

## Parent Handbook

### Mission Statement

The goal of Hamilton Park Montessori School (HPMS) is to create a high-quality Montessori learning environment that meets the social, emotional, cognitive and physical needs of community members.

The curriculum at HPMS is based on the Montessori Method, created by Dr. Maria Montessori, the first female physician in Italy, and she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her work in the field of education.

At HPMS, high standards are set for children who are educated in a positive Montessori environment that encourages independence, respect, growth and community membership. In this environment, children not only “learn how to learn,” but learn how to be a member of a caring community.

**“Our care of the children should be governed not by the desire to ‘make them learn things,’ but by the endeavor always to keep burning within them the light which is called intelligence.”**

**- Dr. Maria Montessori**

### School History/School Governance

HPMS began educating children in the fall of 2006. The School was founded by a team of educators interested in creating a positive learning community where the *Best Practices* in Montessori and Early Childhood education are implemented.

HPMS is a privately funded, limited liability corporation (LLC). The President of Hamilton Park Montessori School, LLC is Samantha Trice. Samantha, also the Head of School, has established an authentic Montessori Program.

If you have any questions regarding the School, please feel free to contact Samantha, Susan Giusto (Director), or your child’s Lead Teacher.

**“Let us wait, and always be ready to share in both the joys and difficulties which the child experiences.”**

**- Dr. Maria Montessori**

### Purpose of the Policy Handbook

The purpose of the Policy Handbook is to communicate community guidelines and expectations. As HPMS continues to grow, our guidelines and expectations will adapt. Parents will be notified of any changes in weekly classroom newsletters, email communications or discussions. Please feel free to share any comments or concerns about these policies or the program with our Staff.

### Admissions Policies and Procedures

HPMS is a non-denominational, independent school. We admit students regardless of sex, race, religious beliefs or ethnic origin. HPMS abides by the American Montessori Society (AMS) Code of Ethics and meets all state law and regulations governing early childhood educational centers. A copy of the AMS Code of Ethics and Manual of Requirements for New Jersey Child Care Centers is available for review in the Office.

Procedures for applying to HPMS are as follows:

1. Please contact the School by email or phone to arrange a first tour. First tours are for adults only, and they are held mainly on the second Wednesday of each month in the afternoon. There are a limited number of spaces in each tour, so please call or email to reserve a space. The first tour allows adults to discuss the philosophy of the School and gives parents the chance to see the facility.
2. If you are interested in admissions after the first tour, please return a completed application along with a \$75 application fee to our mailing address:  
Hamilton Park Montessori School  
P.O. Box 13130  
Jersey City, NJ 07302
3. Once your application is submitted, you will be placed on the waiting list. If an appropriate space becomes available, HPMS will contact you for a second tour. The second tour is with your child. This tour gives you the opportunity to see the program and your child in the classroom environment. Please note: HPMS will not be able to meet with every family who has submitted an application.
4. If you have been invited on a second tour with your child, HPMS will notify you of your child's acceptance status the following March. If room is not available, your application will be placed on the waiting list, and you will be notified if a space becomes available.
5. Should your child be accepted, you will need to let HPMS know within fourteen (14) days (if you wish to attend) by returning the parent Agreement Forms and the required Security Deposit amount. The Security Deposit is non-refundable.
6. No place is secure unless the Application, Parent Tour (First Tour), Child Visit (Second Tour), Agreement Form, Material Fee and Security Deposit are on file at the School. Please do not assume otherwise.

## **Orientation/Matriculation Procedures**

Our goal is for your child's school experience to be as successful as possible. Please expect the first few days that your child attends the program to be shorter days for your child (45 minutes to one hour), with you in the classroom with your child. If your child is joining an established community, this "phase-in" time may be before school (8 am – 8:45 am). If your child is joining a new community, this "phase-in" time may be at 9:15 am, or later. Your child's teacher will contact you to arrange a time to meet with you and your child before your child begins school. This meeting is required.

Before your child may begin school at HPMS, the following must be in the office:

1. Signed and returned Agreement Form (Contract) with paid Security Deposit/Material Fee, and Tuition
2. Information to Parents Statement Form
3. Student/Family Information and Medical Release
4. Universal Child Health Record (Medical Form signed by a Doctor with the Immunizations Section and Lead Screening complete)
5. Field Trip Permission Form
6. Photography Consent and Release Form
7. Pick Up Permission Form

## 8. Tuition Payment Plan

### Absences and Illnesses

Please let the office know if your child will not be attending School. The office will notify your child's Lead Teacher. If you know your child will be absent in advance, please write a note or send an email to the School.

If your child is sick, please keep your child at home. In order to attend school, your child must be well enough to go outside with the class and to participate in all activities.

A child cannot be admitted to the school if any symptoms of the following communicable diseases are present:

#### Respiratory Illnesses

Chicken Pox  
German Measles\*  
Hemophilus Influenzae\*  
Measles\*  
Meningococcus\*  
Mumps\*  
Strep Throat  
Tuberculosis\*  
Whooping cough\*

#### Gastro-Intestinal Illnesses

Campylobacter\*  
Escherichia coli\*  
Giardia Lamblia\*  
HepatitisA\*  
Salmonella\*  
Shigella\*

#### Contact Illnesses

Impetigo  
Lice  
Scabies  
Shingles

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\*Reportable diseases, as required by NJAC 10:122-7.10(a)

Such illnesses or symptoms of illness include, but are not limited to, any of the following: Severe pain or discomfort, acute diarrhea (characterized as twice the child's usual frequency of bowel movements with a change to a looser consistency within a period of 24 hours, or bloody diarrhea), two or more episodes of acute vomiting within a period of 24 hours, red eyes with discharge, yellow eyes or jaundiced skin, infected untreated skin patches, difficult rapid breathing or severe coughing, skin rashes in conjunction with fever or behavior changes, weeping or bleeding skin lesions that have not been treated by a health care provider, mouth sores with drooling or stiff neck.

Once your child is symptom-free for 24 hours, or a health care provider indicates that he/she poses no serious health risk to himself or herself or to other children, your child may return to HPMS.

If a child who has already been admitted to HPMS manifests any of the above mentioned illnesses or symptoms as specified above, your child will be removed from the group of well children to a separate room or area until picked up **WITHIN THE HOUR** of phone call to parent. A late fee of \$1 for every minute which passes after one hour may be applied if he or she is not picked up from the program.

Our parent community will be notified in writing if a contagious illness is confirmed by a doctor; we will not name the child who is sick.

## Allergies

If your child has any known allergies, please inform the staff verbally, and in writing. If your child has food allergies, please send a separate snack for your child to eat each day. Also, please provide a labeled container with "treats" that your child may enjoy during celebrations and special snacks.

## Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

If you are enrolled in the Extended Day program, you may drop off your child as early as 8:00 am in the classroom. Likewise, children may be dropped off early with 24 hours notice for a fee of \$10 per hour. If you would like to drop off your child between 8 am – 8:45 am each day, that can be arranged with the office for an additional \$500 per school year.

For the regular school day, you may drop off your child at the 1 McWilliams Place Entrance Courtyard at the sliding glass doors anytime between **8:45 am and 9:00 am**. Please sign in your child in the Classroom Arrival/Dismissal Log. If you need to speak with your child's teacher, please write a note or send an email and the teacher will contact you at an appropriate time. You may also leave a message for your child's teacher in the office. If you arrive after 9 am, please walk your child to his or her classroom and sign in your child without disturbing the class. However, please make sure your child's teacher knows your child is in school. You must walk your child to his/her class (dropping off your child in the hallway without notifying a staff member is not safe or allowed).

Pick up times are: **11:45 am – 12:00 pm, 12:45 pm – 1:00 pm, 3:00 pm – 3:15 pm or 6:00 pm**. Please pick up your child at the McWilliams Place Courtyard "Sliding Door" during the **11:45 am – 12:00 pm, 12:45 pm – 1:00 pm and the 3:00-3:15** dismissal times. Extended Day students are dismissed from the 1<sup>st</sup> floor "Circle Room" After School Program. A late fee of \$1 may be applied for every minute after 12:00 pm, 1:00 pm, 3:15 pm, or 6:00 pm.

As a courtesy, HPMS allows children to stay additional hours between 8 am and 6 pm, space permitting. To use this service, HPMS will need 24 hours notice and there is a \$10 per hour fee. Please note, you must get permission from the office in order to receive additional hours. Payment is expected at the time you pick up your child.

Teachers will only dismiss children to adults on the Authorized Released Form. If you need to add an individual to this form, please come into the office to do so. A new person will need to present identification, which will be photo copied before the School will release your child. Please try to introduce people picking up your child to your child's teacher and the office staff. There will be a space to write notes on the sign in/out sheet for special instructions. Please communicate on paper or via email during the busy arrival and dismissal times!

As required by the State of New Jersey, if the parents, or persons authorized by the parents, appear to be physically and/or emotionally impaired to the extent that, in the judgment of the director and/or staff member, the child would be placed at risk of harm if released to such an individual, the child shall not be released to such an impaired individual. The staff members will attempt to contact the child's other parent or an alternative person authorized by the

parents. If HPMS is unable to make alternative arrangements, HPMS will call the 24-hour Child Abuse Hotline to seek assistance in caring for the child.

## **Assessment**

Montessori teachers are trained to observe children working with materials and to create an individualized curriculum to meet the needs of each child. Individualized Lesson Plans are developed for each child every two weeks based on their developmental level and progress. Formal Parent/Teacher Conferences are held in the fall and the spring to discuss the progress of your child.

Permanent Progress Records are kept. The Narrative Report is created in the fall and spring Semester to update you on your child's success in class.

## **Birthday and Holiday Celebrations**

Montessori has a nice tradition of celebrating a child's birthday by having the child carry a globe around a "sun" for every year the child has lived. The teacher asks questions about what the child was able to do at the age of one, two, three, etc. Parents are invited for this celebration and are encouraged to provide pictures for each year of a child's life. It is fine to continue the celebration with a nutritious snack (fresh fruit is always great) or a small special treat (e.g., mini muffins, cupcakes or cookies). Please do not send in a sugary or messy snack (e.g., a big cake, ice cream). It is not appropriate for a school celebration.

## **Communication between School and Parents**

Communication is important and encouraged at HPMS. To educate a child effectively, we need to hear the perspective of the child, the lead teacher and the parent. Children often share information with parents before the school community. We encourage parents to share information and ask questions as they arise. Please communicate with your child's Lead Teacher and/or Office Staff. All community members are asked to share thoughts, ideas and comments at an appropriate time and in an appropriate manner.

To share information with the School, parents may do the following:

- Arrange a meeting with the child's Lead Teacher.
- Call the office to leave a message or arrange a meeting with the child's teacher.
- Send an email to:

[Sue@HamiltonParkMontessori.com](mailto:Sue@HamiltonParkMontessori.com), or  
[Samantha@HamiltonParkMontessori.com](mailto:Samantha@HamiltonParkMontessori.com)

Please let your child's teacher know the best way to communicate with you. Formal Parent/Teacher conferences will be held in the fall and the spring.

## **Discipline Policy and Ground Rules**

HPMS follows the guidelines of Positive Discipline. All adult community members are encouraged to read Positive Discipline for Preschoolers by Jane Nelsen. At HPMS, discipline is an important opportunity to teach. Positive discipline empowers children to make appropriate choices with respectful, relevant and reasonable consequences. Elements of positive discipline include the following:

- Opportunities for success
- Respect
- Limits and firmness
- Allowing children to be children (adults are expected to act like adults).

While each situation is different, here are some ways to implement positive discipline:

- Offer children appropriate choices
- Create routines
- Get children involved
- Use a sense of humor
- Be patient while a child processes a situation and/or action
- Teach respect by modeling respect
- Provide supervision, distraction and redirection
- Step back to figure out what a child needs or is feeling (e.g., attention, power, revenge, assumed inadequacy)
- If you say something, mean it and always follow through
- Remember that children model whatever adults do (e.g., if an adult yells, a child will yell; if an adult is respectful, a child learns to be respectful).

Children are encouraged to process and reflect upon a situation. Adults are present to help children identify feelings and communicate. Children are not forced to say "I'm sorry." "I'm sorry" may be offered as a choice to resolve an issue, but not the only way to resolve an issue. A child may be asked to calm down and think about ("reframe") a situation before resolving it, but a child will not be placed in "time out."

Children will not lose outdoor time, sleep or food as a consequence for behavior unless it is a relevant consequence. For example, if a child is throwing food, the food will be removed from the table until the child is ready to eat it, not throw it. If a child is refusing to put on his/her coat and the entire class is waiting, the class will go outside and someone from the office will wait for the child to put on his/her coat. When the coat is on, s/he may join the class outside.

**It is the responsibility of HPMS to provide a physically and emotionally safe environment for community members. If behavior by a child or adult creates an unsafe environment, the Head of School or the Director of the program has the right to dismiss the person from the community.**

## **Dress Code/Extra Clothes**

Children are expected to dress in comfortable clothing that they can manipulate by themselves. Please make sure your child is wearing shoes that provide plenty of support and will not slip on the floor. Please dress your child in clothing that is appropriate for the weather. As a rule of thumb, dress your child in as many layers as you are wearing. Please remember hats, gloves, scarves and coats during the cold weather. We will go outside in cold weather. Learning activities can be messy so please only dress your child in clothing that can get dirty. **PLEASE REMEMBER TO WRITE YOUR CHILD'S NAME ON EVERY PIECE OF CLOTHING (e.g., socks, mittens, coats, shirts, shoes, pants – everything!).**

Your child will need a complete set of weather appropriate extra clothes; please include a pair of old shoes. If your child is prone to accidents or needs to change his/her clothes often, please provide a couple of labeled outfits.

## Emergency Procedures

During an emergency situation, our goal will be to stay calm and help the children feel safe by keeping their daily routine as normal as possible. If the routine needs to be changed, the change will be explained to the children in a brief, comforting and honest manner.

### Procedures/recommendations for different situations:

**Building Evacuation (Fire Safety/Site Risk):** Children practice “fire drills” (this is the term used for all evacuation drills with the children) at least once a month. Parents are given wallet-sized cards with the information of the emergency procedures and locations. **PLEASE CARRY THIS CARD WITH YOU AND MAKE SURE YOUR CHILD’S EMERGENCY CARD CONTAINS CURRENT INFORMATION AT ALL TIMES.**

**Community Alert:** HPMS has computer access during school hours, but staff members do not listen to the radio or news. **If an event is happening in the area, PLEASE NOTIFY THE SCHOOL OFFICE.** The Office will contact the proper authorities for safety recommendations. Unless contacted by the school, parents should plan to pick up their child at the regular dismissal time.

**Lock Down:** If a “lock down” situation occurs, the children will stay in the classroom or be evacuated to the basement. There is enough food and water for all of the children for 72 hours. The school will attempt to communicate with parents by phone or email.

**Medical Emergency/First Aid:** If a child is in need of emergency medical attention, the office will first call 911, then notify the parents while first aid is being administered to the child. For the following situations, 911 will be called:

- Major Head Injury
- Seizure
- Airway obstruction
- Cessation of breathing
- Profuse bleeding/open wound/exposed body part or broken limb.

Parents will be contacted if there is a concern.

HPMS core staff is CPR and First Aid trained and certified.

**Weather:** see page 11.

## Field Trips and Transportation

HPMS is located within walking distance of wonderful field trip destinations (e.g., the public library, the firehouse). Parents will be asked to sign a Walking Permission Slip Form. Parents will be informed of walking field trips in the weekly note. Chaperones will be asked to join these trips.

For third level students, field trips will be planned to destinations in NJ and NYC (e.g., museums, Carnegie Hall Kid programs, concerts, plays). Parents will receive separate field trip forms for these trips. Chaperones will be asked to join these trips. The children will take public transportation for these field trips.

## Lunch

Full day children will eat lunch brought from home. During lunch, staff members sit with the children to teach grace/courtesy skills. Please send lunches that your child can prepare and eat by him/herself. Please provide the appropriate utensils. HPMS encourages healthy food and does not allow candy or soda during lunch time. **Due to possible severe allergies, nuts and nut products are not allowed; this includes peanut butter.**

## Medicine Policy

HPMS will only administer medicine if a note from a doctor with specific directions is received. Parents must fill out a form to have medicine administered at school. Medicine must be in the original container with all information legible. Medicine will be kept in a lock box in the refrigerator or in the office. **DO NOT PUT MEDICINE OF ANY MANNER IN YOUR CHILD'S BACKPACK. PLEASE GIVE MEDICINE TO AN AUTHORIZED ADULT IN THE SCHOOL.** You will be asked to sign a permission form to authorize the teacher or adult to administer the medication to your child.

No over-the-counter medicine will be administered, unless a script or note from a doctor with clear directions accompanies the medicine, and the medicine is in its original container. Sunblock may be applied if it is in its original container with your child's name clearly written on the outside of the container. Please test the sunblock on your child's skin at home before sending the sun block into school. Please apply the first layer of sunblock to your child at home in the morning.

## Naps

Children under the age of five who attend school for more than four consecutive hours are required by the State of New Jersey to rest for 30 minutes. If a child falls asleep, the child will be allowed to nap for 1.5 – 2 hours. Children will rest/nap on a cot. If your child rests/naps, please send a clean sheet (a fitted crib sheet will fit the cot) and blanket with your child at the beginning of each week. **No pillows please.**

## Newsletters, Reminders, Invitations, and Parent Calendar

Each classroom sends out a Newsletter on Fridays. The Newsletter is our way of sharing information on the weekly topics and themes, the books and music, birthdays, enrichment specials, calendar reminders, housekeeping needs and fun information with the classroom families.

Please make it a point to check your email on a daily basis for reminders and important information. Reminders are often sent the day before an event or activity. Our "Subject" line in the email will contain key information.

Invitations are sent out usually two weeks prior to an event or activity and are mentioned in the Newsletter with ample time to enable you to attend without work or schedule conflicts. Please make sure to put these dates on your personal calendar.

The Parent Calendar is sent along with the last Newsletter of the Month for the upcoming month with dates for you to put on your personal calendar.

Important Note: As our school looks to move toward a “green” environment, we communicate via email more often than with hard copy. If you have difficulty opening attachments, please let the office know so we can facilitate getting the information to you.

## **Snack and Flowers**

Snacks and flowers are provided by families on a weekly basis. Families may sign up on the classroom signup sheet to bring snack and flowers for the entire community for one week.

## **Snack Station**

The snack table is set up as a station that is open during the work cycle. Two to four children may eat snack at a time. If your child has food allergies, please provide a separate snack for your child every day.

If you have signed up to send snack for the community, please send nutritious food. Some suggestions include: fresh fruit, fresh vegetables, crackers, hummus, cheese, non-sugar cereal, mini muffins, rice cakes, pretzels – any nutritious snack you serve at home! **Please check nutrition labels and do not send anything containing nuts or nut products.** You may choose to send in snack each day or to send in food for the week.

## **Student Records**

Parents may ask to review the records of their child. Please let the office know if you would like to arrange a time to review your child’s record. Records are kept in a locked filing cabinet so that the confidentiality of each child is respected. Files will be kept for one year after a child leaves the program. Records will be released to other educational institutions if there is signed consent from the parent/s of the child.

## **Suspected Child Abuse**

The School is required by law to report to the New Jersey State Division of Youth and Family Services (DYFS) any suspicion of child abuse (this includes neglect or exploitation). If a parent suspects any form of child abuse and notifies the School we will report it to DYFS.

## **Toilet Training**

Children in the Early Childhood (2 ½ to 6 year olds) program need to be fully toilet trained to participate. The bathrooms are located in the hallway. A staff member will accompany all children to the toilet. Children are expected to go to the bathroom independently. Staff members may offer children flushable wipes, but are not expected to wipe children.

Children in the Bridge (2 ½ to 3 ½ year olds) program do not need to be toilet trained. Please bring enough diapers and wipes for your child on a weekly basis. Let us know when you begin training at home so we can be consistent with your child’s bathroom routines at school.

## **Toys and Superheroes**

Toys need to stay at home. Toys are distracting and may be lost at school. Superhero images (e.g., on lunch boxes, clothing, backpacks, shoes) are not permitted as they often encourage inappropriate behavior. If you do not follow this policy as a parent you teach your child that it is okay not to follow school policy. Thank you for your support and understanding.

## Tuition and Fees

Tuition obligations, as outlined in the Agreement Form, are due before your child begins the program. Tuition payments for the school year begin July 1. You may pay HPMS in full with a discount, or enroll in a Monthly Payment Plan as outlined below.

Monthly Payment Plan installments begin July 1 and continue in equal amounts through April 1. The non-refundable Enrollment/Security Deposit is credited to the last payment installment, assuming completion of the school year. Parents enrolled in a Monthly Payment Plan agree to a late fee of \$20 if a payment is received after the 5<sup>th</sup> of the month, and a \$20 fee for returned checks. HPMS offers the following Monthly Payment Plan options:

- You may arrange an "Automatic Deduction" Plan (ACH) with the Director by submitting a voided check. Deductions will be made from your checking account on **THE FIFTEENTH (15<sup>TH</sup>) OF EACH MONTH.**
- If you use on-line banking, you may set up HPMS Tuition Payments due the first of every month. The Director will provide you with the appropriate routing instructions.
- You may write a check payable to HPMS on the first of each month and give it directly to the Office, or mail to:

HPMS  
P.O. Box 13130  
Jersey City, NJ 07302.

**Dismissal, Exclusive of Withdrawal:** HPMS may discontinue a child's enrollment for any reason including but not limited to the following reasons:

- The School reserves the right, in its sole discretion, to immediately exclude, request the withdrawal of, or dismiss any Student from classes or from the School upon notice to the Parent(s), for any cause whatsoever, including but not limited to, violation of any rules or regulations, or failure to make payment of fees and tuition, if deemed by the School to be in the best interest of the School and/or the Student. The School also expects that Parents will at all times conduct themselves appropriately in matters involving the School, Staff and other Students. If a Student is dismissed by the School, tuition will be payable through the end of the month in which dismissal occurs.
- The School decides that a child is not benefiting from the program

In the event of a dismissal from HPMS, tuition will be charged at the daily rate for the days attended, and the balance will be refunded within 30 days.

**The Materials Fee and Enrollment/Security Deposit will not be refunded.**

## Withdrawal:

After acceptance of the HPMS Agreement Letter, there will be no reductions of any kind from fees, charges, and/or tuition if a Parent wants to reduce or end a Student's enrollment. If the School is given 60 days prior notice of a Student leaving the School and the School enrolls another Student to fill the vacated space (assuming the School is otherwise full), then tuition, fees and charges shall be payable only through the end of the month in which the Student leaves the School. The School is not required to mitigate damages.

If we are not able to fill your child's space, you remain responsible for tuition.

Please give us as much notice as possible (at least 60 days) so we can work together to fill your child's space.

