



# YELLOWSTONE MONTESSORI

## Yellowstone Montessori Academy

### Parent Handbook 2015 - 2016

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# OVERVIEW

## Introduction

We welcome you and your child to the Yellowstone Montessori community. We are looking forward to getting to know you and your family. We hope that our experience together will be joyous, nourishing, uplifting and educational for all, including the difficulties that may come, for these can be our greatest teachers. Let us work together with one heart for the benefit of your child(ren). We acknowledge that you are your child's first and primary teacher throughout life, other than his/her own inner teacher. Our commitment is to work with you to the best of our abilities and Montessori training for the fulfillment of your child's optimal development.

We realize that this handbook is extensive. We also realize that most likely you will not be able to sit down and read it in a single sitting. (It wasn't written in one sitting either...) We hope that you will learn most of what is in it through the daily interactions you experience at school. We actually apologize for the length of this handbook and some of its tone, which has been necessitated by Montana state law for day care center programs and schools, as well as by insurance requirements.

## Legal Contract and Proprietary Information:

**The information contained in this manual is part of your the ENROLLMENT CONTRACT you sign when you enroll your child in the school.** It is also proprietary information and intended only for the use of members of the Yellowstone Montessori Academy community. No personal information may be used without the permission of the person involved. The information in this handbook is copyrighted. No information contained herein may be copied or used for any other purpose unless specific permission is obtained from the school administrator or school director.

## How to Use This Handbook

The curriculum is described in the section "What is Yellowstone Montessori Academy?" That section is not alphabetized, but is grouped according to subject matter.

Answers to most other questions will be found under "Operations" which is divided into "Administration", "Calendars and Schedules", "Programs and Tuition" and "Policies and Procedures". These categories are listed alphabetically as are the subjects in each. The daily procedures of the school (absences, arrival dismissal, clothes, lunch...) are described in alphabetical order under the section "Policies and Procedures."

## The History behind our Name "Yellowstone"

Yellowstone Montessori is named after a favorite place and a favorite educator. The Native American Minnetaree tribe called the Yellowstone River "Mi tsi a da zi". French fur trappers translated this word into "yellow rock river" or "yellow stone". This yellow rock canyon can be seen in our school logo. Montessori, of course, refers to the educator who developed the Montessori Method, Dr. Maria Montessori.

# WHAT IS YELLOWSTONE MONTESSORI ACADEMY?

## MISSION:

Yellowstone Montessori Academy seeks to provide a special learning environment according to the philosophy, educational methods and materials of Dr. Maria Montessori. The program is for children from the approximate ages of 3.0 to 6.5 years and focuses on promoting and enhancing each child's fulfillment of his or her greatest potential.

## GOALS:

1. To assist individual children in gaining knowledge and skills in academic, artistic, social, emotional, physical, and spiritual (character, manners and moral development) areas in an atmosphere of kindness, creativity, joy, freedom, self-discipline and harmony;
2. To focus on each child's needs individually, endeavoring to draw out his/her innate love of learning and joy in exploration; and
3. To support the development of self confidence in interpersonal relationships that will provide a foundation for the child's success in the future;
4. To provide a beautiful, safe and fully-equipped Montessori indoor and outdoor environment that attracts the attention and interest of young children.
5. To provide loving, highly trained and experienced staff who knows how to meet the needs of preschool aged children.

## SCHOOL FOUNDER'S PHILOSOPHY

Yellowstone Montessori Academy realizes the dream of Constance Dratz to provide the best possible education and environment for the little ones of the Gallatin Valley to develop and thrive. She spent many years researching and experimenting with teaching methods and philosophies to determine which ones are actually successful with most young children. In order to prepare herself properly to teach young children, she spent two years away from her home in Bozeman—one in Milwaukee, Wisconsin and the other in Columbia, Maryland. In both the Montessori elementary and primary school training programs, Constance learned that Montessori designed a learning environment which is effective with children from different cultures, due to its basis in the scientific observation of the developmental needs children. The environment is designed to engender the development of personal responsibility, awareness of the needs of others, and the positive use of freedom through constructive activity and choices.

As a part of the general curriculum many Grace and Courtesy lessons are presented to all children. These include, "How to Say Hello, "How to blow my nose," How to ask for help," How to express gratitude," etc. Manners are practiced all day long in the classroom and outside. Yellowstone Montessori focuses on a series of universal virtues or values. These qualities will be discussed in a natural way as situations arise and also on circle or during story time. These include: the Golden Rule, gratitude, respectfulness, patience, persistence, obedience, courage, kindness, orderliness, cleanliness, diligence, etc. These concepts are introduced through children's literature and through individual and group conversations. **We also recite a poem of gratitude before lunch: "Thank you for the world so sweet; thank you for the food we eat; thank you for the birds that sing; thank you, God, for everything."** This poem is not intended to in any way promote a particular religion or other spiritual belief system. Gratitude is an attitude which can bring lifelong perspective and happiness to individuals who understand it and can see its fruits in their lives.

A secular Montessori curriculum does not include religion and we do not teach it. However, Yellowstone Montessori does celebrate Thanksgiving the Tuesday before with a large

snack prepared by the children. We also sing Christmas songs, which most often involve snow and reindeer, but we also respond to the requests of children. When asked, we give short explanations about cultural holidays such as: Hanukah, Christmas and Easter. If children bring special things from home to share, which are educational and religious in nature, we allow them to share it at circle time. If children ask, “Did grandpa go to heaven?” We confirm that he did.

We believe that this innocent stage of development, the very beginning of a person’s life should be sacrosanct, protected, allowed to blossom from within from its innate root without the negative aspects of our culture, as much as possible. We also believe that children should NOT be burdened with the political persuasions, environmental concerns or problems of adults because they worry and are powerless to make changes. Therefore, we do not bring our personal political, environmental or other adult concerns into the classroom.

In the years from three to six a child’s purpose and only work is to develop him/herself as a personality and an identity (consciously and unconsciously) within his/her family and culture. In order to accomplish this task, each child has been given what Montessori calls, “The Absorbent Mind”. This is a quality, which only a young child has, to absorb the people, language and culture around him/her in order to create an identity and the ability to function within that culture. To do it optimally may be the most important accomplishment of a lifetime, because everything else in life is predicated upon it. Thus, the school focuses wholly on supporting the child in his/her great effort. We concern ourselves moment by moment with those things that do matter to small children: sensitivity to their hearts; helping them make friends; being understood; skinned knees and slivers; kindness; missing Mommy; hunger, thirst, tiredness; bugs, birds, butterflies and worms; learning to read and count; dandelions and plants; our Richardson’s Ground Squirrel, the fish tank; their comfort, confusion, anger and upset and the training of their minds and manners. We concern ourselves with giving them a calm, structured, clean, beautiful, comfortable environment where they can be at peace and learn to concentrate. And, to that end we want to provide everything that is beautiful, uplifting, healthy, peaceful, positive and hopeful in food, dress, materials, words, books, music, behaviors and attitudes.

At this age we do not want them forming their identity, conscious and unconscious, based on potentially harmful experiences or images. Thus, it would be very helpful for both teachers and your children if their experience of television, DVD’s and hard rock music and lyrics is very limited. For many of them, one dose of a super-hero can seriously compromise a child’s ability to concentrate in the classroom for up to six months. For young children the images are so overpowering that nothing else compares to them. While the child is processing Spiderman, Teenage Ninja Turtles, Star Wars, Superman or Wonder Woman, many other developmental opportunities and considerable practice of social skills are missed. Children are highly sensitive. There wasn’t anything like Spider Man in Mommy’s womb and they are deeply affected by the powerful music and images. Since they don’t understand what is real from what is unreal, everything appears real and the superhero is much more real and interesting than the classroom lessons like the cylinder blocks or pink tower. We try to interest them in something real and they escape into fantasy. They become desensitized to the delicate realities/nuances of life. This is a problem because a child’s further success is built upon these perceptions, virtues and skills. Escape is built on fantasy. Self-confidence is built on the mastery and knowledge of one’s academic and structural environment and the development of one’s social, emotional, and physical self: Each child has special gifts s/he has brought into the world for a purpose. Childhood is the time to draw them forth and develop them, not to spend in it in fruitless escape into someone else’s fantasy.

Thus in general we don't allow children to share toys at circle. (They get lost in the classroom; other children pocket them and emotional upset results.) For the reasons listed above, we also ask that parents do not send a child to school in clothes which are advertisements for Disney, super heroes, dinosaurs, or political views. The pictures are triggers for other children to start acting like the characters depicted on a child's clothing. Your child isn't looking at the picture all day; the other children are. And they respond by acting it out. Also, the child with the pictures is proud of it and walks around the class regularly interrupting other children's concentration saying, "Look what I've got on my shirt!" Other major distractions in the classroom are tattoos and body painting. Young children are as naturally beautiful as people ever will be. We are hoping that each child will develop a sense of self confidence in their natural appearance and not feel a need to focus on or enhance their physical beauty. We believe it's more important for each child to focus on developing and acknowledging beauty within themselves and others.

We welcome parents' interest in curriculum and they may examine any book or materials that are presented to children. If you are concerned about something you observe at school, please bring it to Constance's attention immediately. Usually there is a reasonable explanation for what you observed. Other times you may provide the school with a great suggestion. Although the teachers strive every day to do the very best for the students, we don't always think of everything. We really appreciate parents' constructive suggestions.

Yellowstone Montessori does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, religion, disability, ethnic or national origin in its admissions or other educational policies. The school's policy is to promote a diverse community of children, parents and teachers who come from a variety of races, religions, backgrounds and beliefs.

### **DAY-CARE OR SCHOOL?**

Yellowstone Montessori Academy is a limited liability company (LLC) registered in the State of Montana. This preschool also uses the business names of Yellowstone Montessori and Yellowstone Montessori Institute. The school is not affiliated with nor does it promote any other school, church, religious belief, business or non-profit organization. The school opened for children in November, 2007. Constance and Edward Dratz purchased the school property on July 15, 2010. Until that time the school leased the property.

Yellowstone Montessori is licensed as a child care center through the Montana Department of Health and Human Services Child Care Licensing Bureau. Since this environment of children, staff, materials, building and grounds provides a Montessori education, and its primary purpose is education, rather than "day-care," we call it a school. In Montana any facility which cares for more than three 3-4 year-old children from different families for more than three hours each day must register as a group-care facility or day-care center for children and meet all the requisite state codes. We have a conditional use permit from the City of Bozeman planning department to operate a day-care center at this location. Our health and safety procedures and student files are audited by the Public Health Nurse each year. Further, we are inspected each year by the city fire and sanitation departments. All staff has bi-annual Red Cross First Aid and CPR training in addition to college degrees and graduate work or degrees. Three teachers are Montessori certified, one is a Montessori-trained intern completing Montessori certification requirements and the fourth is an elementary art teacher.

## WHO WAS MARIA MONTESSORI AND WHAT DID SHE DO?

Maria Montessori was the first woman to become a medical doctor in Italy. Born in 1870 she lived through two world wars and passed on in 1952 at the age of 82. During World War II she saw all her life's work in Italy destroyed by the Fascists. Twice she had to escape for her life and spent the remainder of the war training teachers in India under the British. As part of her mission she traveled all over the world speaking on behalf of the developmental needs of children. She was convinced that if children could get what they needed developmentally, we could be much closer to a truly peaceful world. Today Montessori schools are established on every continent except Antarctica.

In her twenties and thirties Dr. Montessori had a regular medical practice serving women and children. She was also an educator. With other doctors she developed the first facility and school in Italy for children with physical or emotional disabilities. In 1896, when she received her medical degree, all children in Italy with developmental or emotional problems were traditionally housed in large rooms with adults. Clearly seeing the need for a separate facility for children, she petitioned the queen. The facility was built. During this period she studied how developmentally disabled and other handicapped children could learn. She had great success bringing their physical, mental and emotional development up to the level of normal preschool children of that time. While continuing her medical practice, she then completed a Ph.D. in anthropology and became the first head of the anthropology department at the University of Rome.

Montessori's calling was to work with children among the poorest little ones on the streets of Rome. One focus of her teaching was a slum that was an embarrassment to the city. A development project went bankrupt and the partially-constructed apartments had been taken over by the poorest in the city. Besides the homeless, many poor parents in the slum worked long hours in factories and their babies and little ones wandered the streets. The Queen asked Montessori to help create a program for these children. She was given a large room on the ground floor with a roof terrace where the children could safely play. It became the first Montessori school which she called Casa Dei Bambini or Children's House. It is still a Montessori school today.

Montessori was exceptionally well-trained as a scientist to observe and respond to the developmental needs of children. Over the next two to three years Montessori observed these children, worked with them and created materials to further their development at many levels. These same materials are in Montessori schools today.

But even more important than her scientific abilities, Montessori had a heart that could attune to the small child. She witnessed and understood the basic drive for self-development that underlies each child's behavior. To encourage this individual love of learning, she created an environment where these natural drives are not only allowed but also encouraged to function unimpeded to promote the child's happiness, self-confidence and natural fulfillment. She also created a tiny community where children naturally and gently, day by day, developed patience, manners, the ability to focus, concentrate and share, and an awareness of others. This process took a minimum of three years. Montessori then found that about the age of six, the children displayed new characteristics and developmental needs. Thus, over the years she developed a new environment, lessons and materials to meet the needs of these growing young people.



# MONTESSORI THEORIES OF EDUCATION

## HUMAN TENDENCIES

Montessori believed that development was guided by inner motivation and that there are patterns of growth and development common to all people, universal forces that define and refine in us what it is to be human. Human beings do not have instincts in the way that animals do. Instead of instincts people have human tendencies which help insure survival, but also bring satisfaction. In Montessori's view human tendencies, along with intelligence and the ability to love, have given humans an almost infinite array of possibilities in how to live our lives, adapt to many different environments and still find fulfillment. She explained human tendencies as being part of the system of natural guides essential to survival and self-fulfillment.

As humans we all have a propensity to act in particular ways. Montessori believed that if we cooperate with these propensities, the tendencies will generate opportunities for our positive self-construction. These tendencies are universal to all humankind. They are unchanging and they assist us in our task to survive. Some of these tendencies are: a need and desire for order; a drive to orient ourselves to objects and people in an environment; a need to explore; a need to communicate; a need for activity; a need to manipulate objects with our hands; a need for work (defined as using our intelligence to fulfill a goal), repetition and practice; desire for exactness; abstraction (ability to visualize and create in our minds); self-perfection or the desire to improve oneself. Deeply considering the young child, Montessori designed an environment in which all of these natural tendencies would be allowed to operate from within the child to help him or her in the work of creating him/herself.

## THE PLANES OF DEVELOPMENT

Montessori observed that a child passes through distinct developmental stages about every six years and that these stages can be divided into sub-phases. She thought that the different characteristics of children within these stages was so marked that all education should be formed around them. She also observed that children physically grow in "spurts." Growth can sometimes seem to speed up or stagnate. "The child does not grow in a uniform way day by day, at the same rate. In growth there are crises, somewhat like the metamorphosis of the insects." (*The Four Planes of Education*. A.M.I. 1971. pg.3) Through extensive observation of children from many countries and cultures, Montessori discovered that there are different characteristics, behaviors and sensitivities that occur at different stages of life and that these reflect the changing needs of the individual at each successive stage. Further, she observed that each stage of development was constructed on the previous ones and that if any thing was missed it needed to be made up in the next stage or the development of the personality was compromised.

The first plane is from birth to six years, the second from six to twelve years, the third from twelve to eighteen and the fourth from eighteen to twenty-four. The first plane is divided into two sub-planes birth to three and three to six. The greatest changes take place in the first three years of a plane. The next three years are for consolidation and strengthening of those changes. She also observed that the first six years and the years from twelve to eighteen had many similar characteristics.

A child forms his or her personality from birth to age six. Therefore, a child is self-centered by necessity. Some of the characteristics of children from birth to age six are: a passionate interest in everything they see; a vulnerability to illness because of the very great physical changes occurring in the body; a young child's development greatly depends on the people and experiences s/he interacts with in the environment. A young child needs to move in

order to learn: thought and action are part of the same occurrence. A child learns by sensorial exploration, through his or her hands and senses, which are highly sensitive. The child's main developmental drive is to construct his/her personality. External order allows a child to get a clear understanding of the environment around her. Emotionally the child has a great need for love and security. Most children at age three prefer individual activity but increasingly enjoy it in the presence of others playing or working nearby. Young children are usually generous and trusting.

### **THE ABSORBENT MIND**

The absorbent mind is a term Montessori coined to describe the functional process within the child's mind from birth to six. During the first three years the child's mind functions unconsciously and during the next three years it functions consciously.

“The things he [she] sees are not just remembered; they form part of his soul. He incarnates in himself all in the world about him, that his eyes see and his ears hear. In us the same things produce no change, but the child is transformed by them. This vital kind of memory, which he [she] does not consciously remember, but absorbs images into the individual's very life, has been given a special name by Sir Percy Nunn, who calls it the “Mneme.” (Montessori, *The Absorbent Mind*, 1995, pg. 62)

Thus, the child does not screen information. The absorbent mind is like a camera. It takes no more effort to take a picture of a forest or of a single tree. The absorbent mind cannot evaluate the environment. A young child cannot determine what is right or wrong, good or bad without direction from an adult. Children are not logical or judgmental. They simply absorb everything. As they grow to age six, they gradually take on the language, culture, norms and values of their family and the world around them.

Montessori believed that in the natural gift of the absorbent mind lay the bright hope for the future of humankind.

“Mothers, fathers, politicians: all must combine in their respect and help for this delicate work of formation, which the little child carries on in the depth of a profound psychological mystery, under the tutelage of an inner guide. This is the bright new hope for mankind. Not reconstruction, but help for the constructive work that the human soul is called upon to do, and to bring to fruition; a work of formation which brings out the immense potentialities with which children, the sons of men, are endowed.” (ibid. pg. 17)

### **SENSITIVE PERIODS**

A sensitive period is a period of time when a child has a particular developmental need which ends when the need is met or the developmental stage passes. The child experiences an irresistible attraction or need for certain things and sensitivity to them. As a result of this sensitivity, a child gains a trait, characteristic or skill which lays the foundation for future development. These are periodic or transient instincts. Sensitive periods have five characteristics: they are universal to all children everywhere; they are observable; they result in the acquisition of a specific skill or trait; the period is transitory; and several sensitive periods occur simultaneously. Some of the sensitive periods evident in first plane children are: the development of language, refinement of the senses, order, movement, social behavior, to tiny things. A baby is driven to kick his legs over and over which eventually results in walking. S/he says sounds over and over which eventually results in speech. These are examples of sensitive periods.

## **THE YELLOWSTONE MONTESSORI ENVIRONMENT**

Everything about the primary Yellowstone Montessori environment is specially designed for a specific need of the child aged three to six. The age and number of the children in a classroom, the height of the ceiling, the design and size of the indoor classroom and outdoor facilities, the shelving, tables and chairs, how and where everything is set up, and how many of each material is on the shelf, are all determined by the developmental needs of the child. These aspects of the classroom were designed primarily to meet the physical, character, emotional and social developmental needs of each individual child.

The teacher with her loving heart and extensive training:

- 1) Links the individual child to the material in the classroom;
- 2) Models kindness, patience and compassion;
- 3) Helps relations between the children;
- 4) Demonstrates how to use materials; and
- 5) Shows each child how to function and thrive in the classroom.

Thus, a very important triangular relationship exists between the child, the materials and the teacher. The teacher is not the center point of the classroom. The child with his/her developmental needs is the center point of the classroom. The child is at the apex of this triangular relationship.

### **CONCENTRATION AND EXPERIMENTATION**

The Yellowstone Montessori primary classroom is a gentle environment where a child can experiment with learning socially, emotionally, and intellectually. This calm environment allows a child to learn and to concentrate while not being over-stimulated. In this nurturing environment a child can make mistakes and learn from them without criticism. A Montessori classroom is a place where a child can experiment with new friends, new objects, new language, new ideas, and new skills without fear. It is a place where a child can practice choosing his/her work, play, and behavior. It is a beautiful place with objects designed to fascinate a child, so s/he can learn to manipulate, appreciate and use them for a purpose. The pattern of the day and week is regular and rarely changed so that the child knows what to expect and feels secure.

### **FREEDOMS**

A child's character development occurs in the process of experiencing the people, materials and the freedoms in a Montessori environment. The basic freedoms in the classroom are: to talk, to choose one's work (limited only by having had an introduction to that material), to move about the classroom, to work as long or as short as one desires with any material; to choose the place of work, to refuse a lesson from the teacher and to reflect. Other freedoms are to refuse to allow another child to observe and to refuse to share. By the time a child is five, the child chooses one thing to do at any given time from among several hundred lessons in the classroom. However, from the beginning there has only been one set of materials for each particular lesson. Since a desired material may sometimes be in use, over time children develop enough patience to wait for what they want and develop a sense of what they want to do. They learn to go after what they want to do and to think ahead. The environment engenders a self-regulation within limits of respect for themselves and others.

### **GRACE AND COURTESY**

Grace and Courtesy are the foundation for character development in a Montessori classroom. They basically teach the Golden Rule applied to many kinds of social situations. These are the little lessons that help a child learn how to function in the classroom and become

aware of the needs of other children. These lessons begin on the first day. There are at least 50 of these lessons which are taught to one to four children at a time or to the entire class at circle time through role playing as situations arise throughout the year. Often the teacher will demonstrate a funny rendition of behavior and then show the graceful solution. The children get up and practice. These lessons range from “How to blow your nose,” or “How to introduce yourself to a new child,” to “How to ask another child if s/he wants to play.” Lessons demonstrate how to operate in the classroom; how to get the teacher’s attention; how to raise a hand on circle; how to speak in a quiet voice; how to watch another child’s lesson. These lessons all build the child’s confidence at school and lead to harmony in the classroom and playground.

### **CLASSROOM BELL**

Montessori classrooms traditionally have a little bell which is rung to get the children’s attention when it is needed for announcements. The children practice stopping their work and looking toward whoever is ringing the bell. This lesson also demonstrates the only appropriate way to get everyone’s attention. The bell is not used as a way to settle the classroom.

### **LIMITS TO FREEDOMS**

In a Montessori classroom a child’s freedoms are only limited when they are disturbing someone else’s work or showing disrespect for another person or the materials. At Yellowstone Montessori teachers creatively redirect risky or inappropriate behaviors so that the child and others are safe. Redirection is the most frequent response when a teacher sees something about to happen, or in the process of happening. The word “Stop!” is reserved for situations where a person’s safety is threatened. When differences between children arise, teachers help children to talk about it with each other and learn to resolve problems.

When necessary, limits are set in a kind, repetitive, calm but firm manner, so that all the children feel safe and respected. Every effort is made to meet all the children’s needs for justice, fairness, kindness and understanding. Bullying of any kind is not permitted. A natural outcome of this environment is that children learn how their choices and behaviors affect themselves and others in a positive or negative way. Teachers support and protect the children in this process so that all the children learn that everyone makes mistakes and needs forgiveness, that no one is perfect, but that certain behaviors cannot be allowed for the health, safety and happiness of all.

### **THE THREE YEAR CYCLE OF LESSONS**

The Montessori curriculum for three to six year olds is a three-year continuum of Practical Life, Sensorial, Language, Math, Geography, Science, Art and Music. Each lesson builds on those before it. The early lessons are designed to attract interest from three year-olds; the later lessons are designed to attract the older children. The third year in the classroom is the culmination of all that has occurred before. The five year olds become the leaders in the class. Physical, emotional, social and academic development integrate in the brain/mind and body producing an explosion of learning. Children therefore get the greatest benefit from the environment when they remain in the program three full years.

## **THE CLASSROOM MATERIALS AND CURRICULUM**

### **The Process Is Everything**

In the life of a small child and thus in a Montessori environment, what is important is the **process of learning, not the product**. The classroom is a laboratory for the child's exploration and experiment, not for the perfection of a product, according to an adult standard. A child discovers over time what particularly interests him or her and finds that with practice s/he learns how to do all kinds of things to his/her satisfaction. This is learning driven from within. Pressure and stress are very negative for the young child's physical, emotional and intellectual development and self-confidence. Generally a small child is physically not capable of fine-tuned coordination. Thus, teachers do not single out any child's work or behavior as better than another's nor do they compare children or speak about them in their presence. The child's innate gifts need to be allowed to blossom without such comments and judgments. What is most important is how the child feels about his/her work, not what an adult thinks about it. In this early period of life a child must develop a positive inner strength and a conscious and subconscious wholeness and be shielded from the negative attitudes s/he will meet in the future.

### **Curriculum**

The specific lessons and educational materials in the classroom are divided into four general areas called Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics and Language. In addition to these areas, lessons are available in art, geography, music, literature, manners and physical development. The children are read fiction, non-fiction or poetry daily. Many lessons are presented as oral stories or games and songs. Biology and introduction to science are found in the Sensorial area and on a special shelf with rotating materials. Grace and Courtesy and food preparation are part of the Practical Life lessons and daily activities.

### **Practical Life**

The early Practical Life and art lessons begin as soon as the child comes into the classroom, followed by the initial Sensorial lessons soon after. Practical Life lessons are given because all children are interested them. These lessons are designed to stimulate both large muscle and eye-hand coordination and control for writing and other lessons in the classroom. Since the children are interested in these lessons, they promote increased concentration. The increasing complexity and sequencing within the lessons prepares for sensorial and math, as well as memory for all of the lessons in the classroom. Practical life lessons begin with manipulating interesting objects, spooning and pouring exercises and folding cloths. These are followed with polishing exercises, and the first cooking exercises such as washing fruit or vegetables, cutting them and then serving them. Eventually, the child learns how to make simple foods by him-herself and perhaps a snack for the classroom, such as squeezing orange juice, or cutting apples for applesauce. Later, the children have the opportunity of baking scones, muffins or bread. The children learn self care in washing hands, and care of the environment in taking care of plants, sweeping the floor, and mopping up spills. They learn how to wash dishes, load the dishwasher, how to wash cloths, fold and put them away.

### **Sensorial**

The Sensorial Area consists of a series of materials which stimulate the senses for the development of the mind in classifying impressions about the physical environment. A key to every aspect of the physical world: size, dimension, form, color, weight, texture, and their exploration through the five senses (touch, taste, hearing, tasting, smelling) is created by use of these materials. These lessons prepare the young mind for mathematics, geometry and science,

as well as clarify and order the child's sense impressions of the world. The first lessons use a sequenced block of cylinders of graduated sizes. Through matching the cylinders to their holes the children become sensitive to comparative size and depth. Many other exercises follow in dimension. The kindergarten lessons include building the binomial square and the binomial and trinomial cubes, as preparation for algebra in Montessori elementary school. The children learn correct mathematical terms beginning at the age of three for geometric forms: triangle, pyramid, square, cube, circle, sphere, oval, ovoid, etc. All the materials are mathematically correct, beautiful and pleasing to touch, enticing the child to explore them further.

### **Language**

Language study begins at age 3 with sound games that prepare the child for writing and reading. These lessons follow the child's pace in learning. Children are taught the sounds of the alphabet first, not the names of the letters. Parents are encouraged to speak with the teacher before teaching sounds, so that the parents and teachers may work together. Writing leads to reading as the child "writes" his own thoughts by building them with the moveable alphabet and by sounding out the words. Montessori believed in the concept of "Total Reading." This concept includes not just basic reading of short vowel words, but fluid reading including exposure to the structures of sentences and what meaning the specific order of words conveys. The specially created "Who Am I" stories are in little drawers on the shelves. The school has all the materials needed to teach reading, and many books for children who love them.

### **Mathematics**

Mathematics is taught first as quantity, then as symbol (number). Thus, the children learn that 1, 2, 3 actually means a quantity of objects, not just words or symbols. This process begins when the child shows interest and is able to understand the concept of quantity, which is generally around 4 years. Mathematics is increasingly taught after the age of 5. If the child is interested, s/he may learn all of the basic math facts through multiplication and division, as well as basic operations in fractions in his/her kindergarten year. Exceptional children may access advanced elementary materials in the classroom as needed.

### **Art**

Basic art lessons are presented in drawing, painting, collage, sculpture, printing, clay, weaving, sewing and fiber art, (which sometimes come home as projects, but are most often simply practiced in the classroom). These beginning practice lessons are, for instance, pulling a string through holes in a wooden card, or stringing beads and later threading a needle. Each lesson or material presented is given in a step-by-step fashion according to the interest of the individual child. Once one activity is physically mastered, the next level is presented. The teacher strives to present something of interest that is just beyond the skill of the child, so that s/he has to reach just a bit to be able to do it. This reaching to learn the new skill stimulates and holds the child's interest. If the new skill is too easy or too hard, the child's interest is soon lost. The teacher primarily focuses on observing each child's developmental skill level, entices the child's interest in each lesson and presents the lesson in a way that the child desires to do it. There are many art projects children may choose to work with as the year progresses.

### **Music**

Music is taught as part of the Sensorial area. It begins at age 3 with an introduction to the bells and the diatonic scale, which the children learn by singing, playing and listening to the bells. Songs are sung everyday. Rhythm is taught with clapping and other instruments as well as movement to music. Music appreciation is also taught, exposing the children to all kinds of

music, but especially European classical music, because of its complexity of frequencies and American folk songs for rhythm and culture. In the exercise room we have bells, maracas, tambourines, triangles, a drum and other percussions instruments to use with music.

### **Geography**

Children are exposed to geography through travel, families spread around the globe, and through television and books. Yellowstone Montessori has a goal of having a picture of every country in the world in the classroom among the geography materials. Examples of music, arts and crafts are displayed in the classroom for the children to discuss and admire. The children progress from the land and water globe to the painted globe, learning the continents. The children love the puzzles of the continents and countries, which they build, then trace and label. They have opportunities to choose to make maps and take them home. If the child is fascinated with geography, s/he has the opportunity to learn the location and name of every country, or to make special books on each continent or on the USA. Objects from different countries are shared. The children may learn the chief geographical biomes: deserts, grasslands, rain forests. They learn the physical geographical forms: island/lake, peninsula/gulf; isthmus/straight, as well as the chief rivers, mountain ranges, cities and capitals of the world. All of these materials are in the classroom, and primarily presented to children at age four, five and six.

### **Spanish**

The children are exposed to foreign languages in several ways. First, we have children whose native language is not English. In the past four years we have worked with children whose native languages are: Spanish, French, German, Polish and Arabic.

### **Physical Development**

Physical development and coordination happen as part of every move and every lesson in the classroom environment. Movement triggers the brain to learn. The hand leads the eye, the attention and the brain development. In the exercise room walking-on-the-line stimulates large motor coordination and balance. Dancing and movement exercises, lessons for jump rope, hopscotch and balance beam, ball handling exercises and musical chairs all contribute to a child's physical confidence. Outdoor games, free play in the sand box, on the climbing apparatus, and swings further enhance a child's physical development. The teachers are trained to work with the children in these ways. Children handle all of these experiences best with their regular teachers whom they have learned to love and trust, rather than with part-time instructors.

### **Cycles of Educational Themes**

In addition to the regular Montessori curricula, Yellowstone Montessori follows a cycle of themes based on national holidays, the cycles of the seasons and weather, and the particular interests of individual children. Art projects, celebrations, science lessons, books read, songs, cooking lessons, pictures and objects studied, and special visitors to the classroom, are all integrated in a cycle of themes depending on the interests of the children. As part of these themes the children learn about the solar system, magnetism, rocks, basic physics, the microscope and binoculars, shells, the growth cycles of plants and animals and the cultures of other nations.

## EARLY LESSONS FOR ENTERING THREE AND FOUR YEAR OLDS

**Practical Life:** many of these materials remain on the shelves all year, some rotate.

### **Care of Self, Care of Environment, Grace & Courtesy, Movement on the Line and Art.**

Dressing frames: large button frame, snap frame, hook & eye frame, buckle frame, zip frame,

Stringing: beads

Sorting: nuts, buttons, bolts... to color or size

Opening: boxes, jars, locks, Matrushka (wooden nesting dolls)

Spooning: lentils, rice

Folding: napkins, aprons

Handling precious objects: jewelry, porcelain, heavy glass, tea cups & saucers, crystal

Dusting: tables, shelves, floors

Pouring pitchers: lentils, rice

Pouring Water from pitchers: into glass, cup & saucer, into bowls and basins, into buckets

Sweeping: indoors, outdoors

Polishing: wood, shoes, leaves, glass, silver

Squeezing: sponges,

Wringing: wash cloths, floor cloths

Washing: hands, nails, faces, mirrors, windows, tables & chairs, cloths, dishes,

Setting a table for lunch or dinner

Serving: snack or tea

### **Food exercises:**

Tweezing corn kernels off the cob

Grinding: corn

Cutting: bananas, celery, potatoes, apples, cheese

Peeling: carrots, parsnips, cucumbers, potatoes, apples

Cracking: nuts

Grating: soap, cinnamon, cheese

Spreading: humus, cream cheese...

Squeezing: oranges

Washing: fruit, vegetables

Cracking & whisking eggs

Measuring: cornmeal, flour, salt, baking powder, liquids

Cooking/baking: scones, banana muffins, applesauce, pancakes, muffins, bread

**Outdoor exercises:** raking leaves, sweeping porches, planting pots, sprouting seeds, watering flowers and vegetables, weeding, growing vegetables and flowers, harvesting food

### **Tool Use:**

Sorting nuts and bolts, hammering pegs in clay, use of clamp, screwdriver, nut driver and vise, saw, hand-sanding, drilling with hand drills, hammering nails into wood, and sawing wood.

**Care of plants:** watering, feeding, washing leaves, arranging flowers, removing dead leaves and flowers.

**Recycling:** paper, glass, metal, cardboard, plastic bottles



**Art: (introduction to drawing, painting, clay, printing, fiber art)**

Play Doh

Glue & paper

Lacing cards

Bees wax blocks for coloring

Cutting Paper: wide-lined, thin lined, zigzag, curved

Plasticize: using a roller and shape cutters

Crayons:

Felt pens:

Painting on easel: color, stroke, line, pattern

Real Clay: pinch pot; rolling and building techniques for small pots; painting on clay

Sewing a button, basting stitch, hemming stitch

Collage

Paper folding

Basic weaving: with paper, with fabric strips, with yarn

Knitting/crochet

Special projects according to seasons

Sculpture with wood and clay

**Geography:**

Geography pictures from books (discussion, reading stories)

Land and water globe

Land/water forms (Lake/Island, gulf/peninsula, strait/isthmus)

Making their own land forms with clay

Continents/oceans globe

Continents puzzle

North America

South America (eventually USA 50 states and all countries of world)

**Sensorial: (preparation for math and science)**

Exercises for Study of:

Dimension: cylinders, cubes, rods, geometric plane and solid forms

Color

Texture

Temperature

Smell

Taste

Study of leaf shapes

Study of structure of flower

**Mathematics:**

Quantities 1-10, association of quantity with numeral

Categories of decimal system: units, tens, hundreds and thousands.

Formation of teen numbers

Formation of tens numbers (11-99)

Writing and forming numbers 1-100

Forming numbers 11-9,999 with the golden bead decimal materials

Introduction to basic operations: addition, subtraction, multiplication & division

If children stay the third year they count to 1000, and begin working on addition and subtraction tables.

**Language:**

Vocabulary through pictures, matching, stories, rhymes, songs

Sound games with objects and pictures

Singing sounds to music and movement (Abby Astronaut)

Introduction of the Alphabet through tracing sandpaper letters and large cut-out alphabets

Rhyming and other beginning sounds and blending sounds work

Once the sounds of the letters have been learned then words are formed from sounds

Writing cursive and manuscript

If children stay through kindergarten, they begin the study of 2 and 3 letter phonograms or spelling patterns in the English language as well as the analysis of sentences, writing sentences and little “stories,” reading books

Teachers read literature daily: poetry, fiction, non-fiction, biographies for children. Books are chosen for beauty, content, educational or cultural value for young children. We have anthologies of literature for young children as well. We also have every truck book we can find.

**Character development and Virtue:**

Discussions at circle time and during any situation that arises naturally

Silence game

Songs and poems of gratitude each day before lunch or snack.

Putting on our “Golden Gloves” (“I do unto others as I would have others do unto me”)

Reading stories which emphasize the concepts of certain character traits through stories and discussions throughout the year.

Modeling behavior: It is essential that the teachers model this behavior. Some of the qualities emphasized are: gratitude, respectfulness, friendliness, helpfulness, kindness, patience, cleanliness, obedience, orderliness, fairness, generosity, forgiveness, persistence, joyfulness, and truthfulness.

**Emotions:** Books for very young children are read and discussed which name and describe emotions. Skills in communicating feelings appropriately are developed step-by-step through practice in the classroom and out on the playground as part of the natural flow of each day.

**Sample List of Grace and Courtesy Lessons for New Students:** Grace and Courtesy demonstrations begin on the first day, with such lessons as “How to blow your nose.” These dramatizations continue throughout the year but are more intensively presented during the first three months of the year to help the children adjust to the environment. The children enjoy the opportunity to practice and often find the presentations amusing.

<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. How to blow one’s nose.</li> <li>2. How to sit in a chair.</li> <li>3. How to carry a table.</li> <li>4. How to greet someone</li> <li>5. How to shake hands.</li> <li>6. How to say “Good Morning”</li> <li>7. How to say “Goodbye” to someone.</li> <li>8. How to thank someone.</li> <li>9. How to speak in a soft voice</li> <li>10. How to pass by someone in a crowded area.</li> <li>11. How to pass food at table.</li> <li>12. How to ask for food at table.</li> <li>13. How to serve food to others at table.</li> <li>14. How to offer food or tea to a guest or classmate.</li> <li>15. How to speak to a friend, when s/he is across the classroom.</li> <li>16. How to walk around a rug &amp;/or someone’s work.</li> <li>17. How to roll and unroll a rug.</li> <li>18. How to carry a chair.</li> <li>19. How to open a door.</li> <li>20. How to walk quietly in the classroom.</li> <li>21. How to walk across a crowded room.</li> <li>22. How to get the teacher’s attention.</li> <li>23. How to introduce children to each other.</li> <li>24. How to invite someone to play with you.</li> <li>25. How to ask if you can play with a group.</li> <li>26. How to form a group in a chosen place in the classroom</li> <li>27. How to join a group forming in the classroom.</li> <li>28. How to form a line.</li> <li>29. How to walk in a line.</li> <li>30. How to wait in line.</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>31. How to excuse oneself from the table.</li> <li>32. How to wait to eat at table.</li> <li>33. How to use a napkin.</li> <li>34. How to have a polite conversation at table with your partner.</li> <li>35. How to ask for food.</li> <li>36. How to sit to receive a lesson/presentation.</li> <li>37. How to form a circle.</li> <li>38. How to carry materials.</li> <li>39. How to clean up after ourselves.</li> <li>40. How to listen to a story, poem or song.</li> <li>41. How to sing a line after the teacher has presented it.</li> <li>42. How to ask if you can observe a lesson.</li> <li>43. How to wait for the teacher’s attention</li> <li>44. How to ask another child for help.</li> <li>45. How to stand up from the floor and bend to pick up materials.</li> <li>46. How to sit cross-legged in a group.</li> <li>47. How to stand up from a cross-legged position.</li> <li>48. How to line up on the playground when called.</li> <li>49. How to line up for a fire drill</li> <li>50. How to ask if you may help.</li> <li>51. How to respond to the bell.</li> <li>52. How to refuse an invitation</li> <li>53. How to join walking on the line.</li> <li>54. How to sing with a group.</li> <li>55. How to tell someone to stop.</li> <li>56. How to ask someone to move.</li> <li>57. How to welcome a visitor to the classroom.</li> <li>58. How to sit in a circle for songs</li> <li>ETC.</li> </ol>
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### **Physical Education and Playground Activities**

The physical education program includes the playground activities. Yellowstone Montessori has a good-sized playground with two large sandboxes, swings, a small climber with slide and large climber with slide. These activities have wood chips underneath them. A pavilion with open sides contains a play refrigerator, sink and stove where children can play “house” or other games. There is a large grassy area for kicking balls in the summer/spring/fall. In the summer child wade in a little pool and run through the sprinklers. A small grassy “hill” for climbing and rolling in nice weather is used as a sledding hill in the winter. To the northwest side of the building a cement pad is used to teach traditional skills such as jumping rope, bouncing and throwing balls, basketball, hop scotch, jump rope or four square.

# OPERATIONS

Most administration and operations policies and procedures are included in the **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES** section of this handbook. They are listed in alphabetical order starting on page 28.

## **STAFF BIOGRAPHIES**

### **Constance Dratz, (B.A., M.A.) – Head of School**

Constance has 3 years of academic training in Montessori theory and practice. During the classroom training she did internships in Bozeman, Milwaukee and Washington D.C. in both inner city public and private Montessori schools. She has also worked in three Montessori schools in Bozeman. Constance is certified to teach Montessori primary and elementary children aged 2½ to 12 years old through the Association Montessori Internationale (A.M.I.) based in Holland. This organization is the original international teacher-training and certifying body founded by Maria Montessori and the most rigorous training for Montessori teachers in the world. Constance earned her M.A. degree in Montessori elementary education in 2005 through Loyola University in Maryland, the U.S. program created by A.M.I. She completed further training in 2006-07.

Constance fell in love with Montessori schools when she first discovered them at age 21. Subsequently, her two children were in Montessori pre-schools in California, Europe and Montana. Her daughter's incredible experience in an AMI school in Holland led Constance to remember the organization when she decided to pursue teacher training.

Constance received her B.A. in English from the University of California, Santa Cruz. In addition to other courses, she has taken undergraduate (UC Berkeley) or graduate (MSU) work in chemistry, calculus, marine biology, art, music, economic geography, anthropology, foreign languages, American history, European history and philosophy, psychology, Asian philosophy and religion, school management, child development, learning disabilities, and counseling. Constance taught 5<sup>th</sup>/6<sup>th</sup> grade through 10<sup>th</sup> grade at a traditional private school, primarily English and history during a 9-year period of her life. She also served on a private school board for 15 years. Yellowstone Montessori is the second school she has founded.

Constance's husband, **Edward Dratz**, has been a professor of chemistry and biochemistry at Montana State University for 25 years. Ed and Constance have been married for 35 years. They have two grown children--one works as a physicist for the Air Force and the other as Director of Federal Government Relations for a large corporation in Washington D.C. They have two grandchildren. Ed founded a local biotech company called Z-Dye. Yellowstone Montessori is the fourth school Ed has helped to found. He served on a private school board for twenty years.

Constance enjoys reading historical novels and books on child development, health, investments and travel. She also loves skiing, snorkeling, gardening, and taking regular walks with her husband. And she finds great joy in creating materials for Montessori classrooms by sewing, painting and crafting. Constance believes in life-long education and personal growth. The average age of other participants in her Montessori training programs was about 23, so she was the oldest. Although there are drawbacks to being older, she believes there are also many benefits such as perspective, experience and self-knowledge. Constance renews her Red Cross certifications every year.

## **STAFF BIOGRAPHIES continued:**

### **Cynthia Hulme, (B.S.) - Teacher:**

Cynthia Hulme is an A.M.I. certified primary Montessori teacher. She is also certified by the Pan American Montessori Society and audited the Caspari Montessori Institute Training Course in 2001. Cynthia has taught primary Montessori in private Montessori schools in Colorado, California and Montana for many of the last 30 years. When her son was young she also substituted in Montessori infant, toddler, primary and first grade classrooms, worked in the office and was a bus driver for the school.

Cynthia grew up in Boulder, Colorado and her family owned and showed Arabian horses. She earned a Bachelor of Science degree in psychology from Colorado State University.

Ms. Hulme worked for Sears for 6 years after college before discovering Montessori. When she first read about Montessori in Maria Montessori, Her Life and Work, she exclaimed, "This is the way children have to learn!" Thus, her passion for the Montessori Method was born and the children continue to teach her more every day of the miracles of each one's "Inner Teacher."

### **Susan McClain Wells, (B.A.) – Assistant Teacher**

Susan has been working as an educator for most of her life. She has a BA from California State University Dominguez Hills where she studied art, philosophy, child development and speech pathology. She received an endorsement in K-12 Art Education from Montana State University while studying child development, child psychology and elementary education and volunteering at the Child Development Center. She worked for years teaching art to special needs children in public and private schools. In recent years she was introduced to Montessori and worked as a teacher's assistant at three local Montessori preschools. Susan is very enthusiastic about learning as much as possible about Montessori materials and lessons and is hoping to enter the Montessori certification training later this year.

### **Amie Hoagland, (B.A.) -- Assistant Teacher**

Amie recently completed her certification for early childhood development through Age of Montessori. She saw the beauty of the Montessori message unfold within her daughter and made a change in careers, leaving retail management for teaching.

After college Amie was a juvenile probation officer. She always felt her work with children was unfinished, and discovered teaching pre-school enabled her to significantly impact future generations in a positive way. Amie holds a B.A. in English from Idaho State University. She lives in Bozeman with her husband, Chris, and daughter, Mallory. She also has an additional family member, Felix Napoleon, a mini schnauzer. As a family, they enjoy watching the New Orleans Saints, cooking, hiking, and visiting many parks in the area.

### **Kathleen C. Boyle, (B.A., M.S.) – Administrator**

Kathleen's primary focus is school administration including records, reports, files, bookkeeping and communication with parents. She graduated from the University of California at Davis with a Bachelors degree in History and earned a Master of Science in Counseling from Sacramento State. Since graduating she has enjoyed courses in business administration, accounting, computer software and personnel management. With 35 years of daily computer use, she is proficient in many software programs and databases. In 2011-2012 she took courses in Accounting and QuickBooks through Gallatin College.

For the past 40 years she has worked as an executive for non-profit organizations handling a wide variety of projects from managing large events to short and long-term business planning. Her experience covers many industries--from state government regulatory oversight to managing personnel and marketing for a county transit district to managing conferences for a large state REALTOR® association. She has worked with

“children” of all ages and finds preschool-age children particularly delightful. As Constance Dratz’ sister, she shares her sister’s passion and commitment to providing the best possible education for the young child.

In her spare time Kathleen enjoys her Shih-Tzu doggie, Sally, sports of all kinds (both as player and spectator), reading, exploring her family genealogy at Ancestry.com, gardening and photography.

### **Volunteer Opportunities:**

Parents may volunteer to help the school in a variety of capacities both inside and outside of the classroom. Once or twice a year the school may hold a Work and Play Day on a Friday afternoon or Saturday. Families are invited to come to the school to do work projects like planting, painting, construction. Students and their siblings are welcome to assist the adults or to play. Families may be asked to bring a dish and participate in a Pot-Luck lunch.

Some of the other ways parents (and other relatives) may volunteer are as follows:

- Playground monitors
- Playground development: pruning, raking leaves or wood chips, watering, weeding
- Material Making: Sewing, Copying, Laminating, Cutting...
- Listening to children reading
- Dusting Shelves
- Cooking (Potlucks, special occasions)
- Driving on Field Trips (To Museum or Rocky Creek Farm)
- Cultural/Educational Presentations: music, geology, astronomy, carpentry
- Helping with celebrations and special events
- Care and feeding of fish, cleaning the aquarium
- Clean-up following potlucks and parent meetings
- Creation of vegetable, herb and flower gardens
- Watering & weeding of gardens
- Sweeping decks, porches, and walkways;
- Shoveling snow from deck and porches
- Organizing an emergency phone tree





1705 West Kagy Blvd.  
Bozeman, Montana 59715  
(406) 567-5667

Insert copy of School Year Calendar



**Insert copy of Daily Schedule**

## Snack Schedule

**YELLOWSTONE MONTESSORI ACADEMY**  
**TUITION AND FEES**  
**JUNE 2015-JUNE 2016**

SCHEDULE & FEE DESCRIPTION	LUNCH?*	FEES	MONTHLY TUITION
<b>Application Fee</b> – Not refundable, due with application		\$ 50.00	
<b>Registration Fee</b> – Not refundable. Due at time the child is accepted for enrollment.		\$145.00	
<b>Materials Fee</b> – Not refundable. Due at the time the child is accepted for enrollment.		\$180.00	
<b>Monthly Tuition</b>			
Three (3) half days, 8:30-11:50am	No		\$450
Four (4) half days, 8:30-11:50 am	No		\$520
Five (5) half days, 8:30-11:50 am	No		\$565
Two (2) full days & 2 half days	Yes		\$625
Three (3) full days	Yes		\$625
Three (3) full days & 2 half days	Yes		\$690
Four (4) full days, 8:30am-3:00pm	Yes		\$690
Five (5) full days, 8:30am-3:00pm	Yes		\$775
After school care on an hourly basis	No		\$7/hour
<b>After school care, 3:00pm-5:15pm daily</b> Snack provided by school.	No		\$140/month

\*Each child attending during lunch (12:30-1:00pm) must bring a lunch from home. A healthy morning snack is provided by the school.

**TUITION:** A normal year includes 10 payments per school year of 9.5 months for children and 10 months for staff. Registration Fee of \$145 and Materials Fee of \$180 are due when a student is enrolled and no later than July 1, 2015. Invoices are e-mailed a few days before the end of each month. Tuition payments are due on the first of the month September 1, 2015 through June 1, 2016.

**AFTER SCHOOL CARE:** Offered 5 days per week from 3:00 pm to 5:15 pm at \$7 per hour based on actual hours or for \$140 per month for children who need care 5 days per week, \$112 for care 4 days per week; \$84 per month for care 3 days per week, \$56 per month for care for 2 days per week and \$28 per month for care 1 day per week. For after school care on other than a regular monthly basis, the school will keep attendance and parents will be billed for actual hours. A snack will be provided to children staying after 3:30pm.

**PAYMENT POLICIES:** Each family will be billed monthly according to the terms of their specific contract. The Registration and Materials Fees are not refundable because these payments hold a place in the class for your child. **The Registration and Materials Fees are due when your child is accepted.** Payments are due on the first of each month September through June. Payments will be considered late on the 5<sup>th</sup> of each month and a late fee of \$25.00 will be assessed thereafter. **The same monthly tuition is due each month regardless of the number of days a child has attended school. For instance, in December the school is closed for more than one week. However, the tuition is the same as the months when a child attends every week day in the month.**

## SUMMER SESSIONS AND ORIENTATION FOR NEW STUDENTS

Our Summer Session follows a more relaxed schedule of learning and activities. The program is designed so your child can take advantage of the nice weather and the varied outdoor experiences that we can offer during the summertime. We offer four Summer Sessions of two weeks each. Parents may sign their child(ren) up for one or more sessions. Attendance at Summer Sessions will not affect your child's enrollment for school in Fall for the regular school year.

In the mornings we offer the traditional Montessori classroom lessons that are presented to the children during the regular school year. In the afternoon we spend most of the time outdoors. Children will learn how to grow vegetables and other plants, explore insects, local birds and other wildlife. The children will also play in the wading pool and run through the sprinklers.

A Summer Session Program Registration form is given to parents in March so they may review the schedule and fees. If you want your child to attend any or all Summer Sessions, we ask that parents complete this form and return it to our office by the first of April with a registration fee check for \$50. If parents do not plan for your child to attend Summer Sessions, we ask that you notify the office so a note can be placed in your child's file.

We ask **Parents of new students** to schedule at least one two-week summer session for their child. This time is primarily for new students to become familiar with the classroom, teachers, and other students, the daily schedule and classroom protocols. Then when a new student starts school in the fall, they know what to expect and look forward to school and seeing their new friends.

Below is a chart of the schedule and fees for 2015 Summer Sessions.

Schedule/Fees	Lunch? Parent Provides	2-Week Session Tuition	Mon.	Tues.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.
Registration Fee - \$50 – Will be deducted from first session tuition							
Materials Fee – Four Summer Sessions \$70 or \$20/Session							
Three (3) half days, 8:30am-11:50am	No	\$225.00					
Four (4) half days, 8:30-11:50 am	No	\$260.00					
Four (4) half days, 11:30-4:00pm	Yes	\$260.00					
Five (5) half days, 8:30-11:50 am	No	\$282.50					
Five (5) half days, 11:30am-4:00pm	Yes	\$282.50					
Two (2) full days & 2 half days	Yes	\$312.50					
Three (3) full days	Yes	\$312.50					
Two (2) full days & 3 half days	Yes	\$327.50					
Three (3) full days & 2 half days	Yes	\$345.00					
Four (4) full days, 8:30am-3:00pm	Yes	\$345.00					
Five (5) full days, 8:30am-3:00pm	Yes	\$387.50					
After school care til 4:00 pm	No	\$40					

## **POLICIES AND PROCEDURES** (by Topic in Alphabetical Order)

### **ABSENCE POLICY:**

If your child is to be absent due to family vacation, please notify the school two weeks in advance. If your child is absent due to illness, please call the school before 8:30 a.m. each morning s/he will be absent. Please list the reason for the absence, because if the illness is of a certain type, we are required by law to notify the County Health Nurse about the illness, not the identity of the child. Keep in mind that parents are liable for the monthly tuition regardless of whether your child is absent for illness, vacation or any other reason.

**ALLERGIES:** Please see discussion under “Medical Policies.”

### **ANNOUNCEMENTS:**

Announcements related to school activities may, at the discretion of the school, be sent out to parents via e-mail. Under most circumstances, e-mails will be written and sent by the school administrator from the school’s computer. No announcements are made in the classroom except by a teacher or a child. They must pertain to activities in the classroom.

### **APPLICATION AND ADMISSIONS POLICIES AND PROCEDURES:**

Yellowstone Montessori Academy welcomes children of all races, national origins, and creeds and does not discriminate on the basis of gender, religion or family of origin. We are committed to having a diversified student body for benefit of all. Admissions decisions are based on a first-come first-served basis, depending upon the number of openings available and the schedule requested by the parent(s). Montessori principles stipulate that a class needs to be as closely balanced as possible as to the number and gender of students in each age group. This is difficult to achieve when all of the students do not attend full day programs. Diversity is always an important consideration in the formation of a class community.

The application procedure is as follows: a) Parents and child(ren) meet with the head of school formally or informally and tour the school. Applicant families are given written information and application; b) Parents submit the completed application with \$50 fee; c) Parents first receive an acceptance e-mail or phone call which is followed by a formal letter of acceptance. If acceptance is within a couple of months of attendance, a registration packet is included with the acceptance; d) Or, parents are notified that their child is on the waiting list or not accepted. e) Parents complete the contract and other forms in the registration packet and mail or bring them with the registration fee of \$140 and materials fee of \$175 to the school. f) Registration must be completed prior to, or on the first day the child attends school by paying remainder of first month’s tuition according to the chosen program (half-day or full day) and completing the remaining forms required by the State of Montana.

### **ARRIVAL ON FIRST DAYS OF SCHOOL – NEW STUDENTS:**

Since all children are very different, we allow each child and his/her parents flexibility in the schedule during the first days of school. If your young child quickly adjusts to being away from home and to the school environment, then the child is welcome to attend school all morning or all day as you choose. **Our regular full school day is scheduled from 8:30 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.; our half day morning is 8:30 a.m. to 12:15 pm.** If you need to drop your child off earlier, teachers are at school by 7:50 a.m. **We also provide after school care until 5:15 pm.** Check with Kathleen to get more details if you need this care provided for your child(ren). Some children stay late every day and others stay only occasionally. We do not like to have more than five children in aftercare.

### **New Students under the age of 3:**

If at all possible, we want new students to experience at least two weeks of orientation to school in the summer. They can then begin with their regular mutually-agreed upon schedule when school begins again in the autumn. During orientation new students under the age of 3 may spend only 1-2 hours at school the first few days between 9:00 – 11:00a.m. It is very important for the parent(s) to be away for at least part of that time. Beginning with the third week attendance is hopefully hours 8:30 – 11:30. The first week of school for new students will primarily be spent in the classroom and outdoors becoming familiar with the school schedule and protocols. After the second or third week each child's and family situation may be re-evaluated to determine what is best for the child and family, and also whether the child's hours should be shortened or extended to include lunch, full day or extended day. New students near 4 years of age will be considered individually as to whether they will begin school with the returning students on the first day at the end of August or follow a procedure similar to the one for new younger students beginning in the middle of the first week of September.

**Returning Students:** These students will begin school on the regular schedule at the beginning of September.

### **SAYING “GOOD BYES” IN THE MORNING:**

#### **New Students:**

For some parents and children the first days of school will be seemingly without difficulty. For others there will be tears and anxiety. Please know that whatever you and your child experience emotionally, there is a wide range of response to this new event. Some children smile and wave “goodbye,” marching in to hang up their own coats, while others cling desperately and wail, “Nooooo!” Some of the children who march in easily the first week or two suddenly have a change of heart a few weeks into the school year and start crying. It's as if they suddenly realize that school or work is what will be in their lives from now on and they panic. They haven't become fully comfortable at school yet and they suddenly yearn for the familiarity of home.

For many people the parent/child bond is the strongest most enduring bond in life. On the first day parents often have as much pain over leaving their children as the children do about being left, and sometimes considerably more. If this experience is a difficult one for you and/or your child, think carefully about how you are going to respond to it. Recognize your own feelings of worry, loss, anxiety or fear, and realize that your child will know that you are upset at some level and respond with anxiety or concern for you. If the child associates your worry and concern with the school, it can amplify and confuse the child's own responses to leaving home and coming to school. Think about your child's feelings and what in your actions may send clear, supportive and consistent messages to him/her. Your child needs to experience your confidence in him or her to adjust to this big change in daily life. S/he also needs to know that you feel s/he will be safe in this environment, which you have lovingly chosen for him or her.

Children don't understand the cause of a parent's worry and may experience it as a lack of confidence in him/herself to adjust to the new environment. Or, s/he may associate the parents' worry with the school as a place to fear. When there are extended farewells, children sense that their parents are uncomfortable leaving them. Experiencing the parents' ambivalent feelings increases the child's anxiety. Therefore, having the child at school for just one or two hours on the first few days helps both the parent and the child **practice** parting.

Occasionally, the issue of whether or not a child goes to school becomes a power struggle. This may happen when the process of farewell gets extended in response to the child's pleas. In a power struggle what the child feels about school is not the issue. The child is trying to find out whether or not s/he has power over the parent and the school, and whether or not s/he can direct the situation. If the parent is calm, matter-of-fact and quick, the conflict doesn't have time to escalate. What the child needs to experience is that s/he can happily adjust to new situations and people. This builds confidence and a sense of security and helps avoid the conflict of wills, which may or may not be based on anxiety.

However, there may be special circumstances regarding your child. For instance, an only child who has never been separated from his/her parents, or a child who does not speak English, may often have a much more difficult time separating from Mommy and being left in a strange situation. Please talk to the head teacher about your concerns and your child's special circumstances. We will try our best to be flexible and help your child to adjust happily to school. Also, consider trying to prepare your child for separating from you to go to school by giving him or her opportunities to practice separation for an hour or two.

Finally, psychologists who study separation have observed that some parents may be disappointed when children do not seem upset when the parents are leaving and will provoke reactions from their children asking for yet another hug or by calling "goodbye" from the door. Children, who do not cry, love their parents just as much as children who do cry. Crying is not a sign of loving one's parents more or less. Consider that going back for the second hug you need, may make leaving harder for your child.

The following procedures for dropping off and picking up children have been developed with the needs of the new children and families in mind, as well as the needs of the children who are continuing in school. We hope that following these procedures will help all of the parents and children adjust more easily.

#### **ARRIVAL PROCEDURES: 7:50 to 8:35 a.m.**

**Driving: Please enter the parking lot from Kagy going one way. When parking keep an eye out for small children darting between cars. Do not let your child get out of the car without you beside him/her. PLEASE DO NOT LET YOUR CAR IDLE WHILE YOU DROP OFF OR PICK UP YOUR CHILD. The fumes leak into the classroom and compromise the health of both teachers and children. Please take your child's hand to walk through the gate at the EAST side of the building up the stairs to the deck at the back of the building. Enter the door off the deck paying attention to other adults and small children who may be standing next to the door inside the building.**

**The Eventual Goal: To bring your child into the cubby room, have your "goodbyes" and watch the staff member greet your child. Sign-in on the sheet. Your child has removed his/her shoes, put on slippers and hangs up his/her coat by him/herself. Take your child to the bathroom and then give him or her another hug. Please be careful not to hit someone waiting to park when you're backing out. Wave to your child who will be waving to you in the bay window at the front of the school. Drive out of the parking lot through the Maple Lane/18<sup>th</sup> Avenue exit. Your child will watch you drive away.**

#### **SIGN-IN/OUT SHEET:**

On the small desk next to the back entry door you'll see a clipboard with a Sign-in/out sheet. Please sign-in on the sheet, note the time and date. Write down any messages with the date and sign it on note paper provided and leave it in the clear plastic bin above the desk. **Keep in mind that the Sign-in/out sheet is a legal document that is required by the State of Montana.** It documents that your child was dropped off by you (or an adult authorized by you) and left in our care. When you sign your child out at the end of his/her school day, you are documenting that you (or another adult you have authorized) have taken charge of your child. **Please do NOT allow your child to write on this document as that makes it difficult to read. We provide many opportunities for your child to practice writing his/her name during the school day.**

**The learning period:** Some children have a more difficult time with transitions than others. It is most helpful to them for all of us to be consistent with routines. During the first few weeks with the youngest children, parents may want to come into the cubby area to help their children. If children wear outdoor shoes they are able to remove themselves (see clothes), it will make their morning arrival much easier. The staff will be giving children lessons in how to put on and take off their coats and how to hang them up. If the children are expected to do this, it will help them learn faster. However, buttons and zippers take much longer to learn. If parents help with the buttons or zipper, a child may be able to go into the coat area and accomplish the rest by him/herself. We expect to have staff on hand to help the children, but sometimes there may be a slight wait involved while

other children are being helped. Remember the staff will need to see that all the children are dressed to go outside in cold weather starting in early October, so the sooner children can learn to do some of their dressing by themselves the easier it will be for everyone. If your child is three, if at all possible, please take them to the bathroom before you leave.

**Early arrival:** Children who are signed up for early arrival from 7:50 to 8:20am, follow the same procedures as other children, although the teacher will have them come into the classroom early to help with preparing for the day.

#### **LATE ARRIVAL MEANS QUIET VOICES:**

If a child arrives after 8:40 a.m., a staff member may not be present in the entrance area. Please wait in the doorway until a staff member can leave the classroom to come out and formally greet your child and have you sign in. Please do NOT enter the classroom with your child. Most children are very uncomfortable when coming in late to the classroom, just as adults are. This procedure will make arrival more comfortable and ensure safety. Do not leave your child alone in the cubby room or bathroom. We generally sit down for Circle Time at 8:45 a.m. Always remember that other children will probably be in the classroom working and thus **quiet voices need to be maintained throughout the school building** all morning and each afternoon. A shouted greeting or goodbye disrupts all the other children. Also, calling a beloved child back for an extra hug or kiss can disrupt the child's transition from car to classroom and bring on sudden anxiety and resistance to staying at school.

#### **PICK-UP PROCEDURES: 12:00-12:15 or 3:00 p.m.**

**Driving:** Parents enter the parking lot from West Kagy Avenue, park and come in the Northeast entrance (from the deck..

**Summertime:** In the summertime weather permitting, the children will be out in the playground. Please go out to the playground to find and greet your child. Encourage your child to help put away the toys s/he is using. Then take him/her with you to the cubby room to sign out and collect belongings.

**Regular School Year: If your child is in the classroom, please do not call out into the classroom for your child. If you are arriving early, remove your shoes and silently enter the classroom. Wait and signal a teacher to let her know you are there.** Once you locate your child, greet them quietly and make sure they put away the lesson materials they're working on before leaving. It is very important that your child finish whatever work s/he is doing, especially if it involves cleaning up and putting things away. In this way the classroom and students will be less disturbed. Sometimes the children may be dancing or doing other activities in the exercise room. You are welcome to come in and watch or join the children in the exercise. When there is a break, you can get your child's attention and take them to the cubby room to get ready to leave. Then sign the sign-out sheet and note the time. Always take your child's hand when walking them out of the school to the car in the parking lot.

#### **General Policies:**

- 1. Half-Day Students: pick-up at 12:10- 12:20 p.m..**
- 2. Parents picking up their children in the middle of the day** need to be aware that other things may be going on in the building. The other children should not be disturbed if they are working, eating, washing up, etc. Please be very quiet if you happen to be late picking up your child, as some children may be working on lessons and others listening to a story.
- 3. Full Day students: pick-up 3:00pm.** After 3:30 p.m. any child still remaining at school will be considered to be in after school care and charged \$7 per hour for that care. If parents are going to be late, they need to send the school an e-mail or call the office to leave a message. .



**4. After-School Care students: pick-up by 5:15 pm** Please make arrangements with Kathleen by email for after school care that will occur on a regular or occasional basis. She will make sure we have space on the day(s) requested and let you know if we can accommodate your child. If something unexpected comes up and you are not able to pick your child up at the regular time, please phone the school and talk to someone or leave a message. That way the teachers will not be concerned when you don't pick up your child at the appointed time. The teacher will also make sure your child knows that you'll be coming a little late, so that s/he will not be worried.

**5. Conversations with Constance during school hours:** Please do not carry on important conversations about a child's behavior when she is trying to observe the children on the playground. However, at times such conversations are necessary and she can duck behind a door or go into a private area of the playground to have them for a few minutes. General conversations are fine. For serious conversations Constance needs to be able to give your concerns her full attention, as you deserve. Please send her an email to "YellowstoneMontessori@hotmail.com" or leave a phone message on the telephone at 587-5667 or a written note in the Message/Payment Box above the Sign-in table. Or, please leave voice message on the phone at 406-587-5667 with the best phone number and time to reach you. Sometimes an appointment can be right after school at 3:15 pm once things are quieter and the transition time is over. Otherwise, she can communicate by phone or email.

**6. End-of-day greetings:** You are the most important person in the world at the end of the day when your child first sees you. **Please leave the cell phone in the car.** If you greet him or her with enthusiasm, you just might set a precedent that continues throughout a young life into high school. Wouldn't it be nice to have a 16 year-old that yelled, "Hi, Mom!" when s/he came home from school? The end of each school day is a precious time for parent(s) to cherish and re-bond with child(ren). Few things are as important. Such unrivaled delight in you as parent(s) lasts for only a few years until friends, sports and other activities grab your child's attention. So, glory in it now and enjoy it for all it's worth. To this end we have the end-of-day procedures to preserve the importance of this bonding time and to mitigate the confusion and stress for all.

***Children playing on the playground:*** In good weather the children may be playing outside in the afternoon when you come to pick up your child. In such cases, parent(s) who arrive early may come around through the East gate (close it behind you) to find your child in the back yard. You may relax and enjoy the afternoon as long as teachers are not distracted from their oversight of the children. *Make certain the teacher knows you are picking up your child and that you sign out when you leave.* Be certain to check the cubby for dirty clothes. *You are responsible for your child from the time you arrive, as your arrival may affect his/her behavior. You and your child may stay or leave as you wish until dismissal time. However, if your child is upset or unruly in your presence and the behavior is not resolved quickly, it upsets the other children and confuses them as to who is in charge.*

**Appointments:** If you are picking up a child for an appointment unexpectedly in the middle of the day, please check to see if there is someone in the office to help you. Otherwise, stand in the classroom by the work drawers until you catch a teacher's eye. The teacher will be happy to fetch your child for you. It is less disturbing to the other children when staff enters the classroom to get the child, rather than other adults who are less well known especially early in the school year.

#### **BACK-PACKS and LUNCH BOXES:**

Back packs are often too big and too heavy for small children. Backpacks with wheels often do not fit in the cubby. Parents need to determine what is best for their child. Each child will have two double hooks at school for coats, sweaters, and snowsuits and a separate plastic box for two or more sets of clean clothes. Your child will have a separate cubby for shoes and slippers and another drawer for classwork. Also, if your child

participates in the choice of a lunch box, s/he might recognize it more easily and be more eager to see what is inside for lunch.

### **BATHROOM USE and POTTY TRAINING:**

**Bathrooms:** All children use the same toilet facilities. There are two toilets for children and one for adults. Children may use the bathroom at the same time to wash their hands under adult supervision but may not use the toilet except in privacy. Teachers rotate the children through the use of the bathrooms, so that toileting is private unless a small child needs help from a staff member with clothing, or washing/wiping him/herself.

**Potty Training:** All students enrolled at Yellowstone Montessori are required to be potty trained. To minimize “accidents,” please have your child go to the bathroom before s/he enters the classroom in the morning. We remind children several times a day to use the bathroom. However, we understand that accidents do happen and will kindly and sensitively help a child clean him/herself and change. **To facilitate the potty training process, we do not allow students to wear diapers of any kind. Instead we require that all newly trained children wear heavy cotton training underpants. You can purchase them at JC Penney, Wal-Mart or Target in packets of three.** Please do not send your child to school in “Pull-ups” or any other type of diaper. **THEY DO NOT WORK FOR POTTY TRAINING PURPOSES AND ACTUALLY EXTEND THE TIME IT TAKES TO POTTY TRAIN A CHILD.**

If a parent wants to enroll a child who is not potty trained, we suggest that they begin the process at once. A child of 15 months already has a functioning nerve reflex in regard to urine flow and bowel movements that can be controlled. The following method has often been used in families associated with Montessori schools for beginning potty training over a weekend. Montessori schools with toddler programs then follow up during the week with reinforcement. It takes two weeks to one month to largely potty train most children. If the potty training is begun at about 22 months the child can be largely trained by two years old and the more intense power struggles over potty training often experienced at age two can be avoided.

First the parent says that the child is getting to be a “big boy” or “big girl” and it is time to stop using diapers. Go together to the store and allow the child to help pick out the new cotton underwear. The parent picks the day when the process is going to begin and informs the child pointing to the calendar. Or the parent says, “We will begin first thing in the morning when you wake up.” Beginning on a Saturday or other day when the parents can remain at home is best. Expect to stay pretty close to home and the potty for a week or have someone you can rely on stay at home with your child to see that it is done. Generally, the parent explains use of the toilet a couple of times for a few days before the chosen day and has the child practice sitting on it and flushing it. Do not prolong this phase too long or the child will begin to insist only on sitting not on using. You can also use a tiny child’s potty and have them practice on it.

On the day selected to begin, the parent whisks the child onto the potty or potty chair as soon as s/he wakes up, when s/he is still sleepy. Help hold him/her on the potty as needed. A thumb and/or stuffed animal may be necessary. The child sits on it and waits until something is produced, which since it is the first thing in the morning it should not be long. When something is produced, give the child delighted praise. Then help your child down and show him/her how to tear the paper and use it for wiping. Show him/her how to throw the toilet paper in the toilet. You may have to do the wiping for six months or more. Help your child into the new cotton underwear and show your child how to put them on and take them off by him/herself by sticking thumbs down either side of his/her waist under the elastic. Show him/her how to put them on by putting one foot in at a time and then standing and pulling them up with the thumbs inside the waistband and fingers outside. The parent then explains matter-of-factly what is going to happen from now on. (i.e. “This is your toilet (seat...) and this is Mommy’s (or Daddy’s). You are getting to be a bigger girl (or boy) now and so you are going to be able to use this potty, just like Mommy and Daddy, etc.

Now set a clock for 90 minutes or 2 hours. Give your child liquid. Tell your child, “I’m going to set this clock every two hours and when it rings we are going to use the potty.” The parent sets the clock every two hours for 48 hours and puts the child on the toilet right through the night. The child practices putting on and removing underpants, tearing the toilet paper and wiping and flushing. After 48 hours of practice, theoretically the child has the idea and tries to do it on his/her own with a few reminders. School reinforces the learning process because all the other children are using the bathroom on their own as well. This process works for most children although it will take from two weeks to a month or two, depending on the child, to overcome accidents.

That’s it. Just discipline yourself to follow through. There will be accidents especially when you are in stores. Visit the potty as soon as you enter the store. Allow your child to stand on the seat and squat or sit on a toilet seat covered with toilet tissue or a toilet protector. The sooner you get them accustomed to using public toilets the fewer accidents you will have to clean up. Carry a towel, wipes, plastic bags and extra underpants and clothes with you at all times while away from home. Your child should be having dry days and be asking to use the potty within two weeks. Never react to a potty accident with frustration, anger or impatience. Plan for them and they will be easier to handle with grace.

### **BIRTHDAYS:**

We have a little celebration each time a child has a birthday. We light a candle and the child walks around on the edge of the elliptical rug carrying a globe while everyone sings. Parents, siblings and other relatives close to the child are welcome to come and watch. Birthdays are celebrated at 8:45 a.m., or before lunch at 11:15 a.m., or in the afternoon at 2:40 p.m. The parents may choose which time is most convenient for them as long as it is worked out a day or two ahead of time. (Some of our students share the same birthday.) Parents are asked to **provide a picture or two of the child at birth and for each year of his/her life** and be prepared to tell stories about him/her which may be shared with the class. Some children like to give a gift to the school on their birthdays, such as a library book or a plant for indoors or outdoors.

**Please do NOT bring cookies, candy, cake and ice cream to share with the class.** If the child wishes to bring a snack, something special might be fruit salad, strawberries or other berries, watermelon in summer, popcorn, applesauce with cinnamon, fruit and nut mix, tiny banana muffins without sugar. The purpose is to celebrate the life of the child and to get to know him or her better.

### **CALENDARS:**

**A school year calendar is posted on the bulletin board near the Sign-in/out Table. A school calendar is also included in your child’s acceptance, registration or schedule confirmation packet that you receive in the summer (or just before your child starts school).** To obtain another yearly school calendar, please email the office and we will forward one to you.

### **CARPOOLING AND MONTANA STATE CODES:**

If your child participates in a carpool, each driver must be listed on your list of allowed pick-up persons. Also, a car-seat that meets Montana state standards must be in the car for each child. You must also sign a release allowing us to let that person pick up your child. It is up to the parents to check to see that the driver has adequate auto liability insurance.

### **CAR SEATS:**

According to Montana State codes, day-care personnel may not allow children to ride in cars without car seats that are designed for the child’s weight and properly installed. If we see a car without proper car seats, we must keep the child at school until the pick-up person obtains and properly installs a car seat for each child. If you want to know anything about car seats, call “Childcare Connections” 1600 Ellis Street, Unit 1A (off Highland Avenue near Bozeman Deaconess Hospital.) in Bozeman at 587-7786. If you visit, they will demonstrate how to install a car seat correctly.

## **CELEBRATIONS AND THEIR IMPORTANCE:**

Celebrations are very important to children. Celebrations are an integral part of every culture and the means by which we pass on culture to the next generation. They are opportunities to share, to give gratitude and to learn about history. At Yellowstone Montessori we celebrate each child's birthday with the birthday girl or boy carrying the globe around the sun to mark each year of life. Parents bring photographs of the child for each year from the first days and tell stories about the child. We celebrate Thanksgiving with a snack prepared by the children and served on the Tuesday before. We sing Christmas songs, mostly about snow, but also by request of the children. If a great number of the children are old enough to participate in singing carols, we have a song fest just before Christmas. We share valentines on Valentine's Day. In addition, we may give a cultural lesson based on national holidays or cultural traditions such as Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, Christmas, Martin Luther King Day, Valentine's Day, Presidents' Day, Flag Day, Easter, Passover, Mothers Day and Fathers Day and Independence Day. Veterans Day and Memorial Day are honored but discussions of war with children of this age are left to parents and family. In addition, if children of other nations and cultural traditions join the classroom community, we may have a cultural presentation of one or more of their cultural traditions, such as Chinese New Year, Cinco de Mayo or St. Patrick's Day. **We do not celebrate Halloween, as it is over-stimulating for small children. Nor do we read ghoulish books to small children.** However we do carve pumpkins if we grow any, bake the pumpkin seeds and make pumpkin applesauce for Thanksgiving. Celebrations may include: sharing special foods, playing games, listening to stories, singing songs, dancing, carving a pumpkin, giving valentine cards, doing art projects and/or other activities surrounding these days. Parents will be invited to some of these celebrations and not to others, depending on the comfort of the children, the number of new children in the class and their ability to cope with many unfamiliar visitors.

## **CHILD ABUSE REPORTING:**

If a teacher sees strange bruises, s/he will ask parents about them. Please do not assume that we are suspecting you of abuse. For the overall health of your child, it is helpful for us to know about any accidents that may have occurred. Even if there aren't any bruises, a child who has bumped his/her head may suddenly have attention and focus problems that were not previously present. Teachers need to be aware of all such occurrences.

However, individual staff members at Yellowstone Montessori Academy, like all childcare professionals, are required by Montana State law to report child abuse or suspicions relating thereto to the Montana Department of Public Health and Human Services by calling (866) 820-5437 (or local 406-585-9984) within 24 hours of suspecting abuse or neglect. The state office then contacts local authorities. Local authorities will call you. The process may be anonymous at the request of the person making the report. By law the school administration is not allowed to interfere in this process nor are we allowed to tell parents that a report has been made. Teaching staff do not have to tell the school administration that a report has been made. If you get a phone call from local authorities, do not call the school office, as we may know nothing about it. The school is not allowed by state law to discuss it with you. Please keep in mind that reports may come from anyone who sees interactions between parents and children, so the school may not have made the report.

## **CLASS PICTURES:**

The school will arrange for class and individual pictures if enough parents express interest. A local photographer known for her gift with children has taken pictures the past two years in October/November so that they could be ready for Christmas. If we find a photographer who is willing and able to provide this service, we will inform parents by e-mail. We'll also distribute a brochure with all the information about the photos and the packages that are available for sale. No child is obligated to have a picture taken and parents are not obligated to purchase the photos.

## **CLOTHING:**

**Daily dress:** We will be going outside almost everyday all year. The only time we don't go out is if the temperature is below 20 degrees, it is raining or a blizzard. Children need clothing which does not restrict their

activity or movement. Children trip over extra-long pant legs, or pants which have slipped to their knees, and can't bend in clothes that are too tight. Sleeves, which are too long for their arms, get caught and cause accidents in the classroom and outdoors. Sweatpants, which are easy to slip on and off, help boys to be independent in the bathroom, and allow the staff to be working with children in other activities. Elastic waistbands, Velcro closures on pants and shoes are all helpful. Belts are best left at home. If girls wear dresses or skirts, please have tights, stretch pants or shorts underneath so they can comfortably participate in all activities. At ages five and six children will remark on girls' underwear which is very visible when sitting on circle. We want to ensure that no child is embarrassed.

**Please do not send a child to school in clothes which depict Disney characters, super heroes, dinosaurs, or political views.** The pictures are triggers for other children to start acting like the characters depicted on a child's clothing. Your child isn't looking at the picture all day, the other children are. And they respond by acting it out. Also, the child with the pictures is proud of it and walks around the class regularly interrupting other children's concentration saying, "Look what I've got on my shirt!"

**Labels:** Please label all clothing with first name and last initial or just their initials. There is a bin in the cubby room for lost and found, or ask a teacher if you are missing a clothing item.

**Extra Sets of Clean Clothes:** The school provides a plastic bin that fits in the child's cubby for extra sets of clothes. All children need at least **two** full sets of clean clothes in the bin below the cubby: socks and underpants, shirts, pants and shorts. **Children under four-years-old should have four extra underpants.** Please provide both long and short-sleeve shirts and pants. Every child needs a sweatshirt or sweater to wear in the classroom or layer under a coat outside. There are many ways for children to get wet in the classroom or on the playground. Please label each item of clothing with first name and last initial. Check the bin regularly to replace or wash the items as needed. Occasionally, a child will have an accident where his second set of clothing is soiled. The school has purchased extra clothing for these occasions. **If you notice your child is wearing clothing that is not familiar, please wash the clothing and return it to the school the next day. School clothing is labeled YMA with a marker.**

**Indoor Shoes (Slippers):** Slippers reduce the mud, dirt and the noise in the classroom and allow children to concentrate more easily. "Acorn" or other over-the-ankle or slipper-sock style slippers are fine for indoors if children will wear them. Other styles are cooler although they come off too easily and get lost about the school. **The most important thing is to get a slipper with a rubber sole which won't slip on the floors.** Too many accidents happen in the exercise room with slippers without rubber bottoms. Clogs are unsafe in the classroom and most of the year outside. Children fall down in them when they run. The bottoms catch on the ground, floor and sidewalk. **Clogs and flip-flops are fine for summer wear outdoors, because they kick them off and run barefoot in the grass, but they are not allowed at school from September through June.** According to state law children must wear shoes of some type in the building. Please do not send a child wearing shoes with flashing lights or slippers with large stuffed animals on them as they are a distraction to other children.

**Outdoor Shoes and Snow Boots:** Children will need both outdoor shoes and snow boots. Tennis or running shoes with Velcro closures are easy to put on and take off and safest for running and climbing outdoors. Hiking boots with long laces are very difficult for the child (and staff). We will have 25-28 children to help into snow clothes each day this winter. Thongs, slippers, clogs, cowboy boots, high heels, stacked heels, and thick-soled party shoes are not safe on the playground. Children trip, slip and get their feet stomped in such shoes. Snow boots are required for the winter. Cowboy boots are not warm enough for small children. They complain about how cold their feet are. We suggest smaller rather than larger styles and Velcro or zipper closures rather than shoestrings. Please avoid shoes with flashing lights, as they distract children's attention from what they are doing and may lead to accidents. Rain boots are fine for spring and fall rains, but not warm enough for snow.

**Winter clothes:** A snowsuit or equivalent coat and snow pants will be needed for the winter along with snow boots and warm socks, mittens and a hat. No child may play outdoors without them and young children really need outdoor exercise every day. Snow boots with Velcro or zippers are easiest for children and staff to put on and take off.

**Sledding:** We have a little hill in the yard that the children use for sledding in the winter. The school provides plastic sleds. The hill is only 3-4 feet high. To encourage the habit of wearing a helmet, we recommend that children who want to sled to bring one to school but it is not required.

**Hot Weather clothes:** Please provide a sun hat, bathing suit, towel and sun screen for hot weather in the summer. During the summer the children love to run through the sprinklers or play in the wading pools.

**Sun Screen:** *Montana law requires that each child has his/her personal bottle of sun-screen and a release form signed by parents allowing staff to apply it.* Every year at registration parents must sign a green “Over-the-Counter Medicine” form granting the school staff permission to apply sunscreen or other topicals provided by the parent. Remember the sun in Montana is particularly penetrating even when it is still cool in spring and fall.

**Bare Feet:** During the summer hot weather children will be allowed to be barefoot in the sandbox and wading pool or on the grass while playing unless a parent requests otherwise.

#### **CHANGING CLOTHES:**

**During School Hours:** Child(ren) ages 3-6 years change their clothes in the bathroom privately or with the help of a staff member. It is very helpful to the staff if children have clothes that they can pull on and push off by themselves. Trousers with elastic waist bands and few buttons, shoes with Velcro rather than ties are very helpful. Belts are a hindrance.

**After School Clothes:** We do not expect children to stay clean at school, even though they wear aprons for messy activities in the classroom. If you want your child to be presentable for some special event right after school, please bring the clothes you want him/her to wear and have him/her change before you leave. If you tell your child to “stay clean at school,” s/he may refuse to participate in the work of the class or disappoint you by being messy when you arrive.

**Clothes Borrowed from the School:** Generally, we do not share clothes at school. However, if a child is cold and there is an extra coat at school not belonging to anyone, a child may use it if s/he wishes. Some parents have graciously donated clothes to the school that are used if a child runs out of his/her own clothing or if the weather suddenly changes and the child needs warmer clothing.

#### **CIRCLE TIME AT SCHOOL: MORNING CIRCLE BEGINS AT 8:45 A.M.**

Circle time is a time for singing together, sharing stories, asking questions, doing the calendar, discussing the weather, the birds and sharing items brought from home. In September and October teachers give grace and courtesy lessons or a presentation to the entire class showing a new lesson or something new that is on a shelf and how to use it.

**Sharing items of educational interest:** Children may bring a favorite book, rock, shell, postcard, memento from travels, musical instrument, scientific instrument, tool, picture, family heirloom, handmade object or other educational object to show to other children during Circle Time if s/he chooses. We do not necessarily have morning circle every day, but most days we do. We usually limit the number of “show and shares” to about 5 mainly because of time constraints. This means that your child may have to wait a day to present their item at Circle.

**Food:** Although sharing food is gracious, we cannot allow the sharing of food due to the many varied dietary needs of different children. Also, some children have food allergies. However, children may help cook something at school, or prepare a snack such as fresh orange juice and serve it to others. Parents may bring fruit or non-sugar banana or carrot muffins for snack on a child’s birthday. But most parents do not bring food.

**Toys: Please leave toys at home.** They may easily be lost and/or distract a child from the activities at school. Conflicts arise when other children want to play with the toy or pocket it. Toys hidden in pockets usually come out in the classroom. When children refuse to put them in their cubbies, we have to take them away. When the toy is in the cubby the child regularly runs out there to keep it company...

**COMMUNICATIONS:**

**For Information or to Leave Messages:** For information about tuition or general school happenings contact the office. To report a sick or absent child, call the office and leave a message on the phone at 406-587-5667 or even better send an e-mail to [yellowstonemontessori@hotmail.com](mailto:yellowstonemontessori@hotmail.com).

The head teacher is your best source of information about your child. Contact her for more information. You may write her a message, an email, or quickly give her verbal information, call her at home, or schedule an appointment after school.

However, we request that parents not interrupt a teacher giving lessons during class time to convey a message. Please write it down on the Message sheets provided on the Sign-In/Out Table. Just leave the message in the in-box above the sign-in/out table in the cubby room. We also ask that parents not discuss a child’s progress in front of him or her or other parents and children. A teacher may quickly say, “Your child seemed to enjoy his day today” and comment on lessons given such as “Sidney worked with the moveable alphabet.”

The following are types of communication and ways in which they might be handled so that we are certain to receive your messages. When information is not handled carefully, it can easily be forgotten or even lost between the beginning and end of a long day. Please write down your messages and leave them in the box provided above the sign-in/out table in each cubby room or send an email. **For instance:**

<u>Matter/Concern</u>	<u>Staff Member</u>	<u>Verbal/Written?</u>
Brief daily news	Classroom staff	verbal
Illness information	Any staff member	e-mail or phone message
Vacation times	Classroom staff	e-mail or note at Sign-in/out
Different pick-up	Any staff member	e-mail or written message
Extended hours at school	Classroom staff	24 hour notice e-mail or note
Early pick up	Classroom staff	e-mail or phone message
School records	Office staff	e-mail or phone message
Schedule Observation	Office staff	e-mail
Billing	Office staff	e-mail or phone message
School policies	Office staff	e-mail
Changes in attendance hours	Office staff	e-mail
Academics/curriculum	Classroom staff	e-mail
Parent Education	Classroom Staff	e-mail
Classroom procedures	Classroom staff	e-mail
Behavior questions	Constance	e-mail, phone, meeting

**Messages from School to Parents**

**Email:** Our primary means of communication with parents is e-mail. If you don’t have an e-mail address, you can sign up for a free one at [www.yahoo.com](http://www.yahoo.com) or [www.google.com](http://www.google.com). We ask that you check your e-mail at least once a week. Some of the topics covered include health notices or alerts, special events, and scheduling of

Parent Teacher Conferences. We never send frivolous messages and do our best to communicate as clearly and concisely as possible.

**Monthly Tuition Invoices:** Monthly invoices are prepared for each student's parents. **ALL INVOICES ARE SENT VIA E-MAIL.** Invoices are distributed the week before the first of each month. **Be sure to check the invoice to see what balance you owe.** Occasionally, parents over pay one month and have a credit that changes the next month's balance due.

**Telephone calls:** The head teacher will either phone or speak in person to all parents in the first week of school to tell them how things are going. She will also call parents if anything unusual happens at school or from time to time, to let them know what is going on in the classroom and what their child(ren) is doing.

### **COMPUTERS, COMPUTER GAMES AND TELEVISION:**

We do not have any computers or television at Yellowstone Montessori. We may at some point in the future show an educational video, although we haven't yet. There are several reasons for this choice.

1) The purpose of a Montessori education is to learn how to live in the world with balance, self-discipline, and joy, discovering one's gifts and abilities, and learning how to share them with others. Information from audio, video, cell phone, tablet or computer technology is entering the brain but not developing the hand or heart or leading the child to discover and experiment by him/herself.

2) Developmentally, children from birth to seven need to learn how to successfully function in real daily life, not how to escape it. This is the developmental stage for absorbing language and culture, developing one's personality and character and learning how to read, write and count.

3) Children of this age need to move physically to learn and integrate that learning into brain neurochemistry. Sitting glued to a screen does not provide this opportunity.

4) Addiction to computer games has become a serious psychological problem in this country because it interferes with personality and social skills development.

5) The light frequencies from television, cell phones, tablets and computers negatively affect a child's brain at any age. They can cause a kind of hypnosis, which allows advertising to be accepted as fact. They can also create emotional yearnings for all kinds of material goods, which are not real developmental needs. This false information distorts what is important in life and interferes with the parents' ability to pass on their principles and values to their children.

6) A child younger than the age of 7 is even more susceptible than older children because s/he is still in the absorbent mind stage. A young child absorbs everything that s/he experiences and sees without any discrimination, evaluation or analysis.

7) A regular diet of computer games, Nintendo, and television use interferes with social and therefore character and personality development.

8) The staff has experienced several children under age seven obsessed with computer games, Star Wars, super heroes and robots to the exclusion of the ability to discuss, imagine or concentrate on anything else. These children were exposed to graphic and over-powering violence and excitement way too early, causing a kind of shock and over-stimulation which the child could not forget. Some of these children have been unable to receive any academic lessons until all experiences with such stimuli were removed for over six months.



9) **A young child is not an adult's playmate.** The adult is there to protect the child during the extensive period in which basic brain development is completed. Human beings are the only animals on earth which require such an extensive period of development beyond the womb in order to survive and then to thrive. Only a small part of a human's development occurs in the womb. An environment serving a function almost as an expanded womb must be created step by step at each stage of development to ensure that development may take place optimally. Greater and greater freedom and responsibility is given at each stage as the child is ready to assume them and use them wisely.

### **CREATING COMMUNITY:**

We realize that parents would like to share and get to know each other's families. To this end we will have a list of families' names and phone numbers distributed to school families only. [We offer two Parent Orientation meetings](#) of new and returning parents at the beginning of the year to facilitate this also. Primarily we are interested in creating a sense of community among the children. We do this through Grace and Courtesy Lessons, through discussions at Circle Time and moment by moment helping the children work out their conflicts and social concerns. We want to help your child learn how to make friends.

**Bullying, Name Calling or Teasing:** The staff will intercept any behavior witnessed that could be emotionally or physically hurtful to any party. We explain that the behavior is not acceptable and why so the child understands. If a child hurts another child, whether purposely or accidentally, we ask the child to apologize or help him/her to do something to show empathy. We facilitate a conversation in which the children say what happened, what they are feeling and what they did or did not like and what they would like to have happen instead. This restores feelings of justice and comfort in the classroom more readily. Simply being heard is often all that is needed.

**Children Reporting Negative Behaviors at Home:** Children will report things at home that may be actual hurts or things which distress them. Some of the reports may be very clear and accurate. Others may be quite distorted, but which genuinely are what they perceive. The reports are often very self-focused and naturally omit key information, which simply was not of interest to them. Often children report things in order to understand them better. They want to know what is fair and just. They will report something to get an opinion as to whether a behavior is "right" or "wrong", simply to understand it themselves and are not "tattling" to get another child in trouble. Children also report things because they need some undivided attention from their parents. And finally, children will also report what another child did to them, but not what they did to the other child first that provoked the reaction. So, given these realities it is often difficult to evaluate what we hear.

**However, if your child reports something that you are concerned about, don't hesitate to call the school to inquire.** We want to know what the children are feeling, saying and perceiving. It's very important to us to know if Johnny is very angry for several days at another child. Or, if Susie wants a certain lesson and isn't getting it. If the staff was unaware, we will observe closely and then take action to address the situation.

Please be aware that if a child gets a strong reaction or unusual attention from reporting certain behaviors, s/he may report it again to see if there is the same reaction. Children at the age of 4 are particularly interested in using words to provoke reactions. It is a powerful experience for them. Sometimes children will have a happy, wonderful day and go home and only report a fall with great seriousness that they didn't even stop for at recess and didn't mention at school. It's a way of saying, "I need extra time and attention from you. I'm missing you." It is not a way of informing you about their day at school.

Children have a difficult time knowing what they are feeling, describing it, and asking for attention. Aren't adults like this too? Sometimes we can help them to express their feelings, but at other times we have to be very careful not to put ideas and words into their mouths that are not representative of their experiences or feelings. We don't want to pass our fears and worries on to our children. We just want to comfort them.

**DISCUSSING SCHOOL ACTIVITIES WITH YOUR CHILD:** It is difficult to have a discussion about “what happened to- day at school?” with a young child. You *might* be more successful in having a discussion with your child about what s/he is doing during the day if you look at the list lessons provided in this handbook. These you might use to specifically ask your child if s/he has done this. Unfortunately, even a direct question may not solicit any answer other than “I don’t know,” because s/he doesn’t remember the name of the lesson two weeks later. Montessori characterized education of children from 3 to 6 years as pouring in bits of information into the child’s subconscious for him or her to discover and explore later. We are exposing the children to as much as possible to help them characterize the world, organize it in their minds, discover something which delights them and perhaps even generate passionate interest. This sometimes happens, by the age of 5, but more often at six or seven. Of course, what we read to them, the pictures we show, the lessons we give are beautiful, intriguing, positive, and appropriate for their age. If you ask them about worms, or planting or birds or the Richardson Ground Squirrel which thrive before the bay window, you’ll often get a response. If you ask about art, or painting or numbers or reading you may get a response also.

### **DISCIPLINE:**

In Montessori education the goal is self discipline within a developmentally appropriate environment which allows freedom of choice. However, children need limits and structure in order to feel secure about themselves within their environment. Our approach to discipline is first to prevent as many possible problems by the design of the environment and by clear demonstrations. Then we redirect a child’s attention to another activity or give enticing choices. If these don’t prevent or solve the situation, then we see it as an opportunity for problem solving, teaching, or a “time-in” with staff. When a child is using something inappropriately, we offer something s/he can do with that object or another that will not harm him/herself or others. For instance, if a child is throwing sand, we might say, “Can you show me how to use the shovel to dig, so that it won’t get sand in Sam’s eyes?” If the child persists in testing the limits of safety or respect for others, we would give him/her another choice of activities. If the child is still not cooperative, then depending on the behavior, we might have a staff member step forward to spend time with him/her out of the sandbox, until s/he decides and shows by behavior that s/he is ready to play appropriately. The last choice in a case of throwing of sand would be to tell the child that s/he has forfeited the privilege of using the sand box at recess today. Of course, if a child is five and knows the sand box rules, we would move more quickly to the final option (if there was no cooperation and consideration for the other children in the sandbox) than if the child were three.

**Emotions:** The school begins reading books to the children on the subject of emotions early in the school year to help them describe or name their feelings in the event of upset or some other confusion. Children need different things when they are upset depending on their personality and temperament. When a child is upset we seek to comfort him or her in the way each child needs: some need just a tissue, some need to talk, some need a lap or hug, some need “space.” We try to ascertain what each child needs and provide it.

**Disagreements between Children:** When two or more very young children are having an upset, the teacher kneels down and extends her arms out from her shoulders partially encircling the children. She says, for instance, “Do either of you have anything you wish to say?” If one or the other says, “Yes” she asks one of the children to speak, and explains to the other child that s/he will have the opportunity to speak in a minute. The statement of feelings goes back and forth with the teacher helping the children articulate what they want to say. The teacher’s encircling arms offer a sense protection, privacy, and specialness to both children. Her open arms also allow children needing physical comfort to fold into an arm or onto her lap. This is not a question of right or wrong, but an opportunity for learning about what hurts and upsets other people and oneself. It is not a situation for the teacher to assign blame, but an opportunity for the children to learn to express their needs and feelings and to listen to another child’s views. The teacher aids them in this process. Often the children don’t want a “solution” just an opportunity to be heard. When two older children are having a disagreement, a teacher will listen to both children and help the children to articulate and resolve their problem by themselves. Over

time the children learn to express their feelings in acceptable ways and negotiate a settlement with a friend that “feels” right to both without a teacher present.

**Corporal Punishment:** Spanking, isolation and harsh words are not part of the philosophy of Yellowstone Montessori. Such techniques offer models of behavior that we do not want to foster in children. However, if necessary a teacher will leave the classroom with a child and sit quietly with them until the child calms down and says s/he is ready to return to the classroom.

**Physical Aggression:** Our staff is here to provide children with a safe, secure, fun and fascinating place. Occasionally, a child’s behavior is too aggressive for our school to handle. In certain cases if the child’s behavior is dangerous to him/herself or other children or staff members, a parent may be called and asked to pick up a child from the school. Physical violence or verbal abuse towards self or others, running away from staff members and threats against others are complex problems that our staff will not attempt to solve. We will call the parent and ask that the child be removed from the school on a short term or permanent basis.

### **EMERGENCIES:**

**Snow Days:** Email and cell phone calls will be used in case of snow days called by local schools and the governor or other emergencies such as power outages. Please keep the school phone list by your phone. If local public schools are out for a snow day, Yellowstone Montessori will also be closed because the roads are not safe to drive. Note: Since we opened in November 2007, Yellowstone Montessori has never been closed for a snow day or any other emergency.

**Medical Emergencies:** All staff have First Aid and CPR certification and must take these courses bi-annually. 911 will be called as necessary. The school keeps a binder with copies of all of the children’s medical information and releases and a first aid kit in the West Cubbie room where it is quickly available if a teacher needs to go with a child or the children in any emergency.

**Power Outages during School Hours:** Northwestern Energy will be called. The school will determine whether the building is warm enough to continue at school. If not, parents will be notified and children will need to go home.

**Fire:** The school has an emergency evacuation plan posted on the bulletin board. All the children and staff will evacuate to the open field beside Church of Christ across Maple/18th Street. There are monthly practice fire drills each school year. Yellowstone Montessori has an understanding with the church that we can use it as a short term place of refuge in the event that our school building is not habitable for any reason.

**National Emergencies:** If a national emergency occurs during school hours, parents may call the school and come to pick up their children. If this emergency does not directly affect Bozeman, we do not want to panic the children, so we will continue the day as if nothing has happened. The school day will end at its usual time.

### **FAMILY ISSUES:**

Any extended travel of one or both parents, birth of a baby, serious illness, moving to a new house and many other family experiences affect a child’s emotional world and behavior. The school and especially the teachers would like to know about such things to better meet your child’s needs from day to day.

### **FIELD TRIPS:**

There will be no field trips this year.

**FIRE:** See “Emergencies”.

## **FOOD: LUNCHESES and SNACKS:**

### **SNACKS:**

A nutritious morning snack is provided for the children daily. Typical foods include fresh fruit and vegetables, yogurt and crackers. Or corn chips, bean dip, vegetable and fresh fruit. Or humus and flat bread, vegetable and fresh fruit. We drink water with snack and water or whole organic milk with lunch. Children sometimes have the opportunity to prepare food in the classroom. Parents who have children with identified food allergies should provide alternative snacks. A shelf in the kitchen will be made available for this special snack food. The names of the children and their specific allergies are posted inside a kitchen cabinet.

### **LUNCHESES:**

**Children bring their own lunches to school** and we provide them with milk or water to accompany lunch. Please do not send a drink to school with your child unless s/he has a medical condition which requires a special diet.

**Junk Food Versus Nutrition:** Yellowstone Montessori maintains a no-junk food policy, whether in lunches, in classroom cooking, or in the snacks the children make and serve. We believe a child's mind and body need good nutrition to do their best work. We talk often about good nutrition with the children and don't want to tell a child his/her lunch is inadequate. Foods highly adulterated with dyes or M.S.G. such as Jello are not natural foods and interfere negatively with brain chemistry. Since sugary treats are sought by most children, it is often difficult to get a child to eat anything else in their lunches and other children view the sugary treat with envy. **So, please, no sweets such as cookies, granola bars, sweet puddings, chocolate milk, cakes, or Jello. We will send them back home.** A peanut butter and fruit spread sandwich is actually healthy, if the fruit spread doesn't contain high fructose corn syrup. Frozen jam can easily be made with fresh or frozen fruit and tapioca (not gelatin which contains copious amounts of MSG). Children will often happily eat whole wheat bread if the crusts are cut off first. **Yoplait yogurt is dangerous junk food. The combination of sugar, low fat and dye causes children to act very strangely after eating it. The same is true of the tubes Gogurt (blue or pink yogurt). Full fat plain Greek yogurt or Vanilla flavored full fat Brown Cow yogurt does not seem to bother children. Add your own fruit and if necessary a little maple syrup to the Greek yogurt.**

**FAT: Children's bodies and brains need fat.** (The brain is made mostly of fat.) Children are highly susceptible to low blood sugar. Increasing the fat in their diets helps to overcome this: a half-teaspoon or less of freshly pressed flax seed oil, not more than six weeks old and kept in the refrigerator given for three days in a row may help stabilize blood sugar more quickly if the offending foods are removed. Whole fat, organic milk from grass fed cows is much better for young children than low fat milk. The natural sugars in milk play havoc with blood sugar when the fat is removed. The same is true with low fat cottage cheese, low fat yogurt and low fat cheese. Children do not have brains and metabolism like adults.

### **Each lunch should contain foods from the following groups:**

**Protein:** Soups, stews, yogurt, cottage cheese, other cheese, tuna, hard-boiled eggs, slices of beef, chicken, turkey, peanut butter, casseroles, nuts, humus, sandwiches, and beans. If you put the protein in a small container and include a little spreading knife, your child may make his own sandwich or cracker sandwich.

**Vegetables:** Carrots, celery, green pepper, sliced cucumbers, tomatoes, mixed bean salads, olives, green salads, soups, etc.

**Grains:** Brown rice, whole wheat bread, crackers, bread sticks, tortillas, pita, noodle salads, tabouli salads.

**Fruits:** Fresh fruits offer the child natural sugars, which are needed for energy. They are a good dessert.

**Will Your Child Eat Nutritious Unsweetened Foods?** If certain foods are new to your child, you may find that you have a better chance of success with this menu if you allow him/her to choose lunch items. The night before school ask, “Do you want egg salad or peanut butter for your protein?” “Carrots or cucumber for your vegetable?” Ask a similar question for each of the other categories giving two choices of equal value.

We will not let children throw food away except bread crust. All uneaten food will be put back into the lunch box so that you will know what they have eaten. The Montessori teachers will encourage, but not force your child to eat. The children eat their protein first, next fruit and vegetables and last chips and crackers.

#### **FRIENDSHIP AND ACCEPTANCE:**

It is the policy of Yellowstone Montessori that all children be available to play with all of the other children while at school. Children are not to be excluded. Thus, **no birthday party or other invitations are to be delivered at school.** No presents, snacks or cards are to be brought unless every child is included and the standards for those gifts or snacks meet the standards of the school. No parent’s request to have another child “not play with your child” will be honored, unless the school has already determined that such association is not beneficial at present to either child. Such a decision on the part of the school to encourage separation of children for a period to encourage the development of other friendships will only be made based on the particular mixture of the two personalities and the health of their relationship and not on race, class, religion or any other cultural or personal or family characteristic.

#### **HEARING AND VISION SCREENINGS:**

We may be able to arrange such screenings in the future.

#### **HOMEWORK:**

We will not send home any homework. However, if parents of kindergarten age students want suggestions for activities during the summer or on trips, please ask the teachers for help. Children who are reading may check out books from the library or readers from the classroom to take home and read. Please speak to a teacher about which reader to take home. We keep detailed records of each book a child reads so we know which reader is next in the progression.

#### **INSURANCE:**

The school has a standard student minor-accident insurance policy which is required by the state for all Day Care Centers. It also has liability insurance and commercial fire and building contents insurance.

#### **MEDICAL POLICIES:**

##### **Absence Due to Illness:**

If your child is not coming to school for any reason, please call the school before 8:30 a.m. and leave a phone message or send an e-mail. If your child is absent because of illness, please explain your child’s symptoms, because it might be something that we are required to report to the county health nurse. No names are given in such reports unless your child has a contagious disease such as chicken pox which we are required by law to report. If your child contracts a contagious disease, you may be contacted by a public health nurse.

**Accidents:** If we have any serious concern regarding your child’s well being, we will call you and 911. All staff have Red Cross certification in CPR and First Aid. Medical releases and information are kept with staff at all times along with a Red Cross first aid kit.

**Allergies:** We need information about all allergies in your child’s file. If there is serious allergy, please talk to the office and we will have a meeting with all staff personnel, so that everyone is alerted to your child’s needs and a plan is created to address them. In case of food allergies, special foods for snack may be brought to school and kept in a special cabinet, where your child can access them whenever s/he is hungry.

**Illnesses:**

A. Management of common communicable disease will be in accordance with Montana Department of Health guidelines. By law occurrences of certain communicable diseases must be reported to the County Health nurse. However, all personal information will be kept confidential in the school files. In a few cases the school is required by law to give the County health nurse the name of the parent(s) and a phone number so the nurse can follow up.

B. The County Health Nurse has the right to institute appropriate measures to control the spread of any disease in the school population, which may include the closure of school and/or the exclusion of susceptible persons from the school.

C. In all cases the school will rely on the best obtainable advice from the County Health nurse and local medical authorities in assessing the risk of transmission of various communicable diseases to determine how best to protect the health of both students and staff.

D. No sick child may attend school. Working parents must make arrangements to leave sick children with relatives or baby sitters if they cannot take time off when their child becomes ill. In the event your child becomes ill at school, parents will be notified and expected to pick up their child within an hour. In Montana a number of communicable diseases, including head lice, require a doctor's release before the child may return to school.

E. If your child shows signs of a possible illness, please keep him or her home, both for your child's well being and for that of the other children and their families. Please do not bring your child to school if your child shows any signs of:

- 1) an elevated temperature within previous 24 hours.
- 2) vomiting within previous 24 hours
- 3) diarrhea within previous 24 hours
- 4) a draining eye or pink eye.
- 5) scabies or lice, until signed clearance has been obtained from a doctor or a nurse.
- 6) thick, yellow or green mucus draining from the nose;
- 7) a persistent cough;
- 8) an ear ache or sore throat;
- 9) an undiagnosed rash
- 10) a draining rash or open sore
- 11) fatigue, confusion or signs that s/he will not be able to participate in the regular activities of the day.

F. Following an illness, children usually need to be kept home and quiet for 24 hours before returning to school. They must be symptom free and have a normal temperature without Ibuprofen, aspirin or other anti-inflammatory for 24 hours. Children may attend school after they have been on antibiotics for 48 hours. Draining sores must be checked by a doctor and properly covered before a child may return to school.

G. Persistent nasal infection or possible allergy should be evaluated by an ear, nose and throat specialist or allergist. Excessive mucus in the ears or nose can affect a child's ability hear each of the individual sounds of our language, straining their abilities to learn to read and speak clearly.

**Illness at school:** If a child becomes sick at school, or has a fever, we will isolate him or her and call parents. Parents are expected to pick up their child within an hour of notification.

**Immunizations:** According to Montana state law, all children must be up to date with their immunizations. **For preschool-aged children, the only acceptable exemptions are ones that are signed by a medical doctor.** A list of all immunizations and the dates administered must be in each child's file. The County Public Health nurse audits our files for these records every year in December.

**Medical Appointments:** Please tell the teacher on the morning of the appointment.

**Medications:** All medications must be labeled with the child's name. Medication must be given to your child's teacher, never left in the child's lunchbox. The medication must be in the original container from the pharmacy and labeled with the child's first and last name. According to Montana law you must provide signed, written instructions as to the dosage of medication to be administered and when to administer the medication. Instructions must be changed each week. A current copy of the prescription must be on file. Please sign on the Medication Sheet in your child's classroom on every day that you wish us to administer medication. You must provide these signed, written instructions for non-prescription supplements and topical ointments as well.

**Sunscreen:** It is best to apply sunscreen on your children at home before they come to school. However, if your child is very sensitive and will need a reapplication, please provide the child's own bottle of sunscreen (with your child's name on it) and sign a release (green Over the Counter form) that gives the teachers permission to apply it.

**Medical Assessment for Enrollment:** Parents' agree to provide a written medical assessment of their child on a state-required pink form supplied by the school performed by or under the supervision of a licensed physician (within 14 *calendar days* after the child's admission date).

#### **NAPS:**

Naps in the nap room will be available for children who want or need to nap according to parental request or daily observations of the staff. The school provides a fresh crib sheet, blanket and pillow. Each child napping uses the same one for a week and then they are all washed on the weekend.

#### **OBSERVATIONS OF CLASSROOM:**

Yellowstone Montessori welcomes visitors, especially parents! Please schedule a time to visit and go to the office for information about observing before entering the classroom. Visiting usually begins only after the children have been in the classroom two months at the beginning of the year. There are specific guidelines to follow when visiting the classroom so that children will be able to proceed with their work with as little disturbance as possible. Parents can also slip quietly into the classroom after 2:30 p.m. any day of the week to observe their children. If you would like to join us for lunch, just bring something to eat or drink and we'll pull you up a chair. Call and leave a message to let us know.

Since so much of your child's work is not on paper, you will have a much better idea of what s/he does each day if you observe. We request that all parents visit the classroom at least twice during the school year. Keep in mind that your child will be affected by your presence and most likely will not act as s/he normally does in the classroom. However, it is beneficial for you to see what goes on in the classroom on a normal day.

#### **OFFICE HOURS:**

12 noon- 5:00pm. For questions, send an e-mail to [YellowstoneMontessori@hotmail.com](mailto:YellowstoneMontessori@hotmail.com). Or call the office at 406-587-5667 and if no one answers, leave a message. You will be called back that day.

#### **PARENT/TEACHER CONFERENCES:**

Two Parent/Teacher conferences are normally scheduled each year in November and April. They last for 45 minutes or more. The teachers keep records and prepare a written report. Constance or one of the other teachers

meets with parents to discuss the whole scope of your child's development and activities at school. Both parents' attendance at these conferences is beneficial for good communication and understanding for all of us regarding your child's needs. The teacher wants to hear your observations and feedback about how you think your child is doing and what you feel/think is important. Your suggestions are always welcome.

### **PARENT/CHILDREN'S LIBRARY:**

The school has a lending library of books and information for parents which you are free to check out. It is located in the bookshelf near the Sign-in/Out Table in the East Cubby Room. Please remember to sign out the books in the library binder which is also located on the same shelves. We also send home books for practice reading when the child requests them. Please speak to Miss Constance if you have any questions about any of the books in the library.

### **PARENTING WORKSHOPS:**

If parents are interested in parenting workshops, such as "redirection," or a parenting workshop through Gordon Neufeld, or a "how to teach reading" seminar, the school may be able to organize a class or discussion group. The school facilities may be used for these events.

### **INDIVIDUAL PARENT/TEACHER MEETINGS:**

Teachers and parents need to work together for the benefit of your child. Yellowstone Montessori staff takes our participation in the life of your child very seriously. The administration strives to answer your questions about our policies and program and urges you to call the office or email with your queries and concerns. Please feel free to request a meeting with the head teacher at any time. Regarding matters of your child's classroom activities or progress, please do not hesitate to call the head teacher. You can also set up a conference at any time through the office. If there is an issue we feel should be brought to your attention, we will call or email you.

### **POTLUCKS AND SPECIAL EVENTS:**

We will host various events for parents and children and other family members during the school year. These events may include: Work and Play Afternoon in May and Expert Saturday in the winter.

### **PARKING:**

Drive into the school parking lot from Kagy Boulevard and out via the side road (Maple/18<sup>th</sup>) to Kagy. Please park in the designated 13 spaces. Please close car doors and remove keys. **PLEASE DO NOT LEAVE YOUR CAR IDLING WHILE YOU DROP OFF OR PICK UP YOUR CHILD.** The exhaust fumes enter the classroom through windows, affect arriving families and can compromise students and staff members' health. Always escort your child by the hand to and from cars and into and out of the building. Never leave a child unattended in the car. They might get out and be in the way of oncoming traffic. Bring the waiting child(ren) inside with you or send in another parent or call to tell a teacher to bring your children out to the car.

### **PHONE CALLS:**

See "Communication with Parents." If you need to contact the school, leave a phone message at 406-587-5667. Messages are checked a couple of times a day. If a staff member is in the office, the phone will be answered when you call.

### **PHOTO RELEASE:**

Occasionally our staff will take photos of children or parents participating in class or school activities. We may have a friend of the school take a video of the teachers working with the children for on-going teacher-training. Some pictures may put on the school bulletin boards in the entrance hall or living room. We may use pictures for school publicity or slide shows or on our website. **The school reserves the right to use any picture taken at the school. By signing the Enrollment Contract (which includes the Parent Handbook) you are granting permission to the school to use pictures of your child in these ways. Whenever possible, we will**



**notify the parents before using any child's photo. If you have any questions regarding the photo release, please contact the school office.**

### **POLITICS, PLANETARY PROBLEMS AND CHILDREN:**

Yellowstone Montessori Staff will **NOT** indoctrinate your children regarding any issues of the day or personal opinions or beliefs. It is the policy of the school that preschool and lower elementary children should not be burdened with such issues. Further, we believe that children are their parents' primary responsibility and issues such as politics and religion are the parents' responsibility and prerogative. The curriculum at Yellowstone Montessori is already extensive. They do not need to learn about suffering humanity or the dangers to our planet. Young children have no way to cope with or respond to such difficult problems. We will give them a well-rounded education, which includes the interdependence of everything on the planet, the existence of the White House and presidents. We will not be discussing war, genocide, presidential politics, global warming or starving children. We will not be showing DVD's about these subjects. We will be recycling paper, metal and plastic at school and learning to care for plants, animals and people. If children bring up these issues, we will listen, try to change the subject, answer the child privately, or even say lightly that Mommy or Daddy might be the best ones to discuss this topic. If a child is expressing anxiety about anything, we will comfort him or her and notify the parent.

### **PROFESSIONAL DAYS:**

The staff will take one professional day in October, 2015, to attend the Montana Early Childhood Education Conference which will be in Bozeman this year.

### **SAFETY AND SECURITY:**

1) Please do not engage the staff in lengthy conversation when they are watching your children on the playground. Your child's safety is their main concern.

2) Do not let your child get out of the car by him /herself. Hold your child's hand and walk him or her into the East back entrance.

3) When dropping off or picking up your child, please remember to always complete the Sign-in/Out form. According to Montana State law, we have to maintain these completed records for seven years.

4) Please verbally say, "Goodbye" to the staff member standing on or nearest the deck or cubby room, so that we know you are leaving with your child. Parents and children are welcome to linger on the playground, so let us know when you are leaving.

5) No child may go through the gate on the deck without a parent or approved caregiver walking beside them. Close all school doors and all gates to the playground after you go through them.

The staff works moment by moment to ensure the safety and welfare of your child. The facility and play ground have been designed for safety and meet all current state codes and federal standards for safety. The school is licensed as a child care center by the State of Montana. The facility meets all current codes for day care and commercial use. The staff is highly educated and trained to work with children and perform their duties within the school. The staff and facility follow all recommended and required safety standards and codes for schools and day care. All staff members have their Red Cross infant, child and adult CPR and First Aid certification. However, if an accident were to occur, the staff will follow the medical emergency procedures as outlined in the staff manual and posted on bulletin boards. The fire and evacuation plan is posted. There will be 8 fire and/or evacuation drills per school year. As required by law, the school carries standard fire, liability and accident insurance.

### **SHARING THINGS FROM HOME:**

**Please do not bring toys to school.** Favorite story books, scientific books about real things, or real items such as pictures of family, friends or places, rock specimens, shells, bird's nests, small machines, tools, cultural objects from different countries, art objects, musical instruments, crafts the child has made, and heirloom items

are all of interest to a group of children. Bring items that relate to science, nature, art, music, math, language, geography, culture, pets or to events in your child's life, i.e., vacations. If the item is large, or alive or unusual, please contact the teacher to arrange the best time for your child's sharing. The teacher will also want to work with your child to prepare him or her to share it.

#### **SMOKING & ALCOHOL:**

No smoking or alcoholic beverages are allowed on school property.

#### **SNACKS:** page 42

(See "Food: Lunches and Snacks")

#### **SNOW DAYS:**

If public school is canceled due to blizzard conditions or temperatures below -20 degrees Fahrenheit, Yellowstone Montessori will be closed also, because no one should be driving. We will be reading and sending emails and checking phone messages. If necessary, we will call people on cell phones if local power is out. Keep abreast of weather conditions in the winter, when storm fronts are moving in and out, because they affect children's behavior and because weather conditions are a constant safety issue in Montana winters. We have a gas powered boiler heating water pipes for space heating. It takes several hours to lose heat, if it has been warm.

If the heat is off during the night or doors blow open, the building can take a while to heat in the morning. Thus, sweaters are needed. Diligent caution is worth a pound of cure.

#### **TAKING WORK HOME:**

Please remember that the paperwork that a child brings home is not necessarily a true reflection of the amount of work that the child is doing in the classroom. Many of the Montessori materials do not require the use of paper. The product or result of your child's work with the materials is internal: the muscles are developed and coordinated, the senses are more acute, perceptions of the physical world are clear and more organized, the intellect has more information, the child's sense of self and identity is more developed, confidence is building, the child's ability to handle social situations with natural grace is unfolding and the child's interest in all things is increasing. Over the three years in a primary class a child is integrating his/her experiences academically, socially, emotionally, physically and spiritually.

#### **THREE-YEAR COMMITMENT:**

Please keep in mind that the curriculum in a Montessori primary 3-6 classroom is designed for a three year continuum. Each March parents of children currently enrolled are asked to register their children for the Summer Sessions (if they wish) and for the following September. We would greatly appreciate being informed in March if your child will be going to public kindergarten or another school in the Fall. That way we can accept another child to take your child's place in the school.

#### **TRANSFERRING TO ANOTHER SCHOOL:**

Please give the school at least 30 days notice of transfer. If you want your child's records sent to the new school, please notify the office. Giving sufficient notice will allow the teacher to prepare your child for the change, for instance by having him/her work in a workbook to gain some experience of what it is and how to do it.

#### **TUITION, FEES, LATE CHARGES:**

**Tuition:** Your child's tuition is determined by the hours you choose on his/her enrollment contract. Parent(s) will be e-mail a QuickBooks invoice about the 25<sup>th</sup> of each month and tuition is due on the first of the month.

Tuition payment may be made in cash or by personal check or Money Order. On the 11th day of the month tuition will be considered late. The monthly tuition is determined by computing the annual tuition and then dividing it over 9 months, September-May. Thus the payment amount for those 9 months doesn't vary. (However, we charge only a half month's tuition for June.) **Otherwise the tuition will be the same regardless of the number of days in the month that your child attends school.**

**Late Tuition Payments:** Parents may be charged a late fee of \$25.00 on the 11th day of the month. If your tuition becomes extremely overdue, we reserve the right to deny service to your child, or to offer his/her place to another child on the waiting list. If you anticipate a problem paying your tuition on time, please contact Kathleen in the office to work out an alternative payment schedule.

**Late Pick-Up:** The tuition payment is based upon the hours of attendance that the parent selects. When a child is picked up later than the agreed upon hours, his/her account will be charged for after school care at the rate of \$6.00 per hour after 3:00 p.m. If the child is at school more than 30 minutes of any hour, the full \$6.00 will be charged.

**Returned Checks:** If a tuition check is returned by the bank marked "insufficient funds," a \$25.00 fee will be charged.

**Application Fee:** There is a non-refundable application fee of \$50.00 because it takes staff time to review applications, interview, lead observations and orientations and to produce materials for interested parents.

**Materials Fee:** An annual materials fee is charged on the 1st of July. It is spent immediately on classroom materials and supplies for the school year. This fee does not cover the cost of materials needed for the year, nor does it include the cost of snacks.

**Registration Fee:** An annual fee of \$140 is due for every child registering for the fall on July 1, of said year. This fee is essential to meeting the costs of operating the school in August. We do not make ends meet in the summer. Teachers still have to work, make materials and survive. The administration works straight through the summer preparing for the fall. Not enough children attend in the summer to meet the expenses of the school in July and August. Without this fee we would have to close the school.

#### **VACATIONS:**

Please notify the school one week in advance of a family vacation.

#### **VISITORS: (See "Observations of Classrooms")**

#### **WEATHER PERMITTING:**

The school will close if the public schools close due to adverse weather. The children will go outside to play if the wind-chill is not below 20 degrees Fahrenheit or if it is not too rainy and muddy.