework should be purposeful with consideration given to individual abilities and environmental differences.
5. Homework should be assigned and checked on a regular basis (daily or weekly), with feedback provided to the student as quickly as possible.
6. Homework should be assigned so as not to require an excessive amount of time to complete. (Parents who feel their child's homework is excessive should contact their teacher, then the Head of School (in that order).
7. Homework assignments are intended to enhance a student's learning and should never be used as a means of punishment.

## **Learning Support**

Children needing remediation in speech or reading may be eligible for in-school services from Luzerne Intermediate Unit #18. At teachers' recommendation, parents give permission for L.I.U. specialists to make evaluations. The school can suggest other resources available to children with special needs, including 1:1 in-class support at parents' expense.

## **Moving Up and Re-enrollment**

As the school year progresses, we encourage parents to familiarize themselves not only with their child's present curriculum, but also with the educational opportunities of the child's next year at WVMS. Whether in the same classroom or moving up to another program level, Toddler to Primary or Primary to Lower Elementary, for example. Classroom observations are highly recommended, and appointments may be made through the school office.

Financial aid applications for K+ students are due for all students by February 9, 2018, with tax documentation due February 15, 2018. Re-enrollment contracts reflecting financial aid awards will be issued March 1, 2018 and are due back March 15, 2018. Please note that our open enrollment period for new students begins on March 16, 2018. While preference is given to re-enrolling students and their siblings, new applicants will be accepted after March 16, 2018 and placed as class space permits.

## **Transition from Montessori**

How does a child adjust to a traditional classroom after Montessori? Parents are often concerned about the transition to a new school. Our graduates and their parents report that following a predictable initial period of adjustment, children who have done well at WVMS do extremely well in their next school. They cite self-confidence, a positive attitude toward school and their peers, good work habits, and solid understanding of academic fundamentals, including both mathematics and the language arts.

## **Home-School Partnership**

### **Communication**

School and home need to work together closely to facilitate your child's progress. Whenever you have questions or concerns, discuss them immediately with your child's teacher to ensure that your child's needs are being met. Please do this at a time when your child is not present. Teachers will return phone calls as promptly as possible, usually before or after class. All inquiries regarding any change to a child's schedule or attendance should be referred first to the Admissions Director.

Parents are asked to inform the school of any change in the child's home situation or routine that may be reflected in social behavior, mood, or academic performance, such as a new sibling, an absent or ill parent or relative, a separation or divorce, a change in health, overwhelming fears or dreams, etc.

The school website, [www.wvms.org](http://www.wvms.org), carries important announcements and information. A monthly listing of upcoming events will be mailed on a postcard to each family. Important notices, flyers, etc. will be distributed to parents of Toddlers in mailboxes outside the classroom door and sent home to all other parents with the students via backpack. Mail will sometimes be distributed only to the oldest child in an enrolled family. Correspondence sent through the U.S. Postal Service will be addressed according to the information supplied on the Family Mailing Addresses form. Notify the school of any changes during the year. Email notices are also sent periodically. Please contact the school to receive information through email.

## **Classroom Observations**

Parents and grandparents are welcome to visit classrooms. Observations begin in October, once children have had time to become accustomed to classroom organization. Appointments should be made at least a day in advance by calling the school office. Parents should plan to observe in their child's class before scheduled parent conferences in November and March and to observe at the next program level when a child is ready to "move up." Parents are invited to attend Parent Night on Wednesday, March 7, 2017. Grandparents or other relatives and family friends are invited to formally visit the school on Wednesday, November 22, 2017, Grandparent's Day.

## **WVMS Parents Association**

All parents are members of the WVMS Parents' Association and are welcome at all its functions. Meetings are held monthly. The P.A. is an invaluable asset to WVMS. The active support and loyalty of parent volunteers benefits the entire school.

With more than 45 years of parent volunteerism contributing to the school's success and growth, we ask each family to volunteer at least ten hours of service annually. The P.A. plans a variety of volunteer opportunities, such as helping in the classrooms and school library, providing hospitality at school events and planning community outreach projects. Often the P.A. helps welcome new families and orients them to the WVMS community. Parent volunteers guide visitors attending Admissions Open Houses.

## **Volunteers**

We encourage parents to volunteer in a number of ways throughout the school year. Due to certain regulations, the below listed guidelines are required of all volunteers.

- a. To ensure student safety and to be in compliance with regulations, all volunteers will need to complete a WVMS Volunteer Requirements form, which will be securely filed and held in confidence. This form outlines the prevailing requirements for one to volunteer for PreK and/or K+ student activities. In addition to general information requested, all of the applicable requirements must be fulfilled in order for one to volunteer.
- b. All volunteers must sign in and out of the school office each time you visit to volunteer.
- c. Confidentiality is important. Please remember anything overheard concerning students or staff should never leave the building.
- d. Volunteers should not be alone with a student or group of students.

- e. If you need help, please ask the office staff or the teacher to which you are assigned as they will be glad to assist.
- f. Always be positive with the students.
- g. If you cannot come in on a scheduled day, please call our office at (570) 288-3708.

## **Fundraising**

As in most independent schools, tuition at WVMS only partially covers the cost of educating each child. Thanks to the energy and efforts of parents, staff, grandparents and friends, our fundraising efforts bridge that gap and fund financial aid, staff training, capital improvements, the Library collection, and the operating budget. Examples of school fundraisers are the Annual Campaign, which begins in the Fall and our Spring Gala/Soirée. All families are asked to participate in and contribute to the school's fundraisers to make these efforts wholly successful. Other small fundraisers may be presented during the year, such as book fairs or WVMS logo item sales; however, door-to-door merchandise sales of candy bars, magazines, gift wrap, etc. are not used to directly support the operations of the school.

The sale or promotion of commercial products on the school grounds and/or among children is not permitted. Merchandise sales that benefit other non-profit organizations or distribution of any charity's literature must be presented to the Head of School.

## **Family Directory**

For families who chose to participate, a School Directory can be viewed via RenWeb.

## **Montessori at Home**

A child's home can reflect the same fundamental educational principles as the classroom. We encourage all families to familiarize themselves with the underlying tenets of Montessori philosophy. Workshops that enhance parenting skills are also offered. The WVMS Library and Parents' Association each have selections of parenting titles available for loan.

## **Financial Policies**

### **Billing**

WVMS, as an independent, non-profit school, depends on tuition as its major source of funding. Contracts are made for the school year. Three tuition payment plans are offered. Annual Payments are made directly to WVMS by check, cash, credit card, or money order. Semi-annual and monthly installment payments are made to SMART Tuition Management Services, which accepts payment by check, credit card, money order, as well as automatic deductions from checking and savings accounts, on either the 10th or 20th of the month. SMART has established and will assess a late payment fee on any account in arrears.

Payment schedules are agreed upon in the enrollment contract. The deadlines for payment need to be followed to ensure smooth financial operation of the school. Invoice numbers should be noted on all check payments made to WVMS. Fees for checks returned for insufficient funds will be billed to the holder of the account. The school accepts American Express, VISA, Master Card, and Discover card payments. Families can also make electronic check and ACH payments for their Extra Services through their ParentsWeb account. The school reserves the right to withhold transfer of academic records until a student's tuition account is paid in full.

Monthly invoices will be issued for Childcare charges. The yearly fees for milk and lunch service are billed once in the Fall. Activities and Materials Fees for the Toddler, Primary and Lower Elementary programs partially cover the cost of field trips, special class events, daily snacks and consumable classroom materials. The annual fee for Upper Elementary does not necessarily include the expenses of some class field trips. Activities and Materials Fees are non-refundable. An \$18.00 AMS Fee is also due from each family annually, in accordance with our standing as an American Montessori Society accredited school, and is billed at the same time as the Activities and Materials Fee.

Tuition discounts are offered to families with more than one child enrolled in the school. A sibling tuition discount of 10% will be applied to the lesser of the two tuitions.

## **Financial Aid**

The Board of Trustees allocates money each year for need-based tuition assistance for students Kindergarten age and older. If you are considering applying for financial aid, the Wyoming Valley Montessori School utilizes the online service of Financial Aid for School Tuition (FAST) to process all applications. FAST does not decide whether financial assistance will be given or how much to give; rather FAST provides a need-based financial aid analysis which includes a recommendation of what a family should reasonably contribute toward tuition. All information from FAST is kept confidential.

If financial aid is awarded, the actual amount of any grant is determined not only by need, but also by the amount of financial aid funds available to give from the school, the number of eligible applicants for financial aid, and any other factors deemed relevant by the Head of School. Results are reviewed by the Financial Aid Committee which makes determinations based on budget. The Head of School or Business Manager will send financial aid offers to families.

Application for financial aid can be found by logging onto the School's website at [www.wvms.org](http://www.wvms.org). Applicants should click on the Financial Aid link in the bottom middle of the home page. The application process is self guided and allows the applicant to navigate in and out of the program quite easily. Online e-mail and a 24/7 helpline is provided. There is a fee for online application and after completion of the application you will be required to mail your most recent year tax returns. Financial aid applications for the 2018-2019 year will open in December 2017 and close February 9, 2018.