

PARENT HANDBOOK

2016-2017

Swannanoa Valley Montessori School seeks and celebrates diversity. The school does not discriminate in any manner with regard to race, color, religion, sex or national origin.



**Swannanoa Valley
Montessori School**

**Children's House & Elementary School
101 Carver Avenue
Black Mountain, NC 28711
Telephone: (828) 669-8571
www.swanmont.org**

The child is both a hope and a promise for mankind. -Maria Montessori

TABLE OF CONTENTS

PAGE	TOPIC
4	Welcome and the History of SVMS
5	The Montessori Method
6	The Sensitive Period
7	Seven Points of the Montessori System
8	Parent Involvement Opportunities
9	Policies and Procedures
9	Financial/Enrollment Matters
10	Health and Emergencies
11	Visiting the Campus
12	Car-Line Policy and Procedures
15	Discipline Policy
16	Field Trips
16	Communication
18	Inclement Weather Policy
19	Children's House Montessori Program
21	Elementary Montessori Program
23	Waste-Free Lunches
24	SVMS Compliance with Child Abuse Reporting Requirements
24	Asbestos Notification
25	Staff Directory
26	2016-2017 School Calendar

Welcome!

To all the new and returning families, welcome to Swannanoa Valley Montessori School. Please take the time to read the handbook thoroughly and then keep it in a handy place for reference during the year. All parents are expected to be familiar with the policies and procedures of the school and to abide by them. If any questions should arise during the year, please do not hesitate to contact us, as we are committed to your child's success and happiness.

Swannanoa Valley Montessori School opened its doors on September 2, 2003. The school was founded by parents who sought a creative, active learning environment for their young children. We have expanded over the years to include also include an Elementary Program.

The Swannanoa Valley Montessori School strives to provide the highest quality Montessori education to children ages 2 ½ years through 12 years old. Our aim is to provide programs that will create wholesome experiences for the parents and child in the areas of education, social, emotional, and physical development.

The Board of Directors sets school policies, and the Administrative staff is responsible for decisions regarding the administration of the school.

Swannanoa Valley Montessori School is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization and depends solely on tuition, fundraising, and donations for all the operating expenses.

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Children of different ages work together without excessive competition. Younger children learn from older children while older children gain confidence from helping the younger ones.

In our carefully prepared environment, we expose children to specially designed materials and experiences to impart a lifelong love of learning. The staff of SVMS wishes to extend a warm welcome to all parents and children.

"The more the children know, the more they will see and then the further they will walk. To explore, one needs to be filled with intellectual interests and these it is our business to give."

-Maria Montessori

The Montessori Method

The Montessori approach envisions education as “an aid to life.” Montessori is both a philosophy of child development and an educational approach, which respects each child’s unique personality. The core principles are drawn from the natural development of the child and designed to help each child with their inner construction. The method allows for modification to the needs of the individual, regardless of the level of ability, learning styles, or social maturity.

The focus of Montessori education continually changes in scope and manner to meet the child’s changing needs and interests.

Program Goals/Objectives

- An emphasis on cognitive structures and social development
- Teacher’s role is unobtrusive; child actively participates in learning.
- Environment and methods encourage internal self-discipline.
- Individual and group instruction adapts to each student’s learning style.
- 3 year mixed age group.
- Children are encouraged to teach, collaborate with, and help each other.
- Child chooses own work from interest and abilities and is thus self-motivated.
- Child formulates concepts from self-teaching, multi-sensory, hands on materials.
- Child works as long as she/he wants on chosen projects.
- Child sets own learning pace to internalize information.
- Child corrects own error through feedback from materials.
- Learning is reinforced internally through child’s own repetition of activity, and feelings of success.
- Multi-sensory materials for physical exploration and development.
- Organized program for learning care of self and environment.
- Child can work where he/she is comfortable, moves and talks at will (yet does not disturb others); group work is voluntary and negotiable.
- Child is introduced to the joy of learning at an early age providing a framework for intellectual and social discipline.
- Child builds within himself the foundation for a lifetime of learning.
- Organized program to help parents to understand the Montessori philosophy and participate in the learning process.

Concisely, Montessori inspires children to discover the joy of learning at an early age and allows them to take responsibility for their own education. Children develop an appreciation for life, for the world, for the universe, while becoming responsible human beings and active members of a harmonious society. Montessori provides a framework in which intellectual and social discipline goes hand in hand, laying the foundation for a happy, productive life.

The Sensitive Periods

Maria Montessori believed that another person educates no human being; one must do it oneself or it will never be done. She felt that a child must have intrinsic motivation and curiosity of their world to become a lifelong learner. In the *Absorbent Mind*, Dr. Montessori wrote, *“The most important period of life is not the age of university studies, but the first one, the period from birth to the age of six. For that is the time when man’s intelligence itself, his greatest implement is being formed. But not only his intelligence; the full totality of his psychic powers At no other age has the child greater need of an intelligent help, and any obstacle that impedes his creative work will lessen the chance he has of achieving perfection.”* She called these times in a child’s life, the Sensitive Periods. These are time periods when optimum learning of a specific skill can occur, such as language development, large motor development, and reading. The Montessori classroom embraces this fact by allowing the child the freedom to select activities based upon his interest level.

The Child’s Role

There are three roles the child embraces within the Montessori classroom:

- **Materials**-The children are free to use materials creatively and uniquely as long as they maintain a respectful and constructive approach with the learning materials.
- **Movement**-The children are free to move in order to learn, but may not interfere with another’s work.
- **Interaction**-The children must respect the interactions of others and their work, and must also respect the teacher and his/her work with other children.

The Teacher’s Role

A teacher, often referred to as a director or directress, in the Montessori classroom is one of a facilitator or guide. The teacher works diligently on providing the following for the children:

- **Ground Rules**-The teacher establishes and models the ground rules for each individual child within the group setting.
- **Observer**-The teacher takes his/her cue from the activities and needs of the child through careful observation of the children on a daily basis. It is through this observation that the teacher is able to “follow the child” through their learning endeavors.
- **Guide**-The teacher demonstrates the correct use of materials as the children individually choose them. She/he carefully watches the progress of each child and keeps a record of each child’s work with the materials.
- **Preparer of the Environment**-The teacher prepares the environment each day for the children, always keeping in mind the appropriateness of materials and the accessibility for the child.

These words reveal the child’s inner needs: *“Help me do it alone.”*

-Maria Montessori

Seven Points of the Montessori System

1. Each child works at their own pace. Each stone in the mental edifice is well laid before the next is added.
2. The child works from their own free choice, without competition.
3. The Montessori Method has proved itself of universal application. Within a single generation, it has been tried with complete success with children of almost every civilized nation. Race, color, climate, nationality, and social rank, have made no difference to its successful application.
4. The Montessori Method develops the whole personality of the child, not merely their intellectual function, but also their powers of deliberation, initiative and independent choice, with their emotional compliments. By living as a free member of a real social community, the child is trained in those fundamental social qualities, which form the basis of good citizenship.
5. The Montessori system encourages self-discipline, self-knowledge and independence, as well as enthusiasm for learning, an organized approach to problem solving, and academic skills.
6. Most children appear to readily adjust to new situations when they go from Montessori to traditional classroom environments. In all likelihood this is because they have developed self-discipline and independence in the Montessori environment.
7. In a Montessori class, a child is not pushed to intellectual accomplishment. They are given the keys to exploration through sensorial material, which is an aid to clarifying and organizing the impressions his mind already holds. Intellectual exploration forms the backbone and structure of all the creative work in a Montessori classroom. Voluntary repetition of an exercise by a child without suggestion or command is a phenomenon common in Montessori classrooms throughout the world. To repeat is to acquire understanding, to demonstrate concentration, to work toward perfection.

Suggested Readings:

Montessori: A Modern Approach by Paula Lillard

Secrets of Childhood by Maria Montessori

Discovery of Childhood by Maria Montessori

How to Raise an Amazing Child the Montessori Way by Tim Seldin

Parent Involvement Opportunities

In an effort to build community and keep our tuition costs down, the school makes use of volunteers in a variety of ways. Parents are encouraged to apply their own special skills or complete general tasks that are necessary to the efficient running of the school with a suggested contribution of 20 hours per year for each family. Parent participation in ongoing projects and parent workdays enhance the school and can be a fun time to meet other families. *Because your time is valuable, upon completion of volunteer time, the \$200 Placement Deposit will be refunded at the completion of the school year. If you complete less than twenty hours your credit will be at a rate of \$10 per hour of time spent working. *It is up to the parent/guardian to turn in completed volunteer hours for credit to be received.* The only way to turn in completed volunteer hours is through our online form, **Volunteer Hours Worked**. A link to this form will be included on all newsletter communication from the office and is also available on our school website. Please contact the office if you have problems accessing this sheet.

Additionally, you can waive the refund of your \$200 Placement Deposit after the completion of your 20 volunteer hours. By waiving the refund of this \$200 you are indicating that you wish this money to be applied to the SVMS Scholarship Fund. You are making a small gesture that has big results by helping support families who want to be a SVMS family, but cannot afford it. There is a **Waive Volunteer Refund Form** that you can complete if you wish to waive your refund.

School-Wide volunteer opportunities and Board of Directors As a member of the SVMS community, all families are required to volunteer in some shape or form. Make a yearlong commitment to support the work of the Board of Directors by joining a Board sub-committee and/or serve on our Board of Directors. These sub-committees exist to enhance the relationship between the Board, school and its families by organizing activities that allow parents to support and further participate in the life of the school.

School wide activities occur throughout the year. These activities take form in cultural, educational, social, and fundraising events that the sub-committee, in conjunction with the whole parent body, initiates, organizes and coordinates. A few volunteer opportunities will work to support the administrative structure of the school by working directly with the Board of Director and the Administration. In the past some areas of volunteer work that have existed include:

- **Hospitality and Community Building** organizes potlucks, dinners, and social events held several times a year and welcomes new families.
- **Fundraising, Marketing & Promotions** coordinates, implements, and communicates the planned fundraising events and/or sales for the school year.
- **Parent Volunteer & Community Outreach** helps organize the parent “foot soldiers” who will do groundwork for all the planned events, and the volunteers who directly support the school programs and classrooms. In addition they help plan and coordinate community service projects that the school gets involved with.

While many of these areas will be hands on with planning and implementing events, other will be working to maintain and create the strong structures that hold up the operations of the school. Your volunteer time is essential in supporting the school and you are doing important work for the community that intellectually nourishes your family.

School Events

At SVMS we value our community celebrations and traditions. What a wonderful way to share our joy in the children and learn more about one another. We hope that you will join us throughout the year in both your attendance and participation in creating events. Please help to keep your children safe by taking responsibility for them during family events. Be aware that students feel at home on the SVMS campus and in the absence of specific instructions from you, they may stray farther from you than you would like.

Policies and Procedures

Financial / Enrollment Matters

I. Registration and Tuition

1. All children accepted into our program are expected to continue the full school year; payment is required for the entire year. We cannot accept short-term enrollments. A minimum notice of 30 days must be given in writing for the withdrawal of a student during the school years for unforeseen circumstances. The parent/guardian will be responsible for the next 30 days of tuition from the date the notice is received in our office. All prepaid fees are non-refundable.
2. The application fee and placement deposit are non-refundable. These fees guarantee a place for your child.
3. A Change in Status fee of \$25 will be applied for changes to a student's program during the school year.
4. Tuition payments are due on the first day of each month from August-May, or per your Tuition Agreement schedule(example: payment in full by August 1st.) A tuition bill will be emailed a few days before the due date. Payment is made by check, payable to SVMS and placed in an envelope marked "Tuition." Pay by cash or check online, directly to the office or mail to SVMS, 101 Carver Avenue, Black Mountain, NC 28711. A late fee of 3% of the monthly tuition will be charged for payments arriving after the 15th of the month. The late fee will be added each month to any overdue balance. A \$20 fee will be charged on all returned checks. Tuition must be paid by the 30th of the month for your child to continue to attend SVMS.
5. If unforeseen circumstances, such as moving, loss of job, etc., arise that require withdrawal, a thirty (30) day notice must be given to the school. A Withdrawal form is available from the Office Manager.
6. If you have any questions regarding tuition you can contact our Director at Katie@swanmont.org to discuss your payments.

II. Enrollment Forms

The following forms should be filled out and returned to the office for your child's school records. These forms must be filled out and returned to the office BEFORE the first day of

school.

- Immunization certificate or letter of Religious exemption
- Application form and tuition agreement
- Children's Medical Report
- Emergency Contact and Medical Information form
- Signature page
- Questionnaire
- Sunscreen form (for after-noon Children's House students)
- Authorization for Carpool & Pick-Up Contacts
- Previous School Record Request (elementary only)
- Nutrition Opt Out Form (if staying for lunch, Children's House only)
- Volunteer Form (day care licensing)

III. Class Placement

At all levels, the classroom teacher and school administration determine acceptance of new students into a classroom. This decision is made after an interview with the child and the parents. The teacher considers the needs of the individual child as well as the dynamics of the entire class. Generally speaking placement changes are very rare and require serious extenuating circumstances. Once a child has been placed or accepted into a class, he or she will not be moved unless the teacher deems it necessary for the child's healthy development. The parent may not request a class change for their child. If a teacher feels that a child's needs could be best served by another teacher or in another class, the teacher will meet with the parents and other teacher to discuss this. A change would be made only if there is agreement by all involved: teachers, parents and the school administration. SVMS reserves the right to place students according to academic readiness.

Health and Emergencies

1. All children are required by North Carolina State law to have a documented immunization certificate or religious exemption letter. Please notify the office of any updates.
2. If a child becomes ill at school, his/her parent or other responsible adult (as indicated on the enrollment application) will be contacted to take him/her home. You are expected to pick up your child as soon as possible.
3. Please notify the office if there are any changes to contact information.
4. In case of an accident, parents will be notified immediately. If medical attention is needed, the information listed on the child's emergency sheet will be followed. The medical treatment release form on file at school will be used if a parent cannot be reached. If parents or emergency contacts are unavailable, we will contact the child's reference physician, and if necessary, secure emergency services and/or transportation to a hospital. Any expenses incurred will be the responsibility of the family.
5. Children with fever, diarrhea, vomiting, lice, pink-eye, or any symptoms of contagious illness must be kept at home and the school should be notified. ***Your child must be free of these symptoms for 24 hours before returning to school.***
6. If a child is taking medication that may affect his/her behavior (e.g. drowsiness), please notify the teacher.
7. All medications must be administered through the school office. If a child needs

medication while at school, please complete a “Request for Medication to be given during School Hours” form.

Visiting the Campus

All visitors, including parent volunteers and those with observation appointments, must sign in at the office when they arrive.

Observations

Parents are encouraged to observe in an effort to understand the Montessori Method better. Classroom observation is your opportunity to silently watch the children at work. It is particularly helpful for parents to observe prior to conference time. The first observations of the year are scheduled only after the children have had an opportunity to settle into their routines. If you are interested in participating in a classroom observation, please contact the Office no earlier than October to schedule an appointment. Observations are generally limited to one adult at a time in a classroom for 30 minutes. Please arrive no later than 5 minutes before your scheduled appointment in order to review the observation guidelines. After the observation you are invited to spend time with the school administrator to ask any questions about the observation or to share comments. Classroom observations are not considered as volunteer time.

Playground Visits

Remember that if you are using the playground, your children are your responsibility.

Parents who use the playground with their children at any time must assume full and complete liability for their children. Please pay attention to your children and make sure they follow all playground rules. It is important that children do not experience a different set of rules when they are “in-school” versus not.

General Playground Rules

- No aggressive play will be permitted.
- Shoes must be worn at all times.
- Running with sticks, or swinging or throwing sticks is not permitted.
- Do not climb on trees or pull off limbs or leaves.
- Play is permitted only in play areas. Driveways, parking lots, roads are not safe places to play.
- Take responsibility to care for all trash and personal belongings.
- No dogs allowed.

Car-Line Policy and Procedures

Please Note:

- The school's goal is to ensure a *Safe and Quick drop-off and pick-up routine*.
- Please **DO NOT USE CELL PHONES** while in the car line. For safety purposes we need your full attention. Most importantly, this time of transition is very important to your child and your full attention is a prized gift to them.
- Drop-off and Pick-up is not a time that teachers will engage in detailed conversations about your child's day. This is a time for parent and child to say good-bye or reconnect after a day apart. If you desire a conversation with your child's teacher, please contact the office or email the teacher.

Children are ***released only to those individuals designated by their parents or legal guardian and listed on the Emergency Contact and/or Authorization for Pick-Up forms.***

These forms should provide the names, addresses and telephone numbers of those so authorized. Please call the school office and inform the teacher when a non-custodial parent will be picking up your child. You can also email the office about this change, however, the email must be sent no later than **24 HOURS** before your child is to be picked up. In case of an emergency, if you are unable to contact us, school personnel will remain with your child until we have contacted an adult on your Emergency Contact form who can pick them up. Please keep this information up to date.

If someone that we do not know, or recognize, arrives in car-line to pick up your child we will ask them to park and come inside so that we can look at their Driver's License and compare their name with those you have listed on your Authorization for Pick-Up Form. Children will only be released to people listed on your Pick-Up Form.

REMINDERS:

- If you have a message for your child's teacher, please have a note ready to give to the staff member on duty. Please put your message in writing; verbal messages may be forgotten.
- Please be patient. Everyone is in a hurry in the morning, but safety and courtesy must be our first concerns.
- ***Parents are asked not to enter the classrooms.*** This distracts the children and makes the transition time more difficult for all the children. Please say good-bye outside the classroom door. A teacher will be available to help the transition. The teacher will come out of the classroom to assist as needed. Please know that any child having difficulty saying goodbye will be attended to in a loving and caring manner, worked with to engage with peers and activities. We will not let a child continue to cry. Ultimately, your child entering the classroom and beginning their day is their first work of the day.

Car-Line Procedures

Drop-Off Time 8:20-8:30 am

Pick-Up Time- Staggered based on Age

Children's House 2:30-2:40*

Elementary 3:00-3:10

**Children's house students who have Elementary aged siblings will be allowed to join the aftercare students until their Elementary sibling is dismissed.*

Car-Line Procedures

Information about our parking lot

- Car-line drop off and pick-up will occur around the back of our building along the natural circular pattern of the parking lot drive. In order to keep the flow of traffic moving, enter Carver Avenue by turning right off of Blue Ridge Road coming from Old US 70. There will be 2-way traffic entering and exiting at the same time, so please stay as far to the right of the road as possible as all times and drive slowly. When exiting Carver Avenue, turn right onto Blue Ridge Road toward Cragmont. If you need to head back toward US 70, please turn around in the Free Will church parking lot instead of crossing traffic on Blue Ridge Road.
- The morning car line forms by turning right onto Carver Avenue. If you are the first car in line, please circle around the parking lot and pull up to the edge of the building just past the last handicap parking space. Parents should wait in their cars for the teachers to open the car doors and escort your child into the building. Please do not get out of your car during car-line or park in the parking lot before 8:40. This poses serious safety issues for the children.

DROP-OFF – 8:20-8:30 A teacher or parent volunteer will open the car door and escort your child to their classroom. Please say final good-byes prior to the teacher/parent opening the car door. Please stay in your car. Your child will become more confident and independent if you are consistent with their drop-off routine. **Remember** it is easier for your child to leave you than to be left by you. It is also best to let your child know what the routine is rather than giving him/her the choice. You might try practicing this procedure before school starts. We would be happy to help with this.

Park and walk procedure at Drop-off Time

- If you decide to park and walk your child in please park in the center parking spots, so that you can easily join back into the car line for exit.
- **Please do not park in the parking lot at the front entrance of the building. These spots are for Black Mountain Recreation and Parks.**
- Parents who walk their children to the door are asked to leave their child at the classroom door, or with the staff in carline and let them proceed to the classrooms independently. We find that separation is easier this way, and it limits distraction for the children already in the classroom
- We recognize that some children take more time to adjust than others. This is normal. We will call you if we are unable to console your child within the first 10 minutes after

you leave.

Late Arrivals

- All late arrivals must park their car and walk their child into the school. Instead of going straight to the classroom, please go to the office in order to sign your child in on the “Sign-In/Sign-Out” clipboard. After signing in, your child will then be escorted to their classroom by a staff member. Please do not allow your child to get out of the car on their own and walk into the school themselves. This is for the safety of your child.

PICK-UP – 12:00pm OR 2:30pm

12:00 Noon Children’s House Pickup

- Please park in the parking lot behind the building and go to the door of your child’s classroom. Please wait outside the door in the hallway for your child to be brought to you.

2:30 Children’s House Pickup / 3:00 Elementary pick up

- Follow the same procedure as in morning car-line drop off.
- A teacher will be waiting outside and will call your child out when you pull up. A teacher will escort your child to the car and secure them in their car seat. Please do not get out of your car at this time.
- Please wait for the car in front of you to leave. **Pulling around a car in the parking lot causes serious safety issues for the children.**
- If you need to pick up your child early, please stop at the office to sign your child out. Your child will be brought to you at the office for early pick-up.
- A late fee of \$10 will be charged beginning at 12:10 and 2:40 (Children’s House) or 3:10 (Elementary) respectively. Children dismissing at noon, will be waiting for you to arrive in the office after 12:10. Children dismissing at 2:30 and 3:00 will join in with the after-care program until you arrive. If you are more than 30 minutes late, you will be charged the full after-care drop in rate of \$15. Please call the office, (828) 669-8571 if you know that you will be late, however the late fees will still apply.

Discipline Policy

We believe every disciplinary situation is unique in nature. Consequences for misbehavior provide the best learning value when matched to the unique student and the unique learning situation. The odds for children learning from their mistakes increase dramatically when children see a reasonable connection between their behavior and the resulting consequences.

1. We provide consistent boundaries for all the children allowing opportunities for them to process and problem solve before a misbehavior occurs.
2. We model appropriate behavior for the children.
3. We encourage peaceful conflict resolution skills.
4. We create a caring classroom community that encourages success for each student.
5. We create positive student/teacher relationships.
6. We approach each child with empathy and understanding and provide them with choices that develop their independence.
7. We treat each child as a unique individual and respect his/her needs, desires and feelings.

The SVMS staff dedicates itself to following a set of core beliefs that provide a guide for dealing with student discipline. These core beliefs guide our attempts to individualize disciplinary procedures and to help students see reasonable connections between their behavior and the resulting consequences. Since these core beliefs provide the guiding light for our professional decisions, the staff encourages parents to bring concerns and questions to us in the event that we operate in ways that appear to be inconsistent with these core beliefs.

SVMS School Staff Core Beliefs

1. We believe that every attempt should be made to maintain the dignity of both the adult and the student.
2. We believe all students should be guided and expected to solve the problems they create without making problems for anyone else.
3. We believe that students should be given the opportunity to make decisions and live with the results, whether the consequences are good or bad.
4. We believe that misbehavior is an opportunity for greater learning and skill development.
5. We believe that students should have the opportunity to tell their side of the story.
6. We believe that misbehavior should be viewed as an opportunity for individual problem solving skills and preparation for the real world.
7. We believe that there should be a logical connection between misbehavior and resulting consequences.

Unacceptable Behaviors

- Unacceptable behaviors include foul or abusive language (verbal or written), violent behavior (e.g. hitting, kicking, shoving, biting, throwing objects at a person), vandalism, violent role playing (including pretend gunplay), language or activity that is sexual in nature or does not respect personal boundaries.
- No weapons of any kind are allowed on campus or during off campus school activities; this includes guns, knives, pretend guns or knives, or objects that have been made to resemble weapons.

- These behaviors will result in immediate action and communication with the parents and could result in suspension from school activities.

Field Trips

If a field trip is scheduled, parents will be notified in advance. In order for your child to participate in these field trips, your signature is required for this on the Signature Page form. If transportation is needed for Elementary field trips, parents will be asked to volunteer to drive. We will need to have your current auto insurance on file with the name of your carrier and policy number.

Communication

We work to establish effective and open lines of communication, and we wish to encourage parent input and involvement. We provide a variety of ways for you to communicate with the school (phone, email or by written letter) and for the school to communicate with all families. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions, concerns or simply need additional information.

- **Share Information** We ask that you communicate to the school anything that may affect your child. All kinds of things can have an impact on a child and it helps the teachers to know if there is some stress that could be influencing your child's mood or behavior. Information helps us to meet your child's needs. Please inform the school of these matters promptly by phone or in writing. Any incident in school that has upset your child should also be reported. Sometimes things can occur outside the close observation of the staff, or a child appears to have resolved the situation, but in fact continues to be upset. Please inform us so that we can help your child to work through any difficulties.
- **Reaching Your Child's Teacher** Confidentiality and privacy are important to us. Please keep in mind that the teacher will be reluctant to become involved in a discussion about your child if other parents or children are present. Issues involving your child are best discussed in private and should not be rushed. Your child's teacher will happily call you at home or make an appointment for a conference if desired. You may send a note, call or email the office for assistance in setting an appointment or to get a message to the teacher requesting a phone call. You may email the individual teacher as well. Before the start of the school day, the teachers are engaged in necessary preparations and must be available to greet all of the children as they arrive. For these reasons we ask that any communication to the teacher at this time be in the form of a written note and delivered by your child through the car-line teacher/volunteer. Immediately after school, the teachers have dismissal duties. **For safety purposes, teachers and staff cannot engage in conversation during this time. They must be focused on the safe dismissal of the children.** When car line is over teachers may or may not be available due to previously scheduled appointments or meetings. It is, however, a good time to leave a message, or quickly arrange a meeting for another time. **There will be no cell phone or computer use by the teachers during the school day.** If you wish to reach your child's teacher please call the school office during the hours of 8am-3pm. A message will be taken and your teacher will return the call as soon as she is able.
- **Conferences** Formal parent-teacher conferences are scheduled two times per year.

Check the school calendar to see when these days are scheduled. Conference sign-up sheets will be available in each classroom in advance. All parents are asked to set aside time for at least two conferences each year. Additional conferences may be scheduled as needed. This is the time for parents and teachers to talk openly about your child's progress and share joys and concerns.

● **Avenues of Communication**

- o **Email** - SVMS's main avenue for communication is via email. Make sure to update us if your email address changes.
- o **Office newsletter** - will be emailed out the 1st week of each month. This newsletter will contain announcements, upcoming events and other important information from the administration and the Board of Directors. If you do not have email you can access the information on the school's website.
- o **Classroom communication** - You will receive regular communication from your child's teacher. This email communication will contain fun details about what your child has been doing at school and what they have to look forward to in the coming weeks. It will also include upcoming events, important information and volunteer opportunities.
- o **Website** - The SVMS website has general information about the school, including a calendar of events, curriculum information, and important links about Montessori education. For your convenience, most of the forms you may need are online and easily accessible.
- o **Facebook** – Teachers and administration will be posting fun and special events with pictures on our Facebook page. We will also have all of our upcoming events and reminders posted as well. Like us and stay connected on Facebook! www.facebook.com/SwannanoaVallyMontessoriSchool
- o **Just Ask** - Of course, there is always the old fashioned way of calling or stopping by.

Inclement Weather Policy

We make every effort to remain open on a regular schedule when there is inclement weather. We will close if we determine the road conditions are unsafe for travel. We determine this by considering, but not limited to the following factors: weather and traffic reports, closure of surrounding schools, and direct communication with weather advisors. **Please note:** Predicting weather conditions in western NC is difficult due to the topography and terrain of western NC. The decision to close or delay school is made with the information we have at that time.

The following procedures are used to inform parents of a closure or delay:

1. Closings or delays will be posted on the parent list serve by 7AM.
2. Watch WLOS (ABC) for the list of schools closed or delayed or visit the WLOS school closing website.
3. **Important:** If SVMS is shown to have a late opening you must confirm that we are actually opening before you leave for school. A late opening is based upon the assumption that the weather will clear or that the ice will be sufficiently melted in a couple of hours. However, there are no guarantees that the weather will cooperate so double check by checking your email before heading out.

Closing during the school day

If we have to close during the day we will:

1. Contact WLOS for broadcast. We strongly encourage you to sign up for the automated text messaging service at WLOS for school closings. This will save you time and give you peace of mind.
2. Send an email to all parents.

All children will be supervised until they are picked up. Of course, any time that a parent/guardian feels they need to pick up their child due to weather, they are free to do so. It is **IMPERATIVE** that your **EMERGENCY INFORMATION** is CORRECT in the school office. There is **NO** AFTER-CARE or BEFORE-CARE in the event of a delayed start, an early release or all day closing.

We will make up missed days in excess of 3 snow days, with a limit of 3 make-up days. If necessary, the Board of Directors will address extreme weather events.

“Children are human beings to whom respect is due, superior to us by reason of their innocence and of the greater possibilities of their future.”

-Maria Montessori

CHILDREN'S HOUSE MONTESSORI PROGRAM (AGES 3-6)

Half-Day School: 8:30-12:00 noon

This program includes all areas of the Montessori curriculum:

- Practical Life
- Sensorial
- Math
- Reading/Language/Writing
- Geography
- Music
- Time Outside
- Morning Snack
- Movement
- Food & Nutrition
- Science
- Art
- Free Play
- Caring for Plants & Animals
- Storytelling
- Poetry/Finger plays

Extended Day School: 12:00-2:30

Afternoon Kindergarten (for ages 5-6)

This program includes the regular Montessori teaching of the morning plus:

- More advanced work in the academic areas of math, reading, grammar, science, and geography.
- More time for repetition of learned materials.
- Special projects in all areas – making books, science experiments, writing stories, field trips, table manners, gardening
- Practical life extensions
- Cooking
- Special Art projects
- Additional outside time

Afternoon Workers and Afternoon Nappers (for ages 3-4)

This program is an extension of the Montessori morning plus:

- A minimum 15 minute siesta
- Practical life extensions
- More time for repetition of learned materials
- Special art projects (afternoon workers only)
- Additional outside play-time
- Cooking (afternoon workers only)

I. Children's House Montessori Education Policies

1. Morning work time begins at 8:30. A record is kept of each student's attendance. Arriving late causes class disruption and important lessons may be missed. We feel that being punctual is an important habit to establish. Transition from home to school is made more difficult for the child when they arrive late. Please help your child with this.
2. Extended day students need to bring a lunch every day. We do not have the facilities to heat food. All lunch boxes must be labeled daily with the child's name and date displayed on the outside of the lunch box, compliant with day care regulations.
3. Two conferences are scheduled each year to review your child's progress. We do not assign grades.
4. Montessori materials are expensive. If a child intentionally breaks a material, and it is not due to normal wear, it is the family's responsibility to pay for the replacement item.
5. Children only attend on the days they are enrolled. We cannot make up days missed for any reasons including illness, vacations, snow days, or teacher workdays.
6. Birthday Celebrations- We have a special birthday circle to celebrate each child's birthday. Check with your child's teacher for special instructions for this day.
7. Off Campus Birthday Celebrations- Many families celebrate their child's birthdays outside of school. To spare the feelings of those children who are not invited to such celebrations, we request that party invitations not be distributed at school. Please be sensitive to the feelings of all of your child's classmates.

II. Preparations for school

1. Toys are not permitted in class; objects to share may be brought for show and tell on designated days only.
2. Please notify the teacher of any unusual circumstances that may affect a child's behavior, such as death in the family, divorce, loss of pet, etc.
3. Parents will provide healthy snacks for their child's class for a week at a time assigned on a rotating basis. You will be sent a snack request form in your child's weekly papers.
4. Each child needs a complete change of clothes appropriate to the season in a labeled plastic bag on the first day of school. *Label all clothes* inside the bag with your child's name or initials.
5. Birthday celebrations are an important time. You are invited to join the class for the birthday celebration. Please help your child choose one or two pictures from each year of their life to make a timeline at home. Write a short summary to tell a story of your child's pictures. This timeline will be shared with the class on that day. A few special healthy suggestions for this are fruit cut into fun shapes, and cheese. Please do not send in snacks with sugar.
6. Water bottles are to be sent each day to school *labeled with your child's name and date*. We will send this back each afternoon.

III. Clothing Guidelines

1. Clothing should allow your child to move freely and safely, sit comfortably and respectably cross-legged on the floor, work without distraction, take pride in his appearance, and use the bathroom without help. Please do not send children to school in costumes. Children enjoy taking on the persona of a character on their shirt or costume. While pretending to be Batman is fun, it is quite disruptive in the classroom and on the playground.

2. Sturdy shoes, suitable for running and climbing that the child can take off and put on independently. Crocs and flip-flops are not sturdy shoes for outside play and are not allowed.
3. Clothing should be selected so that children can dress themselves. *Please mark names or initials on all articles of clothing.*
4. **We do go outside in cold weather and light rain.** *Please send appropriate outer clothing labeled with your child's name. Dressing in layers is encouraged.*
5. If it is snowing or snow is on the ground and school is in session we will go outside. *Children need to wear boots, gloves, hats, and water resistant clothing.*
6. All students need to bring inside shoes to change into as they enter the classroom. These shoes need to provide support and fully conform to the foot. Do not supply slippers or flip-flop type shoes. They should also be free of cartoon images.

ELEMENTARY MONTESSORI PROGRAM 8:30-3:00 (AGES 6-12)

Dr. Montessori's plan for elementary age children is Cosmic in scope in that we view the entire universe and our interrelationship with it. Each area is seen as related to the whole and subject matter is presented to show the harmony and cohesion among living things. (All life –be it coral in the sea or man/woman – shares the cosmic task). Cosmic education is to recognize the importance of the self and the need to love and be loved in order to show appreciation for all creation.

Children learn best from a strong self-image and positive outlook. The children work on the Social, Emotional and Moral development through:

Manners – Sharing – Community – Role playing – Limits – Memory –Games – Listening Skills – Visualization.

The most important goal of Montessori education is personality and character development, especially in the values of love self-discipline, honesty, and responsibility. Self-esteem leads to cooperation, initiative and perseverance. A foundation of self-sufficiency, order and fairness pave the way for creativity.

Elementary Montessori education includes the following areas:

- **Mathematics** – Basic operations with whole numbers; fractions; decimals; Algebra; Squaring; Cubing; Systems of Numeration; Problem Solving and testing.
- **Language Arts** – Grammar; Reading; Comprehension Cursive writing; Spelling; Creative writing; Research; Poetry; Drama; Library skills; Stories and testing. *Writers Workshop* includes process writing –learning to write in the following forms:
 - Explanatory writing, Opinion writing and Narrative writing
 - Journal response writing is used every day across the curriculum.
- **Cultural Studies** – Geography; Astronomy; History; Zoology; Botany; Anatomy; Physical Science; Practical Life and Environmental studies.
- **Additional curriculum** includes, but not limited to – Physical education, Art, Outdoor Leadership, Gardening and field trips.
- **Community Service Projects** examples include Heifer International, Swannanoa Valley Christian Ministries, Manna Food Bank, and Rathburn Center.

I. Elementary Policies

1. Please bring children to school promptly between 8:20-8:30. A record is kept of each student's attendance and tardy arrivals. Arriving late causes class disruption and important lessons may be missed. We feel that being punctual is an important habit to establish. Please help your child with this. School ends promptly at 3:00.
2. For the sake of continuity and classroom management, each child should arrive on time and attend school every day possible.
3. Absences, other than illness, should be discussed with the teacher.
4. Children may bring items of interest to the classroom, such as nature collections, special books, etc. for sharing. Toys should not be brought to class.
5. Each child should bring a healthy, well-balanced lunch. We have one microwave and there is often a long line. Do not send chocolate, candy, sodas, fruit drinks or "kool-aid" to school. We strongly encourage only water. Label lunchboxes on the outside with child's name.
6. Children need to bring a water bottle labeled with their name on it each day to school.
7. The teacher should be notified of any unusual circumstances, which may affect the child's behavior, such as death in the family, divorce, loss of a pet, etc.
8. Birthday Celebrations-- Each class has its own way in which birthdays are recognized and celebrated. Please check with your classroom teacher.
9. Off Campus Birthday Celebrations-- To spare the feelings of those children that are not invited to such celebrations, we request that party invitations not be distributed at school. Please be sensitive to the feelings of all your child's classmates.
10. Parents receive a report of their child's progress two times a year. The report evaluates the child's progress and does not assign grades. Conferences are also scheduled two times a year to go over these reports with the parents.

II. Clothing guidelines

1. Clothing should allow your child to move freely and safely, sit comfortably and respectably cross legged on the floor, be casual and comfortable since they have many outdoor activities, work without distraction to themselves and others, take pride in their appearance and to prepare the child for going out into the community.
2. Please do not allow your child to wear clothing to school that portrays violent or aggressive behavior. Please do not send children to school in costumes.
3. Wear sturdy shoes, suitable for running and climbing; sneakers are appropriate. Flip-flops and crocs are not allowed.
4. Shoes must be worn at all times when children are outside. Wear layers for cold weather.
5. Please mark names or initials on outerwear such as jackets and sweaters and on lunch boxes and water bottles.
6. Children will need a pair of comfy shoes to wear in the classroom. All shoes worn to school will be taken off before entering the classroom. They may choose to not wear shoes in the classroom if they prefer, and then will need to wear their alternative shoes/slippers or socks.
7. All children need to wear appropriate clothing and shoes on P.E. days and outdoor field trips.

Waste-Free Lunches

SVMS is committed to waste reduction, and therefore, is strongly encouraging our SVMS families to pack waste-free lunches. This commitment is clearly in alignment with Maria Montessori's vision of educating our children about their environment and how they can affect the world they live in.

In order to reduce the waste in your child's lunch, here are things that you can do:

- Pack food in small, reusable food containers, including drinks
- Avoid packing too much food; pack smaller portions.
- Use cloth napkins and stainless-steel utensils
- Pack in a reusable lunchbox rather than a paper bag
- Avoid disposable packaging, i.e. prepackaged food, juice boxes, Ziplocs.
- Buy foods like yogurt and applesauce in regular-sized containers and then pack in small containers.

The flat, box-shaped lunch boxes work well at our lunch tables, and we ask you to purchase one of those. We have tight refrigerator space. They fit well on the table, providing an organized "placemat" for your child and their food. They often come with their own set of small reusable containers.

For information about waste-free lunches, we recommend the website:

www.wastefreelunches.org. The website provides lists of great lunch ideas, tips on reducing waste, and links for purchasing their box-shaped lunchboxes. Also, EarthFare sells these type of lunchboxes. Camping stores like Diamond Brand or Black Dome sell small containers for liquids. Another resource is www.reusablebags.com.

"A child is a discoverer. He is an amorphous, splendid being in search of his own proper form."

-Maria Montessori

Swannanoa Valley Montessori School Compliance with Child Abuse Reporting Requirements

Public law is very clear regarding expectations of schools in the prevention of child abuse.

School personnel are required to report any suspicion of child abuse.

Suspicion may include: verbal reports by children; unusual marks or bruises NOT reported by parents and observed by school personnel; suspicious behavior of children; verbal or physical abuse observed by school personnel, excessive unexcused absences. Schools are specifically required not to investigate to determine accuracy of these suspicions by law.

Asbestos Notification

The US Environmental Protection Agency's (EPA) Asbestos Hazard Emergency Response Act requires all school to inspect building materials for the presence of asbestos. AHERA excludes schools from the inspection requirement if the school was constructed after October 12, 1988, and has a signed agreement from the architect or project engineer responsible for constructing the school stating that no asbestos-containing materials were specified for use in the construction of the school. Our school has been provided such a statement, as is, and therefore exempt from the requirement to conduct an asbestos inspection. The EPA requires us to annually notify you that we are aware of the AHERA regulation, and that we are in compliance. The Management Plan is available for your review at anytime during normal school hours. The Asbestos Program Manager will answer any questions you have about asbestos.

STAFF DIRECTORY

NAME	TITLE / CLASS	EMAIL ADDRESS
Kristy Beaver	Primary Lead Teacher - Dragonfly class	kristy@swanmont.org
Ali DuFault	Primary Lead Teacher - Firefly class	ali@swanmont.org
Katie Hanning	Executive Director	katie@swanmont.org
Jennifer Hermance	Lower Elementary Lead Teacher / Elementary Coordinator	jen@swanmont.org
Diane Jackson	Office Administrator	diane@swanmont.org
Veronica Morecraft	Primary Assistant Teacher - Firefly class	veronica@swanmont.org
Angie Shorb-Neilsen	Upper Elementary Lead Teacher	
Kat Poe	Primary Assistant Teacher - Dragonfly class	kat@swanmont.org
Christina Ruiz	After-Care Teacher	Christina@swanmont.org
Peggy Sisk	After-Care Teacher	peggy@swanmont.org
Erin Van Note	Director of Development	erin@swanmont.org
Stefanie Wielkopolan	Lower Elementary Assistant Teacher	stefanie@swanmont.org

SWANNANOVA VALLEY MONTESSORI SCHOOL | 2016-2017 CALENDAR

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Instructional Days: 174, Conference days ■ No school: 3 ½ days, No School Full TWD ■: 3, Noon Release: TWD ■ 5, Holidays ■ 3
Holiday/Vacation days: ■ ****Calendar is subject to changes****