

St. Francis Montessori Irving

Parent Handbook

2023 - 2024



Saint Francis Montessori
545 Iris * Primary
533 Iris * Upper Elementary
406 Pecan * Lower Elementary
Irving, TX 75061

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St. Francis Montessori Mission

The mission of St. Francis Montessori is to educate children in accordance with the teaching and principles of Maria Montessori, upholding the standards of the Association Montessori Internationale (AMI) in the Primary and the American Montessori Society (AMS) in the Elementary program. The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd, a Montessori program of religious formation, is integral to Montessori education at St. Francis.

At the heart of our work is the task of awakening each child's natural wonder, from which flows a deep and lasting desire for learning and growth, together with compassion, self-reliance, and other human virtues. In this context, too, we nurture the child's relationship with God, fostering the religious values of joy and contemplation.

Our Guides and Assistants prepare an environment that is responsive to the child's needs at each stage of development. They guide and encourage the development of the whole child—spiritual, social, intellectual, emotional, and physical—by teaching the children to work freely and whole-heartedly in the context of a supportive community.

Finally, we strive to create a strong and joyful community among our children, staff, families and directors, thus promoting stewardship of the school and a partnership with parents for the benefit of each child.

Tuition and Programs

Maria Montessori called her environment the Casa de Bambini, or Children's House. We strive to use the word *casas* to describe our environments as well.

The Morning Primary Program with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

- children attend the morning session 8:15 AM - 12:00 PM, Monday - Friday
- for ages 3 - 4
- tuition \$4300

The Full Day Primary Program with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

- children attend full day 8:15 AM – 3:15 PM, Monday - Friday
- recommended for ages 4 – 6 (parents of 4 year olds discuss readiness with the Guides)
- tuition \$5100

The Elementary Program with Catechesis of the Good Shepherd

- children attend full day 8:15 AM – 3:15 PM, Monday – Friday
- for ages 6 – 12
- tuition \$5900

Catechesis of the Good Shepherd only (for siblings not enrolled in the Montessori programs)

- ages 3 - 12
- tuition \$275

Sibling Tuition: Elementary \$4600 for second child, \$4000 for third; Primary Full Day \$3000 for second child, \$1900 for third; Primary Morning \$2400 for second child, \$1400 for third; fourth and more free

UD Faculty Tuition: 20% off first child only

Tuition/ Work Exchange positions available for those in financial need

Registration: \$250 per family for Montessori, non-refundable (increased to \$400 past 30-day enrollment return period). For other fees, see the Enrollment Form.

Tuition is due according to the family's payment plan through the auto payment form. There are three payment plans: one, two, or ten installments. Families who join after September 1 will have a pro-rated 9-month payment plan. Payments begin June 1 through April 1, with February's tuition suspended for

reenrollment fees..

St. Francis Montessori uses an outside vendor to collect tuition payments. An **automatic withdrawal will be required for families**, including the bank processing fee. **Parents are required to sign up for Smart Tuition. A Smart Tuition FAQ is included in the new family enrollment packet.** Each family will receive emails from Smart Tuition with tuition information and it is the family's responsibility to update bank information and payment frequency through Smart Tuition. New families to St. Francis will be given an additional automatic withdrawal form with your enrollment forms.

Withdrawals

There will be no refunds on tuition paid in the event of automatic withdrawal, even before the start of the semester. Parents will be responsible for insufficient funds fees or returned checks. Written withdrawals are required for stopping payments.

Fees are paid in June's invoice unless a payment plan is requested. Fees include:

Records \$50, Supplies \$100, Snack Opt-out \$100, Elementary-only Activities \$100, and Elementary-only Languages (Spanish in 6-9, Latin in 9-12) taught weekly by a qualified teacher \$100.

Paperwork and Policies

9-Week Probationary Period

St. Francis Montessori fully expects the successful integration of every newly enrolled child into our environment. Occasionally a child is observed as "not thriving" within our community. Every effort is made to rectify this situation. However, if these efforts do not bear fruit and SFM cannot provide the proper environment for the academic and spiritual well-being of the child, a conference will be scheduled with the parents and the child's Guide and Directress. St. Francis Montessori reserves the right within the beginning nine weeks of the year to make these observations and possible change of enrollment. This focus helps us to make certain our community of children is well-formed and meeting the needs of each individual child.

State Requirements

SFM is licensed through AMITOT, Association Montessori Internationale Teachers of Texas, whose work is aimed at the safety and development of the child. SFM must adhere to all the standards of AMITOT regarding the safeguard and care of children, which upholds the state of TX's standards. Suspected child abuse will be reported as required by § 261.401 of the Code of Texas. "Texas law requires caregivers to report suspected child abuse or neglect to the Texas Department of Family and Protective Services or law enforcement. Call **1-800-582-6036** to make confidential reports. Failure to report suspected abuse or neglect is a crime. Employers are prohibited from retaliating against caregivers who make reports in good faith."

To contact AMITOT, parents can call [817-773-2137](tel:817-773-2137) or visit <https://montessori360.com/amitot> and ask for Debby Riordan.

The enrollment forms must be completed and returned before your child's starting date. A child may NOT begin Phase-in until all forms and medical information is submitted. **Please mail to 545 Iris Drive, Irving, TX 75061 or return to SFM during operational hours in the secure white mailbox at 545 Iris.** These forms are required by state regulations, and all contribute to the safety and well-being of your child. It should be noted that these files are kept in the strictest confidence as a matter of policy and are available to the parents upon request. The required forms are:

SFM Application Form

SFM Enrollment Contract

- Child and Family Information
- Intent to Enroll
- Payment Agreement
- Handbook Agreement
- Education, Volunteer Hours, and Fundraising Agreements
- Photo Release
- Medical Information, including current immunization records or exemption form, a doctor's signature for well-being, vision and hearing tests
- Emergency Care and Release of Liability
- Emergency Contacts

If your child's information changes, please provide SFM with updated information on the Change of Information form found on the SFM website or from Ms. Polly.

In addition, St. Francis Montessori carries insurance in the amount of \$300,000 for each occurrence of negligence covering injury to a child according to state requirements.

Parents may request to review a copy of AMITOT's Minimum Standards and the most recent Licensing Report. The information to contact the local licensing office, PRS hotline, and PRS website will be on the Posting Board at the office.

DFPS requires that we state that we do not require our faculty to receive the flu vaccine.

Absences

Regular attendance is vital to your child's continued progress, but we ask that you keep your child home if he or she shows signs of fresh cold, fever, unusual rash, sore throat, vomiting, or diarrhea, or any other contagious symptom (see **Illness** section for further details). Children may not return within **24 hours** of a contagious illness. Please notify SFM if your child or a sibling has contracted a contagious disease so other parents can be informed.

We ask that parents make a courtesy text to the Guide and Directress if a child will be out for the day or for several days. Please text before 8:00 am.

Unexpected Closings

In the event of inclement weather, St. Francis Montessori will notify parents of our closing on the SFM email list and Remind app. In the event of a delayed schedule, children should arrive at 9:30 AM. Pick-up times will be as usual. Saint Francis reviews the ISD and local private school decisions in their decision to close.

Transportation

To ensure your child's safe arrival and departure, we require a completed Drop-off/Pick-up Release listing the name(s) of individuals authorized to transport your child to and from SFM. Children will only be released to authorized persons, so please notify SFM in writing of any changes in transportation arrangements throughout the year. If there is a change, parents will alter the physical form at pick-up.

Drop-off Procedures

- ALL TRAFFIC FLOWS SOUTH on Iris, NORTH on Pecan. FOLLOW THE U.
- Please enter the circular drive according to traffic flow (north entry) to the furthestmost spot.
- Please stop your car in the circular drive and walk your child to the doors of the building (north playground gate for the Casa, the south gate for the Casita, 406 Pecan for Lower Elementary, and 533 Iris for Upper Elementary.
- Please do NOT enter the building if you are in the carpool lane.
- The Guide or the Assistant will meet your child(ren) at the doors, greet, and sign them in. To ease in separation, we ask that parents do not enter the building at drop-off. To help with the separation, we ask that you schedule a time to come in prior to your child' s first day to see the casa and meet the adults. Please see your entry packets for times and days available for these visits.
- Primary parents must MEET THE EYES of the SFM adults when dropping children off.
- When leaving, all traffic turns SOUTH on Iris during drop-off times, NORTH on Pecan.
- Please do NOT park near the fire hydrant near Primary.

Pick-up Procedures

- ALL TRAFFIC FLOWS SOUTH on Iris, NORTH on Pecan. FOLLOW THE U.
- Please enter the circular drive according to the traffic flow and park in the furthestmost spot.
- Pull to the most forward position.
- Primary children will be dismissed from their individual environments at 12:00 pm and at 3:15 pm. Elementary will be dismissed at 3:15 pm.
- For inclement weather, please come to the dismissal doors (front middle doors for Primary) to receive your child/ren and walk him/her/them to your car.
- When leaving, all traffic turns SOUTH on Iris during pick-up times, NORTH on Iris.

Children may walk, supervised, between locations with 48 hours notification to the parents or within 48 hours with parental permission.

When a disciplinary need arises at Elementary, a child may be transported by faculty to Saint Francis for administrative support.

SFM does not provide transportation to and from school. Elementary field trips will have special forms.

Montessori Drop-off Starts at 8:00 AM

Late arrivals are extremely disruptive in the casas, and make it harder for the child to engage fully in the work cycle. Therefore, we cannot stress enough the importance of helping your child to arrive on time. The drop-off window is 8:00 – 8:15 am. If you are late, please wait patiently at the front middle white doors for an adult to see you. A fee of \$5 per day will be charged for consistent late arrivals after 8:20.

Pick-up time is at 12:00 Noon for Half Day and 3:15 PM for Full Day

It can be a traumatic experience for a child to be picked up late, particularly for the young child. If you will be late for dismissal, please contact the Guide so that we may assure your child that you are safe and on your way; a fee of \$5.00 will be assessed for every 15 minutes of child care provided after 12:15 PM (for 12:00 PM pick-up) or 3:30 PM (for 3:15 PM pick-up).

It is also disruptive for a child to leave early. If this is unavoidable, please notify the Guide or Assistant in writing that this will be necessary. Please schedule pediatric and dentist visit outside of school hours.

General Information

First Days of Montessori

The traditional academic year is Labor Day through Memorial Day. “Phase-in” is the term used in Montessori programs for the initial orientation phase before the traditional academic year begins for children ages 3 - 6 years, and a shorter time for the elementary children ages 6-12. It is critical to a happy and successful learning year. During this carefully planned period, new children are introduced to how things work in the environment and returning children receive reinforcement of these rules and instructions on how to better help when new children assimilate. Phase-in is a period of stabilization, where smaller groups help foster security and comfort. A traditional phase-in schedule for Primary is a short 30 minute visit the first day starting mid-to-late August, with incrementally increasing time for visits for a week to two weeks leading up to Labor Day weekend. Elementary aligns with Primary the following week.

The Montessori environment is stimulating and exciting for children, a place where independence, freedom, and choice of materials allow the child to learn and develop their whole self. Phase-in helps the child to learn how to handle this freedom while still following the rules of the environment and respecting each other.

Montessori programs all over the world begin their year with phase-in for these and other reasons:

1. Children need shorter time periods in the environment to familiarize themselves with the ground rules and physical space itself.
2. Small groups enable the Guide to establish or re-establish a relationship with each child individually.
3. The gradual phase-in allows the child to take in all the new information without being overwhelmed or confused.
4. Phase-in sets the tone for a whole year of respecting and caring for each other and the environment.

A schedule for phase-in is included in your initial information parent packet, mailed in June. Please read it carefully and contact the Guide or Directress with any questions. Children who enter later in the year will also have their own phase-in period. If both parents work, you may wish to contact the Directress with scheduling questions ahead of time.

Often this transition is the young child’s first major separation from the secure and familiar world of home and family. Children easily read the tender hearts of reluctant parents like mirrors reflecting mirrors. Your loving, confident, matter-of-fact approach will help your child take this big step positively. For further suggestions on how to ease this separation, please refer to the handout sent to you at the beginning of the year or ask your child’s Guide for suggestions.

Snacks, Lunch, and Backpacks

Healthy snacks are available throughout the morning in the casas, illustrating the importance of healthy eating habits with vegetables, fruits, protein, dairy, and carbohydrates. Water is available in the casas on a daily basis, but also please provide a water bottle for playground time. Children who attend full day

should bring substantial healthy lunches. **Please, no drinks, gum, candy, or sugary treats of any kind.** Food should be inside sanitary, temperature-controlled containers.

Please do NOT have any cartoon or pop-culture characters on your child's lunch bag.

Children do NOT need backpacks. SFM provides folders for work going home. Please return the folders promptly. (Upper Elementary children will decide annually about backpacks within their class.)

Animals

Children enjoy and learn responsibility from caring for animals. Our inside animals have evaluations and records in order to be with the children.

Birthday and Saint's Day Celebrations

Your Primary child's birthday will be celebrated in the Casa through a special ceremony that demonstrates how the earth orbits around the sun to measure a year. For this ritual, we request that you send in a baby photo and a photo for each successive year. The children love seeing their classmates' growth shown in such pictures. For those children whose birthdays fall on a weekend, holiday, or during the summer months, you may speak with the Guide to arrange an alternative date.

Elementary children celebrate by sharing our most favorite things about our friends, if the child desires.

Parents and siblings are invited to join in this birthday celebration; please confer with the Guide to plan this. We ask that you do not distribute home party invitations or send presents in for after-school parties. Hurt feelings are the result for those children not included.

Your child may want to celebrate the Feast Day of their patron saint. Please consider sending a favorite book about your child's saint or holy cards for each child commemorating your child's saint.

Medical and Health Issues

Potty-Training

All children attending St. Francis Montessori must be potty-trained and should wear cloth underwear. However, children are not expected to be totally accident free. Please make sure to send in a full set of extra clothing, packed in a large Ziploc bag with the child's name on it, for the occasional accident, to be stored at SFM. When a child has an accident, we will send the dirty clothes home in a separate plastic bag, INSIDE the Ziploc bag. Please return the clean Ziploc bag the next day with refreshed clothes.

Health Records

SFM must have a current physician's examination record for each child before his/her first start day, annually. A change in the health of a child or any accident during a vacation must be reported to SFM. A personal health data and medical emergency parental consent form must be completed annually and submitted prior to opening day. Without the required records, the child will not be able to attend SFM. This is a state law. If a child has a severe allergy, a doctor's health plan is required.

Medication

SFM can administer medication under serious conditions or in emergency situations. Parents must submit a doctor's plan with detailed instructions. If your child is taking medication for a non-serious illness,

please make sure that your child receives his or her medication prior to the beginning of the school day and/or after the school day has ended. SFM does not administer non-emergency medication.

Illness

By conducting standard daily health observations, SFM will inform parents if their child has been exposed to a contagious disease within the Casa. We also ask parents to notify SFM if there is a contagious disease in the home.

To avoid the spread of any contagious disease, we ask parents to keep their child home, if he or she has had a fever, nausea or vomiting, diarrhea, lethargy, conjunctivitis, or signs of a fresh cold within the previous **24 hours**; has a sore throat or coughs continually or has any condition or symptom which may be indicative of a contagious illness. In addition, if your child receives a **vaccine**, please keep your child home for 48 hours before returning to the Casas; fevers often develop within 48 hours.

If a child becomes ill during school hours, the Guide will first attempt to reach the parents; in the event that you cannot be reached, the individual listed in your emergency form will be contacted. We ask that once contacted, parents pick up their children as promptly as possible for the comfort of the child.

First Aid and Injuries

Most school-related injuries require simple first aid procedures, which can be administered by the Guide or Assistant. A first aid kit is available in the Casas. Our faculty is CPR and First Aid certified. For more serious injuries, parents will be contacted for instruction. We will call 911 for immediate attention.

In serious cases, a parent will be immediately notified via their emergency contact information according to SFM policy. Parents will receive a written accident report explaining the circumstances of the injury. If you have any questions concerning the incident, please feel free to contact your child's Guide.

Domestic Services

The Irving Family Advocacy Center is located at 600 W. Pioneer, just blocks from Saint Francis. Families in need of counseling can seek help through their services.

Building Safety Procedures

A Fire Safety inspection is done on a yearly basis. St. Francis Montessori conducts fire and other emergency drills on a monthly basis throughout the year. During the day, doors to the building will be locked, 8:30 AM -12:00 PM and 12:15 PM – 3:15 PM.

For fire drills, SFM exits to the outside front grass near the circular drive, as well as the back playground. For tornado drills, all the children shelter in the bathroom. For lockdown drills, we call them "Mother Duck" so as not to scare the children but to have them follow wherever the teacher goes. The children will go where the best adult judgment is made; either all gather in the Atrium or quickly exit the building or re-evacuate outside. During all emergency exits and drills, children are counted and called by name with a roster, identifying that the child is present. Emergency numbers and parent numbers are also available.

In case of an event which would require evacuating our building in a real emergency, we will escort the children outside of the building to St. Clare's and vice versa and parents will be notified of the situation. A cell phone and emergency numbers will be readily available for such an event; a group text will be sent as well as a group email, as well as personal phone calls. Safety is our primary concern. Faculty will remain

with the children, supervising them at all times. For children with special needs, the Guide will specifically escort the child to safety by keeping the child with the Guide at all times.

Standards for Behavior

Every child at St. Francis Montessori, regardless of age, is expected to respect the people, materials, and property that comprise our community. Learning this lesson is a social responsibility which begins with our youngest children. All children are helped to see that they have choices to make, not just with regard to their activities, but with regard to their behavior as well.

Children need constructive, supportive guidance to feel secure and to learn what is acceptable and what is not. This guidance needs to be presented in a way that nurtures self-discipline and self-esteem and is respectful of the child's dignity.

In the Casa, lessons in appropriate behavior are presented in much the same way as academic lessons. Manners and courtesies are presented through Grace and Courtesy lessons and practiced in the Casa on a daily basis. Children learn to be respectful and kind to each other by waiting for one's turn, using appropriate language to express their feelings, and respecting the Montessori materials.

Unacceptable Behavior includes but is not limited to:

- Inappropriate or disrespectful talk or swearing
- Demeaning name calling
- Teasing or purposefully hurting feelings
- Consistent disruptive noise that disturbs other children's work
- Hitting, spitting, biting, or kicking
- Purposeful destruction of class materials or equipment
- Interfering with the work, health, or safety of another

If a child forgets, or behaves inappropriately, often a gentle reminder from the Guide or Assistant is all that is needed. At times, the child will be asked to take a moment to regain self-control and choose a more appropriate course. At no time is misbehavior ever handled or addressed in a physical or verbally abusive way. SFM adheres to the DFPS guidelines for discipline and guidance (Texas Administrative Code, Title 40, Chapters 746 and 747, Subchapters L, Discipline and Guidance) below:

Discipline must be:

- (1) *Individualized and consistent for each child;*
 - (2) *Appropriate to the child's level of understanding; and*
 - (3) *Directed toward teaching the child acceptable behavior and self-control.*
- *A caregiver may only use positive methods of discipline and guidance that encourage self-esteem, self-control, and self-direction, which include at least the following:*
 - (1) *Using praise and encouragement of good behavior instead of focusing only upon unacceptable behavior;*
 - (2) *Reminding a child of behavior expectations daily by using clear, positive statements;*
 - (3) *Redirecting behavior using positive statements; and*
 - (4) *Using brief supervised separation or time out from the group, when appropriate for the child's age and development, which is limited to no more than one minute per year of the child's age.*
 - *There must be no harsh, cruel, or unusual treatment of any child. The following types of discipline and guidance are prohibited:*
 - (1) *Corporal punishment or threats of corporal punishment;*
 - (2) *Punishment associated with food, naps, or toilet training;*
 - (3) *Pinching, shaking, or biting a child;*
 - (4) *Hitting a child with a hand or instrument;*
 - (5) *Putting anything in or on a child's mouth;*
 - (6) *Humiliating, ridiculing, rejecting, or yelling at a child;*
 - (7) *Subjecting a child to harsh, abusive, or profane language;*

- (8) Placing a child in a locked or dark room, bathroom, or closet with the door closed; and*
- (9) Requiring a child to remain silent or inactive for inappropriately long periods of time for the child's age.*

If a child continues to have difficulty with self-control, the following progression of interventions will be utilized:

- The faculty person will give a reminder when needed to the child.
- Personal interaction with the Guide and child to review what the behavior is and how the child can correct it.
- The Guide will document persistent behavior and notify parents to collaborate.
- If the behavior correction is not made, then the parent and faculty will meet for a conference to discuss parental reinforcement of basic ground rules.
- A follow up conference is held.
- If for whatever reason a parent is unable to assist in this process or a child fails to exhibit proper self-control, the Guide/Directress may recommend having the child suspended or withdrawn.
- Parents always have the option of meeting with the Guide and Directress for more pressing issues. If a conflict persists within the environment, the parent has the option of meeting with the Board to voice their own concerns and to offer their own proposal.

Bringing Things to the Casa

Some children like to bring something from their secure home environment to the Casa. We want to honor this urge and, at the same time, be sure what the child brings leads to a positive experience.

- Flowers, plants, and other things found in nature are encouraged.
- Cultural items from other countries are encouraged.
- Your child's Guide can make further suggestions if needed.

Please have all other toys, money, security blankets, pacifiers, gum, and other items of this nature at home or in the car. If a child brings these into the casas, they will be set aside until dismissal.

Dress

The children's clothes should not be an aid to their movement, not an obstacle. Their clothes should allow them to run, climb, work, and play freely. The children need to be able to handle their clothes independently, particularly in the bathroom. For small children this is not possible with overalls, jumpsuits, belts, and pants with tight straps. Pants with elastic waists are easiest for young children to manage. Clothes that zip, snap, or button in front encourage your child's growing independence in this area and foster the development of manipulative skills. Inside shoes should also be easily put on and off. Observe your child trying to be independent in clothes and shoes to be aware of the suitability of the articles.

We also ask that you provide an extra set of clothing, packaged in a large Ziploc bag with each item labeled with the child's name to be stored at SFM. Please include undergarments, socks, and pants and shirt or a dress in the set. Please exchange clothes based on seasonal needs.

Any outerwear, shoes, or loose items of clothing that may be removed by the child throughout the course of the day **MUST** be labeled with the child's name. This enables us to make sure the right clothing returns home with the right child. A lost and found box is in the front office.

Costumes, t-shirts with motifs or characters, commercial brands like Disney, sequins, jewelry, purses, sunglasses, and hats such as cowboy or firefighter hats can distract from the work in the classroom. We ask that you do not allow your child to wear or bring items of this nature to SFM.

Shoes that flash, jingle, or make noise, flip-flops, cowboy boots and smooth bottomed dress shoes can distract from focus on the work present in the environment and can be unsafe especially at play. Excessively long shoe-laces and double knots are an added obstacle to the child; cotton shoe laces remain tied while synthetic ones do not.

The children will be playing outdoors on all but the most wet or bitter days. Please make sure to dress your child appropriately. Please do not send your child in their “good” clothes; worn play clothes are best, as children will be allowed to play and explore, sometimes to the detriment of their clothing. In winter, please dress your child warmly. Once again, we ask that all loose clothing (mittens, boots, sweaters, etc.) be clearly labeled with the child’s name.

Nutrition

The children’s work in the Casa is directly affected by the nutritional quality of their meals. Providing your child with a nutritious breakfast, with a healthy portion of protein, each morning will give them a good basis for functioning well. Please try to avoid sugar, artificial coloring, flavoring, preservatives, and other additives (especially cereal). Real, whole foods are best; processed foods are to be avoided.

As part of the Montessori lessons in Practical Life, Grace and Courtesy, as well as to provide the children with needed energy, a snack of fruits, vegetables, protein, and carbohydrates will be available to the children during the morning hours. Parents will be assigned a week each year to provide the Casa with healthy snacks. This will be handed out in early August (an opt-out fee is available in the Enrollment Form). Children will use peelers and blunt-edged serrated knives to prepare their carrots and cucumbers; please alert the Guide if you are not comfortable with this, as it is likely that children will occasionally cut themselves despite careful observation on the part of the faculty.

Snacks in all Montessori classrooms provide not only nourishment, but a lesson in healthy eating habits. Water will be provided. Be sure to fill out the appropriate section on the Emergency Contact Form if your child has food allergies so that we can make adjustments accordingly. Severe allergies require an emergency plan from a healthcare professional, per state law.

Children enjoy preparing their own food for lunch and contributing to making meals. It aids their independence. Provide only healthy options for them to make their breakfasts, lunches, and snacks. Elementary children should daily be making their own lunches independently, based on healthy choices.

Getting the Most Out of Every Day

You, the parent, can help ensure that your child gets the most out of every day by trying to do the following things:

- Make sure your child gets enough rest. As a general rule, 3-6 year olds need as much as 10-13 hours of sleep (ex 7 pm to 7 am); 6-9 year olds need 9-12 hours; 9-12 year olds need 9 hours or more per pediatric recommendations. It is best to try for the most sleep for your child and then provide less if they are waking up early. If your child is waking up on his or her own, your child is likely getting sufficient sleep.
- Provide nutritionally balanced meals based on a whole foods diet.
- Help your child to arrive promptly.
- Find constructive ways to ask about your child’s day, but do not push your child for details. Some are ready to talk later in the day about their time at school after a snack and rest.
- Allow your child “down time” to assimilate all they have learned.

- Let SFM know when you will be traveling out of town.
- Make the Guide aware of any events that might alter your child's mood (father away on a business trip, death of a pet or relative, new baby at home, rough night's sleep, etc.).
- Limit ALL screen time (we suggest a weekend family recreation of a movie is all the child watches in a week).
- Read to/with your child every day.
- Pray with your child every day.

Parent Details

Parent Education

In the fall and spring, SFM schedules Parent Education Meetings in order to share knowledge about childhood education, the Montessori approach, curricular content, and other topics of interest raised by parents and faculty. These meetings provide insight into what goes on in the casas, as well as into the parent-child relationship in general. Parent Education Meetings will earn 2 volunteer hours per parent (up to 8 hours annually). These informational sessions are critical to the Montessori educational experience.

The more you understand your child's work, the more you can appreciate and enjoy his or her education and discoveries. The Academic Calendar you receive will reflect the days of these meetings, which will be rich and succinct in their presentation. The teachers invest their time and love in these presentations.

Parent Orientation (at the beginning of the year) and joining Elementary (mid-year) is MANDATORY.

Classroom Observation

Parents are encouraged to visit and observe their child's Casa environment, usually each spring. An invitation for observation will be sent. As our first concern is for the freedom of your child for self-activity, self-discipline, and concentration in his or her work, we ask that parents wait until the scheduled times to allow children to work in the Montessori environment.

You will be given guidelines to read before you start observing so as not to disturb the workflow.

Communication

St. Francis Montessori considers open communication with parents to be an essential part of our mission. Only through open communication can we work together as partners in your child's education and development.

The Directress, Mrs. Polly Christensen, can be reached by phone and email at the following:

214-274-2805

polly@stfrancisirving.org

Text is preferred for fast, quick communication. E-mail is the preferred method for thoughtful discussion or long-term planning. Email will not be answered on the weekends or school holidays.

All non-classroom matters should be addressed with the office staff, whose contact information will be distributed at the beginning of the academic year in the Parent Information Packet.

If you have a question about your child's classroom experience, please ask his or her Guide. If a parent has a concern or complaint about a member of the faculty or staff, the parent is encouraged to meet

directly with that person. If a satisfactory resolution is still not reached, the matter will be brought to the attention of the Directress, then, if necessary, the Board. The Board, parent(s), and staff member will resolve the issue.

In order to effectively communicate with parents, St. Francis Montessori utilizes email to make announcements and keep parents informed about SFM happenings. Most notices will be sent out via email. You must check your email frequently because you are responsible for all information contained in the emails. If you do not have email, please ask another parent to keep you informed of the information contained in the emails. Only parents and legal guardians will be put on the email list. We also use an app called Remind that communicates short messages to text and/or email.

Any hard copy forms or notices to be sent home will be given to you at pick-up. You are welcome to hand notes to the Guide or Assistant when dropping off and picking up your child. You may also mail correspondence to 1412 E. Union Bower Rd., Irving, TX 75061.

Please visit the St. Francis Montessori website, www.stfrancisirving.org, to stay informed. The parent section of the site has information about SFM, the Montessori Method, and other information such as directories, the Academic Calendar, the wish lists and other important information. Information about the Parent Portal will be reviewed at Orientation.

Parents have the right to visit St. Francis Montessori at any time during the classroom hours without having to secure prior approval, according to state law. This, however, may create disturbances in the workflow so please be conscientious in making this decision. Dropping things off for the child or the classroom (even in the case of independent food preparation snacks) should not be considered sufficient cause to interrupt the focused work period. Please be extremely thoughtful about the work the children are engaged in. We seek to have as few distractions in our Montessori Casa as possible.

Conferences

Parent-Guide conferences are scheduled for each child three times a year; once before Montessori starts, once in the fall, and once in the spring. The conferences provide parents with one-on-one time with the Guide to discuss progress, areas for improvement, and plans for the future.

The Guides will be available to parents to meet or speak with them on a more ongoing basis. If you have questions or more immediate concerns, please schedule a time to speak with your child's Guide and she will be happy to do so.

Volunteering

St. Francis Montessori depends upon the help and cooperation of parents to assist with any number of tasks and programs throughout the year. This assistance helps to keep tuition reasonable, while engendering community spirit and a family atmosphere. Further, there is no better way to show your child that their experience is important than by giving your time and energy to aid its mission.

At the beginning of the year, each family is asked to fill out the volunteer information and return it with the admissions packet. Each Montessori family is requested to complete 20 volunteer hours before the end of the year, ten of which should be completed in the first semester, 3 of which must be at the Oktoberfest event itself. Those Montessori families who are unable or do not wish to donate time may pay a fee of \$400 instead. Families joining in January are asked to complete half of the standard assignment. Attendance at each parent meeting counts as 2 volunteer hours per parent. Unfulfilled hours will be charged a \$20/hour fee, spread out monthly after January.

Parents track their volunteer hours through the Parent Portal. Total hours are due by the last day of the school year. Families who do not complete their hours may pay partial fees or volunteer over the summer to complete any outstanding hours.

Fundraising

In order to keep tuition reasonable, Saint Francis Montessori requests that families participate in fundraising. Whereas tuition is not tax-deductible, fundraising gives families the opportunity to invite family members, friends, and neighbors to support SFM, or to make a tax-deductible contribution themselves.

Each Montessori family is requested to fundraise \$500 annually. Each family has one main opportunity to raise the \$500 of donor funds – Oktoberfest! Families will be notified of their family fundraising total in January and May and will be required to pay the remainder of the \$500 with their final tuition payment due May 1. Those Montessori families who are unable or do not wish to fundraise may pay \$500 at the beginning of the academic year. Families joining in January are asked to complete half of the standard amount.

Enrollment

New Applicants

St. Francis Montessori seeks to enroll curious, creative, self-motivated learners who will thrive in the prepared environment of a Montessori environment. The admissions process is designed to educate the children and their families to both the educational philosophy and methodology used in the classroom and the faith embraced by our SFM community. While applications are accepted throughout the year, the admissions process formally begins in February for the next academic year. Interested families should follow the steps outlined below throughout the admissions process for the subsequent school year:

- Interested families can email the Directress to schedule a tour.
- Parents or guardians can then submit a completed application with a non-refundable fee of \$25.00 on behalf of the child applicant. A decision to apply for admission to SFM is an indication of the family's willingness to embrace the Montessori philosophy and methodology that was witnessed during the in-classroom observation and discussed with the faculty.
- Applicants are notified of admittance decisions and if accepted, an Enrollment Contract is mailed. Each family has 14 days to respond and enroll by signing and returning the Enrollment Contract and paying the materials/registration fee. If the contract is not returned within 14 days, SFM cannot guarantee that an accepted child will be enrolled.
- A child is considered enrolled only when the Enrollment Contract is signed and returned, and a non-refundable materials/registration fee is paid to SFM.
- A visit with the child will be scheduled before the child's first day.

St. Francis Montessori Irving is a non-profit corporation dedicated to Montessori education in the Catholic tradition. St. Francis Montessori Irving admits students of any race, color, national and ethnic origin to all the rights, privileges, programs, and activities generally accorded or made available to students at the school. It does not discriminate based on race, color, national and ethnic origin in administration of its educational policies, admissions policies, scholarship programs, and other school-administered programs.

In its effort to create an educational environment true to the philosophy of Maria Montessori and to uphold the standards set forth by the Association Montessori Internationale, there are factors which are considered necessary for a well-balanced classroom dynamic. (For more on AMI standards, please see their website at www.montessori-ami.org.) Determinations with regards to children will look toward the

distribution of boys, girls, and ages within the structure of the three-year developmental cycle. Children are grouped within age categories with attention to a three-year cycle. SFM thus reserves the right to select children for admission based on their age, gender, and/or current grade level with respect to working within these guidelines.

Our goal is to enroll children who will benefit from a Montessori education. Application to a program does not guarantee acceptance. Age is only one factor for admission to each program level. Developmental readiness is also considered, and all applicants are considered in terms of space availability and classroom dynamics. Further, if your child is receiving special services, it is expected that you share this information with us to help in assuring that our program will be the appropriate environment for your child.

All acceptance decisions are at the sole discretion of the SFM Staff and Board.

Re-enrollment

The Enrollment Contract is given to current children and their families early in the spring semester. If there is any question regarding the status of a child's opportunity for re-enrollment, SFM will notify the family.

Current families should follow the steps outlined below in the re-enrollment process:

- Each family has until the enrollment deadline in February, to respond and re-enroll by signing and returning the Enrollment Contract and paying the non-refundable deposit.
- After this deadline, the admissions process is open to all applicants, and SFM cannot guarantee that a current child will be re-enrolled. A child is considered re-enrolled only when the Enrollment Contract is signed and returned and a non-refundable tuition deposit is paid to St. Francis Montessori.
- Acceptance of the Enrollment Contract is predicated on the successful completion of the year in progress and full payment of the current year's tuition and fees. If a child should fail to complete such work successfully, or not meet expectations set forth in the Parent Handbook or his or her parents' payment of the current year's tuition and fees is not made in full, SFM reserves the right to terminate the contract..

Policy Changes

If any of the above policies are changed, parents will be notified of the changes.

Last updated January 2023