



MONTESSORI PRIVATE ACADEMY

Parent and Student Handbook 2026-2027

"The essence of independence is to
be able to do something for oneself."
- Maria Montessori

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I. Core Values, Mission, and Vision

At MPA, our work is guided by the core values of:

Curiosity, Community, and Compassion

We believe that every child is naturally eager to learn and deserves an environment that nurtures a lifelong love of discovery, meaningful relationships, and respect for others. Our vision is to cultivate curious minds and compassionate hearts, inspiring each student to make meaningful contributions to their communities and the world. Our mission is to provide an authentic Montessori education that develops the whole human being.

II. History

Origins

MPA formally began classes on August 27, 1984, at Maria Linden Center. In 1985, with an expanding program, the School moved to 1390 North Mulford. In June of 1995, the School moved to 5925 Darlene Drive, leasing from the Muslim Association of Rockford. In the summer of 2008, MPA broke ground on the construction of its own building at 8101 Sayer Road. The official move occurred in June of 2009, and shortly thereafter additional adjacent acreage was purchased along Sayer Road to ensure room for outdoor activities and green space.

Credentials/Accreditations

MPA is an Illinois not-for-profit 501(c)(3) organization governed by a Board of Directors composed of parents and community members who are committed to supporting the school's mission and long-term success. The Board provides strategic oversight and works in partnership with the Head of School, who is responsible for the school's daily operations, educational leadership, and administration. MPA is staffed by dedicated administrative professionals and certified Montessori-trained educators who are committed to providing an authentic Montessori education. The school is accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS) and is registered with the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). In addition, MPA's Toddler Program is licensed by the Illinois Department of Early Childhood (IDEC).

Purpose

The purpose of the corporation is

1. To promote and encourage the optimal intellectual, social, and physical development of children through the Montessori approach to education.
2. To establish and maintain a nonsectarian Montessori school that does not discriminate against individuals on the basis of race, national origin, religion, age, or sex in either its admission or employment policies.
3. To support Montessori education as promulgated by the American Montessori Society.
4. To encourage intergenerational development and growth through positive interactions.
5. This corporation is not organized for business purposes or pecuniary profit, and no part of the net earnings thereof shall inure to the benefit of any member or individual, whether incidentally or otherwise.

III. Montessori Philosophy

The Montessori philosophy is based on the belief that children are naturally curious, capable, and eager to learn. A carefully prepared Montessori environment, with structured, sequential, and challenging materials, is essential to supporting each child's individual development. Within this environment, children are encouraged to explore, make choices, develop independence, and build confidence through meaningful, hands-on experiences.

A multi-age cooperative community exists throughout the school, allowing children to interact in roles as both learners and teachers. Younger students benefit from observing and working with older peers, while older students strengthen their own understanding and develop leadership, responsibility, and empathy by mentoring and assisting others.

The Montessori teacher is a specially trained guide and advocate for the child. Through careful observation and knowledge of each child's developmental needs, the teacher supports the child's natural curiosity and inner motivation while providing individualized guidance and instruction. Rather than directing every activity, the Montessori teacher prepares the environment and introduces materials that allow children to learn through discovery and purposeful work.

The Montessori Method was developed by Dr. Maria Montessori (1870–1952), the first woman to graduate from the University of Rome Medical School. Her educational philosophy is founded on several core principles:

- Respect for the child and recognition of each child's ability and desire to learn.
- Recognition of sensitive periods of development, when children are especially prepared to acquire specific skills, knowledge, and understanding.
- Learning within a multi-age community, where children develop cooperation, independence, and respect by interacting as both learners and teachers.

- Use of specially designed Montessori materials that support independent, multi-sensory, and interdisciplinary learning.

Children learn most effectively by doing for themselves. The Montessori Method encourages children to develop independence, concentration, problem-solving skills, and self-confidence by allowing them to choose purposeful work within a prepared environment that reflects their interests and developmental needs.

Montessori materials are carefully designed to be hands-on and self-correcting, allowing children to recognize and correct their own errors through exploration and repetition. This process builds confidence, perseverance, and a deeper understanding without unnecessary adult intervention.

While Montessori classrooms have clear expectations and guidelines that support respect, responsibility, and community, children are encouraged to take ownership of their learning. They learn to make appropriate choices about their work, whether to work independently or collaboratively, and how to manage their time and effort. The non-competitive and self-directed nature of the Montessori environment provides each child with opportunities for growth, success, and personal achievement.

IV. Montessori Community: Based on Mutual Respect

The MPA community is composed of parents, students, staff, and outside support agencies brought together to educate children to their highest potential using the Montessori Method. Respect is the cornerstone of our community's interactions and behaviors. Acknowledging the dignity and contribution of each member, the community strives to flourish in its mission. The rights and responsibilities of each group within the community are paramount.

Student Rights and Responsibilities

1. Rights

- To be treated respectfully by all members of the school community
- To be academically challenged to the highest level of ability
- To be given responsibilities to the classroom as a contributing member of the learning environment
- To expect cultural respect and understanding
- To be informed of behavioral expectations and academic standards as appropriate for age and ability
- To pursue work in a peaceful and secure environment

2. Responsibilities

- a. To do the best and most beautiful work as appropriate for age and ability
- b. To participate in work time
- c. To respect others in the environment, both students and adults
- d. To respect the learning materials and use them for their intended purpose
- e. To recognize when personal actions are interfering with the rights, space, feelings, and property of others
- f. To take responsibility for personal choices
- g. To develop a sense of responsibility for school building and property and to participate in school jobs
- h. To complete assignments and homework on time
- i. To understand their role as an agent in their education
- j. To model kind and respectful behavior for younger children
- k. To ask for help and to assist others when help is needed
- l. Keep cell phones at home or off and in the student's cubby unless otherwise directed by a teacher in an emergency situation

Parents Rights & Responsibilities

1. Rights

- a. To be treated respectfully by all members of the school community
- b. To expect children to be academically challenged to the highest level of their ability
- c. To receive information regarding the academic and behavioral progress of their children at scheduled conferences or sooner if determined by the teacher, parent, or Head of School
- d. To bring to the Teacher and/or Head of School any questions or concerns about the learning environment or issues relating to the school in a manner consistent with a policy of mutual respect
- e. To receive timely, courteous, and accurate responses to inquiries about their child's progress by staff and administration
- f. To expect the school to be a safe, peaceful, and secure environment for learning
- g. To attend general meetings of the Board of Directors and be informed of school governance policies

2. Responsibilities

- a. To provide current contact information and ensure MPA is immediately notified of any changes
- b. To act in a courteous, responsible manner in all matters, including interactions with all staff, other parents, and students
- c. To respect and promote MPA and all staff through respectful communication, both verbally and through social media

- d. To take matters of concern regarding a child to the teacher and all other matters of the school directly to the Head of School
- e. To provide a home environment that supports and respects the principles of Montessori education
- f. To bring students on time and prepared to meet the requirements of the school workday
- g. To meet their financial obligation to the school
- h. To support the school through a commitment of volunteer time, talents, and financial contributions
- i. To act as partners with the school to improve student learning and behavior
- j. To assist the child in making respectful choices and dealing with the consequences of those choices
- k. To foster respect for cultural and ethnic differences
- l. To work together with their child in meeting responsibilities to their school community
- m. To ensure and support that a child's cell phone is to be left at home or off and in the student's cubby when at school unless directed otherwise by a teacher in an emergency

Staff Rights and Responsibilities

1. Rights

- a. To be treated respectfully by all members of the school community
- b. To work in a safe, peaceful, and secure environment free from verbal or physical threats or abuse
- c. To be respected in their work by parents, other staff, and members of the Board of Directors
- d. To be informed of their job responsibilities and evaluated on a regular basis
- e. To be provided with the necessary Montessori materials and resources necessary to ensure the best practices possible
- f. To participate with parents, staff, and Board of Directors in looking at long and short-term goals for MPA
- g. To maintain personal cell numbers as private and not to be used for communication with parents

2. Responsibilities

- a. To provide an organized, prepared, peaceful, and enriching learning environment for children, parents, and other staff as directed by Montessori philosophy
- b. To academically challenge students to the highest level of their abilities
- c. To the best of their ability, recognize and accommodate students who have varying learning styles within the Montessori environment

- d. To respect the rights, dignity, and confidentiality of students, parents, and other staff
- e. To be an active listener in addressing questions and concerns or in striving to resolve conflict
- f. To inform parents of the academic and behavioral progress of their children at parent-teacher conferences or sooner as need dictates
- g. To give timely, courteous, and accurate responses to inquiries from parents surrounding their child
- h. To empower students to understand their role as agents in their education, to be personally responsible for their actions, and to be independent learners
- i. To maintain personal cell numbers as private and not to be used for communication with parents

V. Organization and Board of Directors

MPA is organized as an Illinois not-for-profit corporation governed by a parent and community Board of Directors. The Board of Directors provides oversight and governance in accordance with the Bylaws of the Corporation. The Executive Committee consists of the Chairman, Vice-Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer, and Head of School.

Board meetings are held approximately monthly and are published in the school newsletter. All parents and guardians are welcome and encouraged to attend. An annual meeting of the Board is held each school year between March and June, at which time new Board members are elected.

MPA is accredited by the American Montessori Society (AMS), an internationally recognized Montessori accreditation organization. AMS accreditation requires schools to maintain high standards in professional qualifications and training, educational practices, facility management, and the availability of appropriate Montessori learning materials to support student development.

MPA maintains public liability insurance to support the safety and well-being of our students, families, and community.

VI. Parent Participation

An integral part of the Montessori experience is the partnership between school and family. Parent involvement has been a vital part of MPA since its founding and continues to play an important role in strengthening our school community. As an MPA parent, your participation and support are valued and encouraged through a variety of activities that contribute to the school's ongoing success and future growth.

Families are encouraged to participate in parent engagement sessions, which provide opportunities to deepen understanding of Montessori philosophy, child development, and the shared language that supports children both at home and at school.

Each year, MPA provides a calendar of activities and events designed to bring families together and encourage meaningful involvement. Through participation, parents expand their knowledge of Montessori education while building strong connections between home and school.

There are many opportunities for families to contribute through our Room Helpers program. Room Helpers serve as a resource for communication, connection, and support among MPA families and staff. Families interested in learning more about becoming involved are encouraged to contact the Head of School.

VII. Programs

Toddler(2-3 years)

1. Half-Day: 5 days per week, 3 hours per day, mornings.
2. Full-Day: 5 days per week, 7 hours per day

The Toddler curriculum includes Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language, Cultural Studies, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish (beginning in January). The program provides a nurturing Montessori environment where children develop independence, coordination, communication skills, and confidence through hands-on exploration and purposeful activities. Guided by their natural curiosity, toddlers build a strong foundation for future learning while developing respect for themselves, others, and their environment.

Early Childhood (3-6 years)

1. Half-Day: 5 days per week. 3 hours per day, mornings or afternoons. (ages 3 & 4 only)
2. Full-Day: 5 days per week, 7 hours per day (ages 3 -6)

The Early Childhood curriculum includes Practical Life, Sensorial, Mathematics, Language, Cultural Studies, Music, Physical Education, and Spanish. The program provides a carefully prepared Montessori environment that supports children's growing independence, concentration, coordination, and curiosity.

Elementary I (6-9 years) and Elementary II (9-12 years)

7 hours per day

The Elementary I & II curriculum includes Mathematics, Language Arts, Science/STEM, Spanish, History, Geography, Practical Life skills, Art, Music, and Physical Education. The Elementary programs build upon the Early Childhood foundation of order, independence, and respect while fostering curiosity, critical thinking, collaboration, and a lifelong love of learning.

Secondary 1: Middle School (12-15 years or 7th and 8th Grade)

7 hours per day

The Secondary I program provides a rigorous, student-centered Montessori environment that builds upon the foundations of independence, responsibility, and respect developed in the earlier years. Students engage in an integrated curriculum that includes Mathematics, Humanities, Science/STEM, World Languages, Seminar, Capstone Projects, Practical Life, Studio Class, Music, and Physical Education. Students also participate in community service and Intersession Field Studies, providing opportunities to connect classroom learning with meaningful contributions and experiences beyond the school environment.

AMP (Additional Montessori Programming)

AMP (Before and After School Program) is available to all MPA students and provides a safe, engaging environment for students outside of the regular school day for additional fees. Families participating in AMP are encouraged to inform their child(ren) and send a brief FYI email to classroom teachers so that students and staff are aware of their AMP attendance.

VIII. Policies and Procedures

Admissions

1. No child shall be denied admission to MPA on the basis of race, religion, sex, or ethnic background. The following priorities will be observed in determining admission and class placement:
 - a. Current enrollment
 - b. Siblings currently enrolled
 - c. Balance of ages and sexes in each class
 - d. Transfer from other Montessori schools
 - e. Date of application
 - f. Past school experiences
 - g. Interview with Head of School
2. Enrollment is considered complete when
 - a. The parent contract has been signed
 - b. All registration forms have been turned in
 - c. All required medical exams or documentation have been provided
 - d. The registration fees and tuition deposit have been paid

Children will not be admitted to class on the first day of the term if required payments have not been made or if necessary paperwork is incomplete.

Acclimating to the Montessori Classroom

Our Toddler teachers will offer a visit to their new students in their homes to help ease their school transition. This visit also helps build relationships with them and their parents. Home visits can also help teachers understand the child and family and how the home environment can support the child's learning.

Separation anxiety is expected, and we encourage parents to stay positive and enthusiastic at drop-off time. It needs to be a quick and short goodbye. Tears are normal, and the teachers are prepared to offer reassurance and care.

However, excessive crying is also not good for the child. If a child cries at any level consistently for an hour, parents will be called to pick the child up for an early dismissal and may try again the next day. Some children and parents need time to acclimate; consistency is critical.

During the transition period for all students at MPA, we expect children to need extra support. However, if a child's needs consistently exceed what we can provide within our

staff ratios, it might be determined that the MPA classroom is not the right fit for the child. The Teacher and Head of School make this determination. The parents are brought into this conversation as soon as the concerns arise.

If applicable, the Head of School and Lead Teacher may initiate a transition bridging process that will be explained if the situation dictates. This process may include recommendations for additional services, as well as support in transitioning to another learning environment that can better meet the child's needs.

Arrival and Dismissal Procedures

Parents, guardians, or anyone dropping off or picking up a student are expected to arrive during the designated arrival or dismissal time slot. Families with multiple children may drop off or pick up all children during the latest scheduled carline time, closer to the start of that child's carline window.

When arriving at school, drivers should place their vehicle in park and remain attentive during the carline process. Cell phone use is not permitted during arrival and dismissal. A teacher will assist students safely and efficiently. Carline is not a designated time for conversations with teachers; any questions, concerns, or discussions regarding a child's day should be scheduled for another time.

Students will only be released to authorized individuals. Written or emailed permission from a parent or guardian is required for any person not listed as authorized to pick up a child. Without proper authorization, the child will not be released.

Student Arrival/Dismissal/AMP Times

Toddler

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (instructional hours for full day)

Pick up and drop off in front of the school

Drop off: 8:10 AM to 8:20 AM

Pick up Half Day: 11:15 AM - 11:30 AM

Pick up Full Day: 3:20 PM - 3:30 PM

Additional Montessori Programming (AMP), registration necessary:

Morning AMP: 8:00 AM - 8:10 AM

Afternoon AMP: 3:30 PM - 4:00 PM

Early Childhood

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (instructional hours for full day)

Pick up and drop off in front of the school

Drop off: 8:20 - 8:30 AM

Pick up Half Day: 11:15 AM - 11:30 AM

Pick up Full Day: 3:20 PM - 3:30 PM

Additional Montessori Programming (AMP), registration necessary:

Morning AMP: 7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Afternoon AMP: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Elementary I and II

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (instructional hours)

Drop off in front of school and pick up off of Sayer Rd.

Drop off: 8:10 AM - 8:20 AM

Pick up: 3:10 PM - 3:20 PM

Additional Montessori Programming (AMP), registration necessary:

Morning AMP: 7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Afternoon AMP: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Secondary I (Middle School)

8:30 AM - 3:30 PM (instructional hours)

Drop off in front of school and pick up off of Sayer Rd.

Drop off: 8:10 AM - 8:20 AM

Pick up: 3:10 PM - 3:20 PM

Additional Montessori Programming (AMP), registration necessary:

Morning AMP: 7:30 AM - 8:30 AM

Afternoon AMP: 3:30 PM - 5:30 PM

Late Pick Up Policy

If a child is not picked up on time, parents/guardians will be notified. The child will attend the Aftercare/AMP program if applicable, and families will be charged the full AMP rate. AMP times and program details are listed above.

If a child remains at school after AMP ends, MPA will:

1. Attempt to contact the parents/guardians two times.
2. If there is no response, MPA will begin calling the emergency contacts listed on the child's file.

3. If, after 30 minutes, MPA is unable to reach anyone, we will contact the local police and/or the DCFS Child Abuse/Neglect Hotline for further assistance.

A minimum \$20 late fee will be charged in addition to regular AMP fees for any late pickups.

It is essential that parents/guardians keep their emergency contact information up to date to ensure the safety and well-being of all students.

MPA staff are responsible for the protection and care of each child until they are released to a parent/guardian, police officer, or DCFS agent. We understand that children are not at fault for late pickups. Therefore, all discussions regarding the situation will be held only with the parent or guardian, not with the child.

Attendance

Student attendance will be recorded for ISBE compliance and IDPH reporting. This will include reporting on students who are absent due to any circumstances. Attendance will be reported for traditional face-to-face and remote learning models.

If your child is not attending school for the day, you must call the MPA office attendance line, leave a message before the start of the school day, and report the reason for absence. We will contact you if we do not hear from you after student attendance has been taken.

Call in Your Child's Absence
Leave a message at (815) 332-8101.

Birthdays

At Montessori Private Academy, we believe birthdays are a meaningful time to honor each child in a thoughtful and respectful way. In keeping with Montessori principles, our celebrations are simple, inclusive, and centered around the child.

Classroom Celebrations

Each teacher prepares a special birthday commemoration for students in their classroom. This may include a class tradition, a storytelling moment, or a walk around the sun, which is unique to each classroom community. Teachers will share specific birthday celebration details with parents.

Healthy Treats

Parents are welcome to provide a healthy, simple treat if coordinated in advance with the Lead Teacher. Please note:

- Cupcakes, sheet cakes, and sugary treats are reserved for celebrations at home and should not be brought to school.
- Treats should be nut-free and easily portioned for children.

Gifts & Invitations

To ensure inclusivity and prevent hurt feelings, party invitations and birthday gifts should not be distributed at school. MPA and its staff are not responsible for organizing or overseeing personal birthday events or gift exchanges.

Child Abuse or Neglect

MPA is serious about its responsibility to attend to the welfare and safety of our students and any other child entering our premises. Therefore, all school personnel strictly follow the obligation under Illinois law to report any suspected incidence of child abuse or neglect directly to the Illinois Department of Children and Family Services and MPA administration pursuant to 325 ILCS 5/4.

Clothing

The Montessori environment encourages the child to develop and master self-care. All students are expected to dress in clothes suitable for school activities. At Montessori Private Academy, a manner of dress that results in disruption to the educational process, interferes with the maintenance of a positive teaching/learning climate, or compromises reasonable standards of health or safety is prohibited.

The following guidelines apply to clothing for all students while at school:

- Closed-toed shoes are preferred as the children are active throughout, and their shoes need to promote safe movement.
- All shirts and blouses must cover the chest and midriff area and have straps at least 2 inches wide.
- Tank-top sports jerseys are not allowed unless a T-shirt is worn underneath.
- Clothing that fails to cover the body adequately will not be permitted.
- Pants must be worn at the waist as designed. Belts must be buckled.
- Skirts, dresses, and shorts should fall no more than 2 inches above the knee.
- No clothing shall have cut-outs or be torn in an explicit or suggestive manner.

- Hats, bandannas, and sweatbands may be worn to school for outdoor use and must be kept in the student's cubby during class time. Students may not wear hoods or hats in the building.
- Clothing or jewelry displaying inappropriate language or symbols that may be degrading to gender, cultural, religious, or ethnic values is not permitted.
- Clothing or jewelry that promotes drugs, alcohol, tobacco products, or any other items not legally usable by students will not be permitted.
- Pajamas and slippers are unacceptable attire at school unless approved by the Head of School for a special day.
- The school reserves the right to review clothing "trends" as they develop and inform parents if problems arise.
- Each child must bring a complete change of clothing in a zip-loc bag marked with the child's name. The clothing should be replaced as it is used and as seasons and sizes change. In addition, an extra pair of inside shoes must be worn within the classroom daily.

If any of the above clothing is worn to school, the Head of School will contact the parent, and the child will be asked to change into their extra set of clothing or may be sent home.

The following suggestions are made to aid the child's independence and comfort for Toddler/Early Childhood, ages 2 to 6:

- Jackets and coats should have large, easy-to-fasten buttons and zippers.
- Boots should be large enough to slip on and off easily so that your child can do it him/herself.
- Clothes should be as simple and comfortable as possible to allow freedom to work, as well as independence when using the bathrooms.
- All clothing, especially boots, mittens, scarves, and coats, should be marked with your child's name.

Communication

MPA communication systems:

- Email is our primary communication.
- The Weekly School Newsletter will hold the most updated MPA information from the teachers and general school information.
- FACTS Family Portal will be the check-in place for most other forms of communication.
- Families are encouraged to follow MPA on Facebook, Instagram, and TikTok for school updates, news, and community highlights.

Conferences

Montessori parent-teacher conferences provide an important opportunity for families and teachers to come together to discuss each child's growth, strengths, and areas for continued development. Conversations focus on the whole child, including social, academic, intellectual, and emotional development, with the goal of understanding the child's experience within the Montessori environment and identifying ways adults can support lifelong learning and success.

Parents are encouraged to bring questions, observations, and insights about their child. These conversations strengthen the partnership between home and school and allow families and teachers to work together in supporting each child's unique journey.

Beginning in Elementary and continuing through Secondary I, MPA students participate in student-led conferences. These conferences give students the opportunity to reflect on their learning, share their progress, celebrate their accomplishments, and take ownership of their educational experience. With teachers and families present, students practice communication, self-awareness, responsibility, and confidence as they discuss their goals, growth, and next steps.

Throughout the school year, families are encouraged to maintain open communication with teachers. Additional check-ins and conversations may be scheduled as needed to support student success, address questions, and continue building a strong home-school partnership.

Discipline

At MPA, the staff prepares the children to participate in the social life of the classroom through presentations in the Montessori curriculum area of Grace and Courtesy. The design of the classroom and the materials themselves are such as to encourage the development of the children's inner discipline.

The classroom approach to discipline uses the system of natural and logical consequences based upon principles of Positive Discipline. A student is approached individually by the staff member, and choices of behavior are presented. A student whose behavior poses a danger to other persons in the environment is removed from the classroom until they can regain control of themselves and are ready to rejoin the class.

In cases where it becomes necessary to implement our policy, we follow a defined set of steps. Depending on the circumstances, certain steps may be skipped, or we may escalate to the next step if the situation requires it.

- **Separation from the activity:** The student is temporarily removed from the activity but placed in an area where they can still observe and stay engaged.
- **Removal from the classroom:** The student is sent out of the classroom. A staff member will accompany them, or if additional support is needed, assistance can be called for.
- **Office Referral:** If the situation persists, the student is sent to the office as a final step for further intervention.
- In extreme instances of a child being unable to regain control, or posing a serious danger to others, parents will be called to remove the child for the remainder of that school day.
- In persistent cases of dangerous or out-of-control behavior, a series of conferences will occur with parents, staff, and administration to resolve the difficulties and establish lines of communication.
- In the very serious cases of a child leaving the school grounds or building without permission, a child bringing a weapon on school grounds, recurrent biting or other dangerous and inappropriate behavior, or bullying other students, parents will be notified immediately and will be expected to meet with staff and administration.
- In any of these cases, a student may be suspended or dismissed from the school. (*Exception for the Toddler Program: Bridging Process will be initiated.)
- A separate and detailed Social Media Policy has been approved by the Board of Directors.

Bullying Policy

MPA Board of Directors Approval Date: 11/29/2021

Acts of bullying, which are contrary to state law, will not be tolerated by Montessori Private Academy. Bullying, intimidation, and harassment diminish a student's ability to learn and a school's ability to educate. Nothing in this Section is intended to infringe upon any right to exercise free expression or the free exercise of religion or religiously

based views protected under the First Amendment to the United States Constitution or under Section 3 of Article 1 of the Illinois Constitution.

Definition of Bullying

Definition provided from 105 ILCS 5/27-23.7:

"Bullying" includes "cyber-bullying" and means any severe or pervasive physical or verbal act or conduct, including communications made in writing or electronically, directed toward a student or students that has or can be reasonably predicted to have the effect of one or more of the following:

1. Placing a student(s) in reasonable fear of harm to their person or property
2. Causing a substantially detrimental effect on the student's physical or mental health
3. Substantially interfering with the student's academic performance
4. Substantially interfering with the student's ability to participate in, or benefit from, services, activities, or privileges provided by MPA.

Bullying may take various forms, including without limitation one or more of the following: harassment, threats, intimidation, stalking, physical violence, sexual harassment, sexual violence, theft, public humiliation, destruction of property, or retaliation for asserting or alleging an act of bullying. This list is meant to be illustrative and non-exhaustive.

"Cyber-bullying" means bullying through the use of technology or any electronic communication, including without limitation any transfer of signs, signals, writing, images, sounds, data, or intelligence of any nature transmitted in whole or in part by a wire, radio, electromagnetic system, photo electronic system, or photo-optical system, including without limitation electronic mail, Internet communications, instant messages, or facsimile communications. "Cyber-bullying" includes the creation of a webpage or weblog in which the creator assumes the identity of another person or the knowing impersonation of another person as the author of posted content or messages if the creation or impersonation creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section. "Cyber-bullying" also includes the distribution by electronic means of a communication to more than one person or the posting of material on an electronic medium that may be accessed by one or more persons if the distribution or posting creates any of the effects enumerated in the definition of bullying in this Section.

Reporting Bullying

Any students that feel they have been the victim of bullying should immediately notify their classroom teacher and/or the Head of School by calling the main office number at (815) 332-8101. If a staff member receives an alleged report of bullying, it should immediately be brought to the attention of the Head of School. If a person wishes to make an anonymous report, they can call the main office number or they may do so by sending their written account to

Complaint Manager:
Blake Johnson, Head of School
blake@montessoriprivateacademy.com
Montessori Private Academy
8101 Sayer Road
Rockford, IL 61108
815-332-8101

Once MPA has received a report of bullying, every effort will be made by the Head of School and all relevant staff to fully investigate the complaint within ten (10) school days from the date it was received. Additional relevant information received during the investigation of the reported incident will be taken into consideration.

Parents or guardians of all students involved in an alleged bullying incident will be promptly notified consistent with federal and State laws and rules governing student privacy rights. As appropriate, discussions may include the availability of social work services, counseling, school psychological services, other interventions, and restorative measures. Parents and guardians of all students involved will be given the opportunity to meet with the Head of School to discuss the investigation, the findings, and the actions taken to address the reported incident of bullying.

MPA's Bullying policy is consistent with other school policies. After the first offense of bullying, parents will be expected to meet with staff and administration to open the lines of communication and discuss a resolution. Subsequent acts of bullying may result in the student being suspended or dismissed from the school.

Any student who engages in reprisal or retaliation against a fellow student who reports an act of bullying will be subject to disciplinary or remedial action. In addition, any student who is found to have falsely accused another student of bullying will also face remedial or disciplinary action.

If, through the course of an investigation, MPA determines that a reported act of bullying is not within the permissible scope of the school's jurisdiction, the victim will be provided with information on services that are available in the community, such as counseling and support services.

MPA will routinely evaluate the outcomes and effectiveness of the Bullying Policy by monitoring the frequency and types of bullying that may have occurred, as well as areas of the school where these acts may happen. All students, staff, and families are strongly encouraged to provide their observations of safety at MPA. The information developed as a part of this evaluation process will be provided to staff, Board Members, parents, guardians, and students on a regular basis.

The MPA Board of Directors and the Head of School shall post this policy on the school's website and publish it in the Parent Student Handbook and the Employee Handbook.

www.montessoriprivateacademy.com

Student Personal Devices

To support a focused learning environment and protect the privacy of students and staff, students must store personal electronic devices in their designated cubbies, backpacks, or other approved locations during the school day unless authorized by a teacher or administrator.

Personal electronic devices include, but are not limited to, cell phones, smartwatches, tablets, earbuds, headphones, smart glasses, recording devices, camera-equipped devices, and any technology capable of recording, transmitting, or receiving audio, video, images, or data.

Students may not use personal devices during the school day without staff permission. The use of any device to photograph, record, livestream, or otherwise capture images, video, or audio of students, staff, or school activities without authorization is strictly prohibited.

Exceptions to this policy may be granted for documented medical needs, approved accommodations, or other educational or safety-related purposes as determined by the school. Requests for an exception must be submitted in writing to the Head of School and approved in advance.

Montessori Private Academy is not responsible for lost, stolen, or damaged personal devices brought to school. Devices used in violation of this policy may be confiscated and returned in accordance with school procedures. Repeated violations may result in disciplinary action.

Fee Policies

- Discounts:
 - MPA offers multi-child discounts for students enrolled in 5 full-day programs for the duration of the entire 2026/2027 school year. All eligible discounts are provided on the **2026/2027 Program and Enrollment Fees document**.
 - Discounts are not applicable to students enrolled in half-day programs.
- The non-refundable enrollment fee is part of the registration process and a child is not enrolled until this is paid.
- MPA uses FACTS Management for collection of payments. At registration, each family will be given enrollment instructions for FACTS.
- Payments received after the designated due date will result in a late fee.
- MPA reserves the right to suspend a student's attendance until the account is current. Reinstatement of a child may occur with full payment of back tuition, penalties, and all outstanding fees. No credit will be given for days missed by a child due to lack of payment. Exceptions to this policy may be granted if there are unusual or extenuating circumstances.

Tuition Assistance

MPA offers tuition assistance to a limited number of returning students enrolled in full-day programs from Early Childhood (EC) through Secondary I (Middle School). Tuition assistance awards are based on demonstrated financial need and the available financial resources of MPA.

Tuition Assistance is not included as part of the initial Enrollment Contract and requires a separate agreement between the responsible parties and MPA. The Tuition Assistance Application is available through the FACTS Family Portal.

Because family circumstances may change and MPA's available resources vary from year to year, tuition assistance is not guaranteed annually. Families must reapply each year if they wish to be considered for assistance.

If the tuition assistance awarded does not meet a family's financial needs, families will have seven business days to determine whether they wish to proceed with enrollment or withdraw their child. If MPA receives written notification within the seven-business-day period that the family is unable to enroll due to tuition costs, the enrollment fee will be fully refunded and the child's enrollment will be canceled.

Fund Development / Donations / Supporting MPA

MPA is committed to keeping tuition as accessible as possible so that a Montessori education remains available to as many children as possible. Annual fund development plays an important role in supporting the school's mission and addressing the increasing costs of providing a high-quality Montessori education.

Contributions to MPA are tax-deductible to the extent allowed by law. Families and community members can support MPA in many ways, including gifts to the Annual Fund, in-kind donations of materials, furniture, or equipment identified as school needs by teachers or the Head of School, participation in fundraising events, product sales, and passive fundraising opportunities.

Gifts made in memory or in honor of a loved one are also welcomed and provide a meaningful way to support the continued growth and success of the MPA community.

General Health Policies

Guidance for Respiratory Viruses and Outbreak Management

MPA utilizes health and safety guidelines and recommendations from the Winnebago County Health Department (WCHD), the Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH), the Center for Disease Control (CDC), as well as the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE).

[Respiratory Virus Guidance CDC Link](#)

Cleaning and Disinfecting Efforts

- Full cleaning and sanitizing of rooms and bathrooms at least 1x daily
- All cleaning products are stored safely and out of the reach of children

Ticks/Head Lice

Due to the tenacious nature of head lice/nits, MPA asks parents to follow these procedures closely.

When head lice are discovered at school, the parent/guardian of the child will be notified immediately, and pick-up will need to be arranged. The child can only return to school after the first treatment application has been completed and all nits removed.

General Illness

We cannot emphasize this enough. Protecting the health and well-being of our entire community depends on keeping your child home if they are not well. Thank you for helping us maintain a safe and healthy environment for everyone.

- If your child is not feeling well, keep them home.
- If the student presents an elevated temperature or concerning symptoms, parents will be contacted to pick up the student.
- Students who become ill during the day must be picked up from school in a timely manner.
- The decision for a child to return home is made by the Head of School.

Child Illness Procedure

Symptoms at School

Sick children must be picked up within 30 minutes of being called by the school.

If a child develops one or more of the following symptoms, the child will be taken to the office to be picked up by an approved adult:

- Fever or chills
- Cough*
- Shortness of breath or difficulty breathing
- Fatigue
- Muscle or body aches
- Headache
- New loss of taste or smell
- Sore throat
- Congestion or runny nose*
- Nausea or vomiting
- Diarrhea

*If allergies have been documented with MPA, the Head of School will determine the child's need to return home.

Accident Reports

Every attempt is made to ensure the safety of students and staff at all times. However, should an accident occur, an accident report will be issued to the parents when their child has been injured or has needed to change clothes for any reason. The report shall state the nature of the accident, date, time, and assistance rendered. When warranted, parents will be notified for an incident involving a more serious injury.

Emergency Medical Treatment

In the event of a medical emergency, we will use the following procedure:

1. We will try to contact both parents/legal guardians at home/work using the telephone numbers listed on the school's emergency contact form. Therefore, notify us immediately of any change in phone numbers or other emergency information.
2. We will call immediately for emergency medical service. If required, the child will be transported by ambulance to the hospital. Parents will be responsible for transportation costs.
3. Should an X-ray or surgery be required, the signature of a parent or legal guardian will be necessary. Please come to the emergency room as soon as contacted. We understand that the medical permission form submitted with your child's school application is not valid unless submitted annually and updated. You may want to update your emergency contacts if you have reason to believe we may not be able to easily contact you in case of emergency.
4. Please call us if you have questions or information regarding the above procedure.

Medication Policy

Medication or homeopathic/herbal medications will only be dispensed if it is absolutely necessary to be given during the time the child is at school. They may not be placed in a child's lunch or care. All medications should come with clear instructions, and MPA staff must be informed of any medication the child is taking. Please make every effort to schedule the medications so that they may be taken at home.

Prescription Medication

Prescription medications will be administered at MPA by designated staff members under these guidelines:

- Prescription medication must be contained in the original pharmacy container with pharmacy instructions for administration clearly stated
- Parents must complete the Permission to Dispense Medication form prior to staff dispensing medication
- All medication **MUST BE BROUGHT TO THE OFFICE** by the parent
- All documentation will be kept in the child's folder. A medication log will be kept.

Over the Counter Medication

Over the counter medications must be brought in the original packaging with instructions, signed in, and the same procedure used as with prescription medication. This also includes sunscreen, lip balm, and chapstick if any student requires help getting these on by a staff member. There is a form that needs to be filled out for this. **This medication policy applies to any child regardless of age that is enrolled at MPA.**

Required Health Forms: Complete Physical & Oral Health Examination

1. Illinois state law regulates children's immunization schedules as well as their dental and eye exams. If seeking a waiver from health requirements, please contact your child's doctor and submit necessary forms required by Illinois state law to MPA.
2. All new students must have an Illinois Child Health Exam Form submitted by the start date.
3. Students entering Kindergarten and sixth grade have additional health requirements that must be fulfilled.

Holidays

The observance of many holidays is based on personal, ethnic, and religious preferences. In respect for this diversity among our families, most holidays are family celebrations within the home and do not fall within the realm of school activity.

The change of seasons is observed with the winter and spring breaks. The elementary students study many religious celebrations within a historical context. Specific celebrations of Christmas and Easter are not held.

Valentine cards may be brought if they are unaddressed and sufficient for the entire class. Please follow the direction of your classroom Lead Teacher. Halloween costumes are not worn.

Should you have concerns about school celebrations, please contact the Head of School.

Lunches and Snacks

Toddler Program (Age 2)

Children enrolled in the Toddler classroom will be provided with a nutritious lunch each day, as well as two snacks—one in the morning and one in the afternoon.

All Other Full-Day Students

Families of all other full-day students are asked to provide a healthy lunch from home each day. Please note that lunches **cannot be refrigerated or heated** at school, so we encourage packing foods that can be safely stored in an insulated lunchbox with an ice pack if needed.

Early Childhood (EC), Elementary II (EL-II), and Middle School (MS)

Students in these programs participate in a Montessori-style community snack. Healthy snacks are provided and are available throughout the morning work cycle, allowing children to choose when they are hungry. This approach supports independence, self-regulation, grace and courtesy, and opportunities for children to host and serve one another.

To encourage students to experience a variety of healthy foods and fully participate in the community snack experience, we ask that families do not send snacks from home. Exceptions may be approved by the Head of School when necessary due to dietary restrictions, medical needs, or other special circumstances.

To support this community experience, each classroom will invite families at least once each semester to sign up to donate healthy snacks for the class. These voluntary contributions help maintain the classroom snack supply while fostering a spirit of partnership between home and school. A sign-up opportunity and suggested snack list will be shared with families in advance.

Elementary I (EL-I)

Students in Elementary I should bring at least one healthy snack from home each day to enjoy during their morning work cycle.

Nut-Aware Food Policy

MPA maintains a Nut and Nut Product-Free Policy for all foods purchased and provided by the school. This practice helps reduce the risk of accidental exposure for students with severe food allergies.

In the event that a student enrolled at MPA has a life-threatening nut allergy, the school may implement a Nut-Free Campus Policy or additional restrictions as needed to ensure the health and safety of all students. Families will be notified promptly if any changes to our food policies become necessary.

Photographs, Videos, and Publicity

Photographs or videos of the children participating in our programs may be taken from time to time and may appear in newspapers, magazines, social media, the MPA website, brochures, or other publicity materials. Parents, guardians, or responsible parties will not be compensated for the use of their child's images. During enrollment, parents will have the opportunity to elect whether or not their child's photo may be used for this purpose. Parents are to make the Head of School aware of any desired changes in the status regarding the sharing of photo/video releases.

Resolution Procedure

If any concern should arise, parents or guardians are asked to seek information directly from the school, consulting confidentially with those best able to address the concern. Usually, the first source of information and the one most likely to provide immediate assistance is the classroom teacher. If a problem should arise for a parent dealing with an employee of the school, it should first be discussed with the person directly involved. In the event that a satisfactory agreement cannot be reached, the grievance should be brought to the attention of the Head of School. If matters still cannot be settled to all parties' satisfaction, resolution requests may be submitted in writing via email to the MPA Board Chairman for review.

School Calendar and Directory

A school calendar will be distributed to parents and published on the school's website. Please be advised that this calendar is subject to change, so please watch for updates.

The Family & Student Directory will be available to parents throughout the school year on FACTS. The Directory may be used for contacting other MPA families. Names, addresses, and telephone numbers should not be used for commercial or solicitation purposes.

Severe Weather and Safety

MPA uses FACTS to inform parents of severe weather, other emergency situations, school closures, and general school announcements. Parents are expected to supply current contact information for use in the FACTS system.

For such emergencies, MPA carefully monitors the decisions of nearby school systems as a guideline, but ultimately makes its own decision based on the safety and well-being of our students, staff, and families. However, if school remains open, parents should use their judgment to decide whether to bring their children to school. Additionally, severe weather school closing information will be broadcast over local Channels 13 and 23 online stations.

Safety drills are regularly scheduled for the school.

Children with Special Needs

Children with special needs who apply to MPA will be considered for enrollment. Consideration must be based on the current class enrollment and the teacher's ability to effectively meet the child's needs as well as the needs of the class as a whole. MPA has no special education teacher to administer a program for specific learning needs.

However, if the Head of School and Lead Teachers determine MPA can meet the specific needs of the child, full cooperation from the parents is required and test results/evaluations must be submitted. In certain circumstances, some services may be available through the Rockford Public School District to augment MPA's regular instruction.

Student Records

In order for records to be transferred, a written release from the parent is needed.

The student's permanent record will consist of basic identifying information, attendance records, progress reports, and health records. Any other information such as family background information, psychological reports, or anecdotal records will be destroyed at the time of graduation or withdrawal.

Transportation

Transportation of students to and from school is completely the responsibility of the parents. CHILDREN WILL NOT BE RELEASED TO UNAUTHORIZED PERSONS. Authorization must be in writing. A phone call will not suffice.

Withdrawal Policy

MPA requires written notice of student withdrawal submitted to the Head of School, \$500 withdrawal fee, and the following:

If a parent(s) or guardian(s) withdraws a student **between the submission of this Contract and December 1, 2026**, I/we will be obligated to pay MPA as liquidated damages an amount equal to the difference between the amount of tuition already paid and 50% of the child's tuition. If a parent(s) or guardian(s) withdraws a student **after December 1, 2026**, I/we will be obligated to pay MPA as liquidated damages, an amount equal to the difference between the amount of tuition already paid by I/we and 100% of the child's tuition.

- If I/we have prepaid the entire year's tuition and my/our child withdraws before December 1, 2025, MPA will refund I/we an amount equal to 50% of the child's tuition.
- If tuition is financed with the monthly plan, the balance of semester tuition is payable in full upon early withdrawal.

If a family is permanently relocating more than a 60-mile radius from MPA: I/we will be responsible only for the (\$500) withdrawal fee per student and may be released from their contract through the month of attendance upon receipt of "request for student records" from the new school.

Any family leaving the school with tuition and/or other fee balances owed and unpaid without a payment plan, will be referred by the Head of School to the Finance Committee of the Board of Directors for collection.

Please note MPA holds the right to update these policies as needed. Parents will be informed of any updates in the Wednesday Newsletter.

Parent and Student Handbook Acknowledgment Form

(submit to Office by October 31, 2026)

We are pleased to welcome you to Montessori Private Academy for the 2026-2027 school year. To ensure that you are well-informed about our school's policies, procedures, and expectations, we have provided a comprehensive Parent and Student Handbook.

Please read the handbook carefully to understand the school's rules, programs, and important information. By signing this acknowledgment form, you confirm that you have received, read, and understood the contents of the handbook.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT OF RECEIPT AND UNDERSTANDING

I/We, _____ (Your Name/s), acknowledge that I/we have received and read the Montessori Private Academy Parent/Guardian Handbook for the 2026-2027 school year.

I/We understand the policies, procedures, and expectations outlined in the handbook and agree to support and adhere to them throughout the school year.

Parent Name/s: _____

Student Name/s: _____

Signature/s: _____

Date: _____

If you have any questions or need further clarification about any of the information in the handbook, please do not hesitate to contact the school office. Thank you all for your cooperation and support.