



Parent Handbook

The Journey

Introduction: Welcome to A Little Journey Montessori School! This Parent Handbook outlines our philosophy, policies and procedures and is designed to acquaint families with our school and our school policies. We will be glad to answer any questions that you may have.

History of A Little Journey Montessori School

A Little Journey Montessori School was created by Stephany Backstrom after nearly a decade of experience working in a Montessori classroom environment as a Lead Teacher and Director. Stephany saw a need for more quality childcare and an excellence in education in the Gallatin Valley. She wanted to provide an environment in which working families could feel safe and confident leaving their children in the care of A Little Journey's teachers. We support working families and want families to trust that their children are well taken care of while developing an educational foundation. She also wanted to create an environment for families with multiple children to help facilitate an ease in drop off and pick up and also have a place that the children can learn, play and grow together.

A Little Journey Montessori School, herein referred to as A Little Journey, was established in 2020 (yes, during a worldwide pandemic) and officially opened its doors on October 5th, 2020. A Little Journey Montessori School was established at 47 Pronghorn Trail Unit B in Bozeman, MT. Stephany was able to design the space in order to be a school for young children and took care in the details when planning the environment before construction started.

A Little Journey serves up to 40 children aged 12 weeks through six years old. We value all children regardless of their background or upbringing. We are supportive of the hard working parents in our community and welcome all children as part of the Little Journey family. A Little Journey is affiliated with the American Montessori Society which provides standards for teaching the Montessori method and professional development for educators.

Location: A Little Journey Montessori School is located at 47 Pronghorn Trail Unit B, in Four Corners, MT. We are located just off Jackrabbit Lane in the same building as Lone Peak Physical Therapy and just north of Murdoch's Ranch and Home Supply.

Mission: Our mission is to provide excellence in education to children based on the Montessori method. We strive to provide an environment where working families can feel confident that their children will be well taken care of while developing lifelong educational skills in which we help prepare the children, not only for their future in education, but also for life. A Little Journey is a place where your child(ren) can learn, grow and play.

“Early Childhood education is the key to the betterment of society.”

~ Maria Montessori

Organization: A Little Journey Montessori School operates as a single-member LLC run and operated by Stephany Backstrom.

Philosophy of A Little Journey Montessori School

A Little Journey is a place where your child(ren) can learn, grow and play. We offer a quality in education to children ages 12 weeks to six years old. Our program offers a Nido environment (12 weeks to about 14 months), then the child will journey to the transitional environment in our pre-primary classroom (about 15 to 18 months), once the child is ready, they will journey to the pre-primary environment (about 18 months to about 2 1/2 or 3 years old), and when developmentally appropriate and the child is prepared, they are ready to make their final journey to the primary environment (about 2 1/2 , 3 to 6 years old). All of our environments are based on the Montessori Method and offer age appropriate, hands-on materials to help the child reach his or her full potential. The Montessori method offers a rigorous, self-motivated growth for children in all areas of development - cognitive, social, physical and emotional. Our curriculum includes language development, math, science, geography, art, music and movement, and fingerplay exercises. We encourage respect for cultural, racial, religious, and economic diversity.

All children progress and learn differently, which makes the Montessori method so wonderful! The classrooms are based on the individual child and what is developmentally appropriate for them, more so than their age. Therefore, our programs are not age specific. There is no wrong environment for your child and some children will even have the opportunity to spend the first part of their morning work period in the pre-primary environment and may spend the rest of the morning work period in the

primary environment as they learn to transition from one environment to the other, that is the beauty of the all inclusive, open space that our environment provides.

Working together with the mix of age groups, we hope to instill and develop manners, compassion, imagination, independence and a love of learning in all of the children who enroll in our program.

We value and support cultural, racial, religious, and economic diversity. In hiring of staff and enrolling of children, A Little Journey does not discriminate with regard to racial, ethnic background, religion, sex, marital status, or physical disability.

Environment: The environment is prepared each day in order to provide a safe and consistent space for your child(ren). The prepared environment is one of the most important aspects of the Montessori method for the child to learn, play and grow.

The Child: Each child is their own individual self and not all children learn and develop in the same manner. Montessori is self-lead and student-paced allowing the child to follow their own curiosity and to not feel pressured to keep up with their peers. The importance of Montessori is to instill independence in the child with self chosen materials in which they can access independently and which provide a control of error.

The Parents: The parents are an important aspect of the child's development in education and we believe that involved parent's help form a foundation of success for the children. We strive to have the parent's involved through social media outlets and an online daily monitoring app called *BrightWheel*.

Parent-teacher conferences will also occur twice a year, in the fall and spring time, for children in our pre-primary and primary programs, giving an opportunity for parents to receive one-on-one knowledge about their child's progress. Parents of children in our nido program will also have ample time to sit down one-on-one with teachers to discuss their child's progress as necessary and may schedule times to do so. Please, never hesitate to ask how your child is doing.

In order for A Little Journey to help you and your child, please help us in following these eight (8) policies:

1. Please leave toys at home and don't fight with children over leaving them in the car at the school door. Children can become grumpy when this happens and can make drop off challenging for all involved. Please see nap time policy in regards to soft, cozy items that are allowed for nap time.

2. Please try to bring happy, relaxed children to school by allowing adequate time and a slow pace when preparing for school.
3. Talk about ground rules with children in a positive manner, and practice talking quietly at home and using inside walking feet.
4. Encourage the ability to distinguish between appropriate indoor behavior and outdoor behavior. There is a difference. If your child enters the classroom with a loud voice, we will ask them to remember to use their inside voice.
5. Parent conferences are scheduled twice each year and although the staff loves discussing your child at pick up and drop off, we do not always have ample time for mini parent conferences. If you have something to discuss at length, please ask about scheduling a time to sit down with a teacher to discuss your child. We are more than happy to do so.
6. Please avoid tangible rewards for accomplishments children naturally receive pleasure from, especially during the potty training process.
7. Order is very important to children to give them a sense of security and peace. Consistency in the child's schedule and routine goes hand in hand with the sense of order for young children.
8. Please stay at the front entrance/welcome area for drop off and pick up and allow your children to be mindful of and take care of their belongings.

The Staff: We believe in the Montessori method and strive to provide Montessori certified teachers and accredited teaching staff in each classroom, although this will not always be true, as we are able to hire a lot of wonderful teachers that are attending MSU in child care fields. We pride ourselves in providing an environment in which the staff can also grow, supporting a work-life balance and establishing their importance to the community. We do our best to retain staff members and treat them with the utmost respect that they deserve. We strive to build a strong, hard-working and caring team that benefits your child(ren) in the best way possible. Unfortunately, turnover is very common in this industry, but we do everything we can to maintain a wonderful, consistent staff by creating an environment in which we can support our wonderful teachers. We want to take care of the ones that take care of all your little ones.

The Community: We know how important our community is and how important quality childcare is in order for working families to thrive, also supporting that work-life balance for our families. We strive to provide a quality service to those hard working families in our community by creating excellence in education and a quality in the care of the child.

What is Montessori?

Montessori is a method of education developed by Dr. Maria Montessori in the early 1900's that is based on self-directed, hands-on activity. Dr. Montessori observed the child and developed her method of teaching based on what she observed of the children and their environment. The lessons that Dr. Montessori developed offer a rigorous, self-motivated growth for children in all areas of development - cognitive, social, physical and emotional.

Desired Learner Outcomes Common to Montessori Education

Dr. Maria Montessori, an Italian physician and educator, developed a method of teaching based on her scientific observations of young children's behavior. Her first "Children's House" was established in Rome in 1907. She found children learned best in a homelike environment filled with developmentally appropriate materials that provide experiences, which contribute to the growth of self-motivated, independent learners.

Dr. Montessori carried her message across the globe, including the United States in 1912. Dr. Nancy Rambusch established the American Montessori Society in 1960. Montessori education in the United States appeals to those who embrace it because of its outcomes for students. The American parents who originally chose Montessori education matched their views of child rearing. They saw their children as moral beings, which over time would become the socially responsible people Montessori had envisioned. And they saw their children becoming confident, competent learners.

The outcomes we aspire to teach are lifelong developments. The original American Montessori agenda of learner outcomes are as follows.

Independence: Is the child able to choose his or her own work, apply energy to that work, complete it to a personal criterion of completion, take and return the work to the place it is customarily kept, in such a way that another child will be able to find the work ready to do? Is the child able to seek help? Is the child able to locate resources to continue the self-chosen task without necessarily involving the teacher?

Confidence and Competence: Are the child's self-perceived successes far more numerous than his or her self-perceived failures? Is the child capable of self-correcting work, upon observation, reflection, or discussion? Can the child manage the available array of "stuff" with a clear sense of purpose?

Autonomy: Can the child accept or reject inclusion in another child's work or work group with equanimity?

Intrinsic Motivation: Is the child drawn to continue working for the apparent pure pleasure of doing so? Does the child, once having achieved a particular competence, move on to revel in mastery by showing others?

Ability to Handle External Authority: Is the child able to accept the "ground rules" of the group as appropriate in his or her dealing with other children? Is the child, distant from the teacher, able to function as if the teacher were nearby?

Social Responsibility: Independent and autonomous persons are always a part of a group and must attain independence and autonomy through participation in group activity. The loss of these qualities by one of a group is a loss for all. Do students attain independence and autonomy and, at the same time, develop social responsibility?

Academic Preparation: In Montessori education, children learn to learn by learning. Academic preparation entails activation and cultivation of inherent powers and processes through which the learner becomes a supplier of meanings or of things-meaningfully-known. Academic skills are essential to learning and knowing, not the aim of learning and knowing. Do students acquire academic skills and apply them in learning to learn?

Spiritual Awareness: Montessori views the child as a spiritual embryo. Implications are conveyed by the metaphor. All humans are spiritual beings as well as physical beings. They have spiritual health as well as physical health. Montessori sees no need to establish whether or not the source of spirit is theological and does not offer theological explanation. The spiritual embryo simply thrives on spiritual investment. The investment can be theological, humane, or a combination of the two. What are the spiritual outcomes of school experience?

Citizens of the World: All children are part of both a world political system and a world ecological system. Both systems have their constitutions and all must learn to live by the letter and spirit of their laws. As a naturalist, Montessori knew about the laws of

mind and of nature and understood the consequences of disobeying either of them. What are the citizenship outcomes of school experience? Are the children acquiring civic virtue? Are they acquiring dispositions to understand the natural world, to cherish it, and to live harmoniously within it?

Key Philosophical Messages That Make Montessori Unique

- Deep respect for children as individuals.
- Multiage classes allow teachers to develop close and long-term relationships with their students, allow them to know each other's learning style well, and encourage older students to become role models, mentors, and leaders to younger students.
- Integrated curriculum is carefully structured and connects subjects within programs (e.g., history and cultural arts to maximize the opportunity for learning and builds from program to program to progress from concrete to abstract learning).
- Independence is nurtured and leads to children becoming purposeful, motivated, and confident in their own abilities.
- Peace and conflict resolution are taught daily and children learn to be a part of a warm, respectful, and supportive community.
- The child creates, in a very real sense, the adult that is to be, through his/her experiences, interactions, and environments.
- Hands-on learning is central to the curriculum in all programs and leads to children being engaged rather than passive with their work.
- The environments are responsibly and carefully prepared with multisensory, sequential, and self-correcting materials to support self-directed learning.
- Teachers and children, and teachers and parents work together as a warm and supportive community.
- Self-expression is nurtured in all children. Children experience art, music, writing, and other forms of creative arts with confidence and passion.

SOME IMPORTANT ASPECTS OF THE MONTESSORI METHOD

1. It is based on years of patient observation and study of children by Dr. Maria Montessori, who was a scientist uniquely educated and qualified for this task. She was a medical doctor, a student of psychology, and a professor of anthropology, a science that is concerned with man in a unique way. She worked out her methods and developed the materials by letting the children show her what worked and what did not work. It is not a "franchise" or "patented" operation. It is in the public domain. There are responsible organizations (such as the American Montessori Society) that operate on behalf of its proper development in this country.

2. It has proved itself of universal application. Within a single generation, it has been tried successfully with children of many nations. Climate, nationality, social rank, or type of civilization make no difference to its successful application. India, France, Holland, England, Burma, Mexico, Panama, Colombia, Canada, Italy, and the United States have many well-developed Montessori schools.

3. It has revealed the small child as a lover of order and of intellectual work, spontaneously chosen and carried out with profound joy, capable of concentration and eager to learn for the joy of learning.

4. It is based upon the child's imperious need to learn by doing activities, which develop his faculties at each stage in his mental growth. These stages are called "sensitive periods," and he more readily absorbs knowledge during those periods. While the method offers the child a maximum of spontaneity, it enables him to reach an even higher level of scholastic attainment than under other systems.

5. Though it does away with the necessity of coercion by means of rewards and punishments, it achieves a higher discipline. It is an active discipline, which originates within the child and is achieved through concentration on work, which he has chosen. Children with extremely active and curious minds are stimulated and utilize their intellectual energies constructively.

6. It is based on a profound respect for the child's personality and removes from him the preponderant influence of the adult, thus leaving him room to grow in biological independence. The child is allowed a large measure of liberty (not license) and he learns to handle it with responsibility.

7. It enables the teacher to deal with each child individually in each subject and thus guide him according to his individual requirements. Each child works at his own

pace, hence the quick child is not held back by the slow, nor is the latter, in trying to keep up with the former, obliged to flounder along hopelessly out of his depth. Each stone in the mental edifice is "well and truly laid" before the next is added.

8. It does away with pressure and its trail of challenges. More than this, at every turn it presents endless opportunities among the children for mutual help, which is joyfully given and gratefully received. Since the child works from his own free choice, without pressure and coercion, he is freed from strain, feeling inferior, and other experiences, which are apt to be the unconscious cause of mental disturbances in later life.

9. The Montessori method develops the whole personality of the child, not merely his intellectual faculties but also his powers of deliberation, initiative, and independent choice, with their emotional complements. By living as a free member in a real social community, the child is trained in those fundamental social qualities, which form the basis of good citizenship.

Admissions Procedure

Due to the fact that Montessori education is based on three-year cycles, and a sequential order of learning, families who have children entering directly into the pre-primary and primary environments should plan for their child to attend for a minimum of two (2) years, however it is not necessarily required. We **do not** enroll children for short periods of time, we do not offer month to month care, nor are we a drop-in service. We want families to see the benefits of the sequential order of the Montessori method which is only possible with a minimum of two (2) years of enrollment. We expect that children that enroll in our program are going to be enrolled for at least two (2) years.

1. Parents are expected to visit the program before submitting an application. We strongly recommend that parents who bring their child(ren) for the initial visit to please respect the children who are working and keep your child with you during the tour. If your child does not attend the initial visit and you would like to have an additional visit with your child should you choose to enroll, it can be scheduled and arranged in order for your child to view their new school prior to starting.
2. Complete and submit the registration application along with a **non-refundable** application fee of \$100. This is a one time fee, per child, due when you submit

your original application. This is the first step to being considered for enrollment and to be placed on the waiting list when a wait list applies.

3. Parents will be notified of acceptance, wait list status, or declined acceptance with an email from the Executive Director including the pertinent information.
4. To accept and hold your child's spot at A Little Journey, the **non-refundable** annual materials fee of \$300 is required for commitment to enrollment along with first month's tuition. First month's tuition and the annual materials fee will not be due for families that are placed on the waitlist until they are notified that a spot has become available, however, it will then be due to confirm the available spot.
5. The remaining paperwork for your child's permanent file, including immunization records and emergency contact information must be provided before the child's first day of school.

Program Schedules, Tuition and Fees

Program Schedule: A Little Journey operates year round. Our calendar is from September to August and generally, but not exactly, follows the calendar of the Bozeman Public School District during the school year months (September to April). We are officially closed on the following days with some additional calendar days surrounding the following holidays: Labor Day, Thanksgiving, Christmas to New Years, MLK Day, President's Day, Spring Break, Memorial Day, the 4th and 5th of July (depending on how the holiday falls), and a week at the end of August just before public schools resume. A calendar for the year is provided each year after Spring Break (or once Bozeman Public Schools makes their calendar public) and allows parents to see (roughly) the entire year's worth of vacation days so that these days off do not come as a surprise to our families. We reserve the right to adjust these calendar days as needed or close for any unforeseen circumstances that arise throughout the year at the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

Summer Program: Due to the fact that A Little Journey is a year-round program, we **do not** allow children to take the summers off without paying tuition. We understand that children may be absent more frequently for special visits, family vacations and other seasonal activities, so for the summer months of June, July and August (must be the same schedule for all three (3) month's), children's schedules can be changed to the minimum enrollment for their age group without affecting their enrollment status and you will only have to pay a schedule change fee at the initial change for the one time seasonal change. Removing your child for the summer months without paying tuition

can compromise their enrollment for the following fall regardless of whether the annual materials fee was paid for the coming year at re-enrollment time in the spring.

Tuition and Fees: Tuition remains consistent throughout the calendar year and is not discounted for holidays or missed days. Additionally, no substitutes or trades will be given for absence due to illnesses or vacations or potential unexpected closures. Tuition is expected to increase annually and notice of any changes will be given with at least thirty (30) days notice. New tuition rates will typically be released each spring during re-enrollment and will be expected to go into effect in the months to follow. The specific date in which the new rates go into effect will be included in the notification about the new rates.

Tuition is billed through the *BrightWheel* app five (5) days prior to when tuition is due, allowing roughly five (5) days notices. Tuition is due on the 1st of every month and will be considered late after the 5th of the month unless other arrangements have been made. **A \$30 late fee will be assessed per day your tuition remains unpaid after the 5th.** If payment still has not been received by the end of the month, services will be terminated by the provider and will not resume until tuition and late fees have been paid. Any days missed as a result of termination for non-payment will not be discounted. Personal checks and cash are accepted for tuition dues. Bank transfers through the *BrightWheel* app are also accepted. Invoices will be received via the *BrightWheel* app. Any additional fees will be added to the following month's invoice and are to be paid with that month's invoice. For example, if your child adds a day or has a late pick up in June, the applicable fees will be applied to July's tuition. If July's invoice has already been sent out, the additional fees will then be added to August's tuition.

The annual, **non-refundable** materials fee, which is used to purchase consumables such as paper towels, snacks and lesson materials, is required prior to your child's start date in order to confirm that your child will be attending A Little Journey. Should parents choose to no longer enroll their child in our program, the annual materials **fee will not be refunded.**

The **non-refundable** materials fee will be due annually each spring during re-enrollment in order to acknowledge that you plan to keep your child(ren) enrolled for the coming calendar year. Consideration for prorating the annual materials fee will occur at this time and will be dependent on when your child officially started at A Little Journey, and is up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director. For example, if your child(ren) is enrolled on March 1st, you will not pay the annual materials fee until the following spring. Should enrollment begin after March 1st, your first non-refundable annual materials fee will be paid in full and due at the time of acceptance and consideration for a prorated annual materials fee will be applied when the annual

materials fees are paid the coming spring, depending on your child(ren)'s official start date and is up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

We reserve the right to impose a late fee of \$15 for each additional 5 minutes that your child is at school past their normal pick up time. This time will be tracked in 5 minute increments. Children with a half day schedule are required to be picked up no later than 12:45 pm or it is considered late. Children with a school day schedule are required to be picked up no later than 3:45 pm or it is considered late. Children with a full day schedule are required to be picked up no later than 6:00 pm or it is considered later.

We reserve the right to impose a **schedule change fee of \$35 per schedule change.** This schedule change fee does not apply to add days or added time within the month. If you would like to adjust your child's monthly school schedule, written notice must be given to the Executive Director thirty (30) days in advance and a \$35 schedule change fee will be applied, and is up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director. Changes to a child's monthly schedule will take effect at the start of the following month and if space permits.

A Little Journey does not prorate the monthly tuition nor do we credit your tuition for days missed due to illnesses, sick days, vacation or unexpected closures due to unforeseen natural, unnatural or health pandemic events. **No credit will be given for absences due to illnesses or family vacations.** Children do not have the option of trading or making up missed days. Children that are enrolled in a part-time program may add time as space permits.

For families entering our **nido program**, we understand that parents cannot control their maternity or paternity leave and may need to return to work in the middle of the month. If you are looking to start infant care during the 1st through 14th of the month, the month's tuition will not be prorated. However, if your infant is starting the 15th through the end of the month, consideration towards an adjusted tuition rate will be discussed and is up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director. This is only offered to infants during their first month of our program and after that there will no longer be an option to prorate tuition.

School Policies

Hours: A Little Journey is open from 7:30 am to 6:00 pm and we strive to be staffed with qualified teachers throughout the day. To avoid interrupting teacher preparation time, **please do not bring your child to school before 7:30 am. Please make arrangements for your child to be picked up no later than your scheduled pick up time (12:45 pm for half day program, 3:45 pm for school day program and no later than 6:00 pm for full day program).** We reserve the right to impose a late fee of \$15 for each additional five (5)

minutes that your child is at school past their normal pick up time. This time will be tracked in 5-minute increments.

Arrival and Departure: Please help your child make the transition to school by not lingering at drop off. We recommend and expect an arrival time of no later than 9:00 am in order for your child to have a quality, uninterrupted lesson time and to not interrupt those children that are already working. If your child will be arriving after 9:00 am periodically due to appointments or other such activities, please notify the staff either the day before or via the *BrightWheel* app prior to such appointment or event or even that morning so that the staff knows to expect your child(ren)'s arrival.

Montessori children keep track of their own belongings, dress and undress themselves to the best of their abilities. Thus, we expect children that can do so, walk into school, rather than being carried, to carry their own belongings if they are able to and put them away on their own. Of course, teachers will be there to offer help when necessary and assist our younger friends with their belongings when they are unable to carry them themselves.

We ask that children that can do so, collect their belongings after school and transport them to the car. We will try and help facilitate this process by having your child ready when you arrive. We provide each child with a "work bag" for their schoolwork. Your child must have their work bag in order to bring their work home and it is their responsibility to pack their work bag prior to going home. To reduce congestion in the welcome/entrance area, please wait until you are outside the building to go through your child's work bag.

We strongly ask that the outside doors be opened by a parent or staff member and not by a child. Children are not permitted to go into the parking lot without an adult, or to play around in the parking lot. If you should come to pick up your child while he/she is on the playground, please avoid lifting your child over the fence and please instead use the gate. You will still need to sign your child out if they are on the playground when you arrive.

Please pick your child up on time. We reserve the right to impose a late fee of \$15 for each additional five (5) minutes that your child is at school past their normal pick up time. Time will be tracked in 5-minute increments. Children who are enrolled in the half day or school day program's may add time when space permits and must have it approved prior to doing so.

If your child is picked up by someone other than the usual family member(s), please notify us in person, in writing, via the *BrightWheel* app or a phone call to the school. For

children's safety, we require that they be signed in and out of the school each day. Please notify us of this change regardless as to whether the individual is listed as an authorized pick up. If someone arrives to pick up your child and we are unaware of this change, a phone call will be made to the parents in order to confirm that we are to send your child with this individual.

Attendance: The Montessori philosophy insists that we respect the child's need for consistency. The children who benefit the most from the prepared environment are those who attend regularly. A child's experience in the classroom and with the materials are cumulative; consistent attendance enhances the child's learning. A consistent routine also provides security for the children; a sense of security and sense of order enables the child to learn more readily.

The classroom guides (teachers) spend quality time and energy preparing the curriculum and lessons each day and for each child. For all children at every level, each day counts toward their learning and development. Please help to ensure your child's social and academic progress by avoiding any unnecessary tardiness and absences. If your child will not be at school due to illness, vacation, appointments, family days or any such day, please notify us via the *BrightWheel* app or a phone call to the school. If you have planned absences, you can notify us ahead of time in person, in writing, via the *BrightWheel* app or phone call to the school.

Infant Care: Parents will be responsible for providing diapers, wipes, breast milk or formula for their child(ren) while in our care. A written plan from parents regarding individualized feeding schedules will be followed while your infant is in our care. Parents will be responsible for informing staff as to when their child is ready to start transitioning to solid foods and staff will also communicate with parents if they notice changes in the child's eating habits, such as; when the infant no longer is interested in their milk or formula. We will not make this transition without first communicating with the parents. Once your child(ren) starts transitioning to solids, we are happy to accommodate eating times with a morning snack, either provided by you, the parent or guardian, or by A Little Journey, lunch time with food provided by the parent or guardian, and an afternoon snack for children enrolled in our full time program that is either provided by you, the parent or guardian, or by A Little Journey.

Infants will nap in cribs until 12 to 13 months of age and until parents have authorized that it is safe for their child to transition to a floor bed with the floor bed permission slip. This will not be done without written consent from the parents prior to 18 months of age. Once the child is 18 months of age, they will be transitioned to a floor mat. Parents can also fill out an individualized sleep schedule that will be followed while your infant is in our care. Please remember that children can respond differently while in a school

environment and their schedules may vary slightly from their home schedule. Nap time can be especially difficult until the child adjusts to the environment. However, we will communicate continuously with parents in person and via the *BrightWheel* app as we understand how worrisome it can be to leave your infant in the care of others.

Safe Infant Sleep Policy: Providing infants with a safe place to grow and learn is very important. For this reason, A Little Journey has created a policy on safe sleep practices for infants up to 1-year-old. We follow the recommendations of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the Consumer Product Safety Commission to provide a safe sleep environment and reduce the risk of sudden infant death syndrome (SIDS). SIDS is “the sudden death of an infant under 1 year of age, which remains unexplained after a thorough investigation.” The staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at A Little Journey follow the AAP safe sleep policy.

Sleep Position:

- Infants will be placed flat on their backs to sleep every time unless there is a physician, practitioner or clinician signed sleep position medical waiver up to date on file. In the case of a waiver, a waiver notice will be posted at the infant’s crib without identifying medical information. The full waiver will be kept in the infant’s file.
- Infants will not be placed on their side for sleep.
- Devices such as wedges or infant positioners will not be used since such devices are not proven to reduce the risk of SIDS.
- Infants who use pacifiers will be offered their pacifier when they are placed to sleep, and it will not be put back in should the pacifier fall out once they fall asleep.
- Pacifiers will be cleaned between each use, checked for tears, and will not be coated in any sweet or other solution.
- While infants will always be placed on their backs to sleep, when an infant can easily turn over from back to front and front to back, they can remain in whatever position they prefer to sleep.

Sleep Environment:

- Our program will use Consumer Product Safety Commission guidelines for safety-approved cribs and firm mattresses.
- Crib slats will be less than 2 3/8” apart.
- Infants will not be left in bed with drop side down when applicable.
- Playpen weave will be less than 1/4” when applicable.

- Consumer Product Safety Commission safety-approved cradles and bassinets may also be used for sleeping if the infant meets the weight and height requirements.
- Infants will not be placed to sleep on any standard bed, waterbeds, couches, air mattresses, or on other soft surfaces.
- Only one infant will be placed to sleep in each crib. Siblings, including twins and triplets, will be placed in separate cribs.
- The crib will have a firm tight-fitting mattress covered by a fitted sheet and will be free from loose bedding, toys, and other soft objects (i.e., pillows, quilts, comforters, sheepskins, stuffed toys, etc.)
- To avoid overheating, the temperature of the rooms where infants sleep will be checked and will be kept at a level that is comfortable for a lightly clothed adult.
- If a blanket is used, the child's feet will be placed to the foot of the crib and a light blanket will be tightly tucked in along the sides and foot of the mattress. The blanket will not come up higher than the infant's chest. Sleep clothing, such as sleepers, sleep sacks, and wearable blankets, may be used as alternatives to blankets.
- Bibs and pacifiers will not be tied around an infant's neck or clipped on to an infant's clothing during sleep.
- Smoking will not be allowed in or near A Little Journey.

Supervision:

- When infants are in their cribs, they will be within sight and hearing of staff at all times.
- A staff member will visibly check on the sleeping infants frequently.
- When an infant is awake, they will have supervised "tummy time." This will help babies strengthen their muscles and develop normally.
- Infants will spend limited time in car seats, swings, and bouncer/infant seats when they are awake.

Staff Training:

- All staff, substitute staff, and volunteers at A Little Journey will be trained on safe sleep policies and practices.
- Safe sleep practices will be reviewed with all staff, substitute staff, and volunteers each year. In addition, training specific to these policies will be given before any individual is allowed to care for infants.
- Documentation that staff, substitutes, and volunteers have read and understand these policies will be kept in each individual's file.

- All staff, substitutes, and volunteers at A Little Journey will be trained on pediatric first aid and CPR for unresponsive infants as well as what to do when they have a question or need assistance before they are allowed to care for infants.

When The Policy Applies: This policy applies to all staff, substitute staff, parents, and volunteers when they place an infant to sleep at A Little Journey.

Communication Plan for Staff and Parents: Parents will review and sign this policy when they enroll their child at A Little Journey. Parents are asked to follow this same policy when the infant is at home. These policies will be posted in prominent places. Information regarding safe sleep practices, safe sleep environments, reducing the risk of SIDS in child care as well as other program health and safety practices will be shared if any changes are made. A copy will also be provided to the staff and signed by staff members.

***The information contained in this publication should not be used as a substitute for the medical care and advice of your pediatrician. There may be variations in treatment that your pediatrician may recommend based on individual facts and circumstances.*

Potty Training: Potty training will be initiated once the child is ready. Teachers will communicate with parents when they notice that a child may be ready to start the potty training process. Parents can also notify staff when they would like to start the process if the child has expressed interest in their home. When your child is potty training, please be sure to provide sufficient extra clothes. We will send any soiled clothing home with the child at the end of the day.

Clothing: Please dress your child in comfortable, age appropriate, sturdy clothes that can be put on and be taken off independently, especially if they are potty training. Overalls and pants with buttons are challenging for children and can add unnecessary struggles to children starting to potty train. Please avoid long party dresses, costume dresses, party clothes or shoes and dress up clothing.

Since we try to go outside as often as we can, outdoor clothing appropriate to the season is essential. This means complete waterproof snow gear whenever there is snow - or the warning of snow. Waterproof snow pants, a jacket, and waterproof gloves are essential to outdoor play time in the snow, along with a good hat and pair of waterproof boots. Boots are highly recommended during the spring melt and fall rains when the ground can be wet and muddy as well.

Tennis shoes are ideal for outdoor play in warm weather; sandals with closed toes and an ankle/heel strap are fine, but please **no flip-flops, clogs, or cowboy/girl boots**. During the warm summer months, we will offer sprinkler and water table play to the children. We will inform parents when we are ready for swimsuits in order to help keep the children cool and have some added fun to their day.

Lunches and Snacks: Your child's lunch is provided by you, the parents or guardians, and must include a protein source and a fruit and/or vegetable. We teach the children proper eating habits and table manners by teaching them to start with their protein food and move through the healthiness of their lunch. Lunch items must be cut up and ready to eat with our school provided silverware. Some foods that can be eaten with hands at home are too messy for a group setting; meat for example, must be cut into bite-sized pieces but sandwiches can be eaten with their hands. Oranges or hard boiled eggs must be peeled and ready for the child. **Please do not pack candy, cake, cookies, fun-sugary fruit snacks, fruit roll-ups, dip, grated cheese, squirt or drinkable yogurt, juice, sweetened milk, soda or beverage of any kind. Do not include medicines or vitamins in your child's lunchbox.** And, please no beverages of any kind. We provide milk and water for children at meal times.

We recommend the use of ice packs in order to keep your child(ren)'s lunch cold as we are unable to refrigerate lunches. For keeping foods warm, we recommend thermoses as we are unable to warm or heat children's lunches.

We provide a healthy morning snack of fruits or vegetables with the option for water or milk every morning during our morning work period for our pre-primary and primary programs. If your child is allergic to cow's milk, we will work with you to provide an alternative option should you wish. Children who stay past our school day program (past 3:45 pm) will receive a school snack of a cracker choice, such as goldfish, cheeseits, etc, and an additional side of a cheese stick, fruit bar, pouch or similar type snack item, depending on what is available.

Nap/ Quiet Time: Nap and quiet time will be a part of the daily routine for all children enrolled in our pre-primary and primary programs. If your child does not nap, they will still be required to participate in quiet time for 25 to 30 minutes while the other friends fall asleep. These children will be allowed to sit quietly on their nap mat and look at a book if they would like. Children may have one small, soft, cozy item to snuggle with during their nap, however, it must remain in their cubby when not being used at nap time. This nap item must be small enough to easily fit in your child's cubby and not make noises. If you wish for your child to sleep, but they do not fall asleep after 45 minutes, the child will join the rest of the group and not be forced to sleep. It does take time for children to adjust to new routines and new environments and we will continue

to try each day for your child to achieve sleep. Any changes in a child's nap routine will be communicated to parents and individualized nap routines will be discussed although every child will participate in at least 25 to 30 minutes of nap/quiet time.

We provide each child with an age appropriate sleeping space; crib, cot, or mat and a blanket with a pillow for those children sleeping on floor beds.

Sharing and Toys: Please do not allow your child to bring toys to school. Children may bring well chosen items based on our current circle topic if it is approved by the teacher beforehand, however, we strongly encourage bringing one book related to our topic over toys and other personal items. We do not guarantee that books brought from home will be read to the group or that the children will be able to present their item during our group circle, although we will try our best. We will not accept most toys or fragile, expensive items.

Birthdays: Children celebrating their birthdays are welcome to bring their favorite fruit or vegetables for our morning snack time. Please speak with staff prior to bringing snacks.

We celebrate birthdays during our circle time with a special ceremony using a Montessori practice called "around the sun". These celebrations are common practice in Montessori schools. Children can bring pictures of themselves from birth to present representing each year of life that can be shared with the class during the celebration at circle time; for example: 4 pictures for a child turning 4 with each photo representing each stage of life. These pictures will be returned to you at the end of the day.

Non-School Party Invitations: Parties outside of school are a great way for families to meet and celebrate with friends and for parents to build and strengthen the Little Journey community. You are not required to invite all children in attendance to non-school parties or events. If you do plan to invite friends from school, please do so privately by reaching out to other parents outside of school. If you need contact information for other families, we will be happy to provide a contact list to you. Help children to limit their birthday conversations to home and not at school, especially when discussing party plans if not all friends are invited. Your cooperation with this policy will save other friends from having their feelings hurt if they are not invited.

Cultural Celebrations: A Little Journey is a nonsectarian school. We are proud of the fact that people of different cultures and religions place their children within our school and understand that families celebrate in a variety of ways and for a variety of holidays and these celebrations may not always be the same. This requires sensitivity to deep

religious feelings especially in late December and in the spring. Religious holidays can be presented as cultural celebrations that enrich all of our lives.

A Little Journey's guidelines for holiday celebrations:

1. Present religious events and celebrations from a historical and cultural perspective and avoid the religious aspect, encouraging children to ask their parents.
2. If several celebrations occur near each other in time or season it is appropriate to deal with all. The themes should be cultural and historical and not religious, such as Hannakah and Christmas.
3. Do not include any type of prayer or any words that can be interpreted as a prayer.
4. The religious holidays in late December should be referred to as "Winter Holidays" or "Winter Break" and the spring as "Spring Break"

Conferences: To help each child's progress, and set goals together, parent-teacher conferences will occur twice a year for children in our pre-primary and primary programs, giving an opportunity for parents to receive one-on-one knowledge about their child's progress. If your child is in the nido program, there will be ample time to sit one-on-one with teachers per your request. We expect there to be a lot of opportunities for our nido parents to meet with teachers, especially as they transition to solid foods and out of cribs at nap time. If at any time, regardless of your child's program, you would like to sit down with teachers, please let us know and we would be more than happy to schedule a time to meet with you.

Approach to Discipline: At A Little Journey, we believe that the people who work with young children on a regular basis must be sensitive, warm, caring, knowledgeable, and interested professionals. Teachers must offer authentic role models for interactions with others and display a sincere enthusiasm for active learning. The educational philosophy of A Little Journey is that real, effective discipline is one that comes from within a person. It is our belief that inner discipline develops in a child through active involvement in self-chosen tasks and the development of self-control. The development of inner discipline in a child is always the goal of a Montessori school. The clear organization of the physical environment; the structure, consistency, and predictability of daily school life; the indirect manner of teaching interpersonal skills through the lessons of "grace and courtesy"; the reliance on peer modeling and coaching channel positive behavior and appreciation and empathy help to limit difficulties.

It is our belief that if the ground rules are consistently followed and positively reinforced, the necessity of external discipline will be diminished. However, when such external discipline is deemed necessary, the following will be observed without failure:

1. Suggest alternative activities and try to redirect the child in minor instances of unwanted behavior.
2. Give the child two options that the teacher is comfortable with the child choosing. For example; telling the child they can choose to do the lesson correctly or they can choose to clean up that lesson and choose different work.
3. If the child cannot comply with the two choices, the teacher gives the child two new choices for the child and have one of the choices be to take a break.
4. If the child is not making a choice, they lose their ability to choose and it is automatically time to take a short break. Breaks are limited to the number of minutes as the child is old. For example; 3 minutes for a 3 year old child.
5. Persistent misbehavior in a group setting may be dealt with by temporary removal from the group, but remain in the classroom. The child may be offered a choice to either participate as part of the group or to take a break. Behavioral expectations are made very clear and the child is asked if he/she is ready to return to the group.
6. If the child expresses behavior that will not be tolerated in the classroom, they immediately need to take a break and will not be offered a choice.
7. Teachers will talk with the child who constantly seems to be in need of discipline; explore ways of making life more pleasant. Problem-solving skills are reinforced as well as suggestions for alternative behavior choices.
8. Teachers will help to teach the child that emotions are real and valid, and how to deal with them in constructive ways with kind words rather than physical responses.
9. If the behavior persists, parents will be notified and joint action will be taken. The Executive Director will be notified of persistent, inappropriate behavior and will make recommendations to the parents in regards to outside referrals and additional behavior management programs when deemed necessary.
10. The Executive Director will make suggestions regarding alternative schools that may better meet the needs of the child, as necessary.
11. Under no circumstances shall any child be subjected to corporal punishment in any manner upon the body or to verbal abuse.

Illness and Medication: In order to attend school, children must be able to participate fully in the daily routine, including outside play time. While we understand

that mild colds are common in children, and generally do not interfere with everyday activities, **please do not send your child to school who may be exhibiting one or more of the following symptoms; a fever, a deep/raspy cough, a rash, a thick yellow/green nasal discharge, unexplained redness in the eyes, vomiting, or repeated diarrhea. Children must remain home for 24 hours after the symptom(s) have subsided.**

A child who does not normally fall asleep during nap time, but needs a nap in order to recover and make it through their normal daily routine is not sufficiently recovered to return to school. A child that requires one-on-one care due to consistent and repeated diarrhea or vomiting, is not in well enough health to be at school.

Should your child become ill or injured at school, we will attempt to notify you immediately. We will apply first aid in case of injury when necessary. If you cannot be reached, we will call your emergency contact person if it is required for your child to be picked up from school immediately. A child who is seriously injured will be taken to the hospital when emergency services are deemed fit. Our staff has been trained in CPR and First Aid and will administer the necessary care until EMS arrives on scene.

We will not dispense medicine without a signed daily medication form. If your child needs medicine during school hours, please fill out a form each day it is to be administered. The medicine must be in its original container, clearly labeled with your child's name, instructions, prescription label and provided by parents.

Non-Medical Emergencies: In the event of a citywide emergency, your child will remain at school unless we are advised by authorities to evacuate. If children are moved, the location will be posted on our doors if able to do so. We will also do our best to update parents through the *BrightWheel* app and/or email. Children's safety will be our first priority. Parents will be informed as soon as children are in a safe place and we are able to share our location. Parents will also be notified of when it is safe to come pick up their children.

Pandemic, Natural or Unnatural Event: If an unforeseen natural, unnatural or health event, such as a health pandemic, occurs, the situation will be assessed by A Little Journey. A Little Journey will do everything they can in order to stay open, however, sometimes situations can be out of our control. Shall A Little Journey need to close for prolonged unexpected or unforeseen circumstances, parents may be expected to pay a fee or partial tuition to hold their child's spot and remain committed to A Little Journey. Each situation will be handled on a "by case" basis. Sometimes the situation will be out of our control and we may be forced to close for an unknown period of time. Tuition will

be assessed on a case by case basis depending on the length and duration of a closure. Minor closures will not result in adjustments to tuition.

Child Abuse: Montana law mandates that all staff members report any suspected abuse or neglect of children. It is our job and all staff members are mandatory reporters.

Non-Discrimination Policy: A Little Journey does not discriminate on the basis of race, color, gender, religion, sexual orientation, nationale or ethnic origin in admission procedures or hiring of staff members.

Re-Enrollment: Re-enrollment for the next school year (beginning each September) is done annually every spring. Current families will need to notify the school if they plan to have their child continue for the following year and confirm enrollment by paying the annual **non-refundable** materials fee. The materials fee is **non-refundable** and will be applied towards consumable supplies for the coming school year; such as paper towels, snacks and lesson materials. The materials fee will not guarantee your child spots for the fall should you choose to withdraw your child for the summer months without paying tuition. Parents will also need to provide any updated information, such as change of address, phone number, and updated immunization records. If your child will be transitioning to kindergarten for the coming school year, you will need to notify us of a tentative last day for your child during re-enrollment in the spring.

Grievance Procedure: Parents that may have a grievance or concern about the school or staff should attempt to resolve the conflict directly with the Executive Director. This can often clarify and resolve a situation in a calm and cordial manner.

Termination of Enrollment, Withdrawal and Termination Policy: Enrollment is for the entire year (September to August) and parents agree to pay the full monthly tuition fees for the calendar year. Notice of termination or withdrawal by the parent(s) or guardians must be given in writing to the provider one (1) calendar month, thirty (30) days, in advance in order for payment responsibilities to end. Tuition is billed monthly and we do not prorate partial months. Therefore, withdrawal notice must occur the month prior to withdrawal. If you terminate enrollment prior to the end of the month, no credit will be given for missed days and you will be responsible for payment for the final month whether or not you remove your child prior to the end of the month. Should you decide to withdraw your child from our program, it is best to do it at the end of the month prior to your last month, for example; if you wish to end care at the end of July, notice must be given on or before the 1st of July in order for payment responsibilities to end with July's tuition. If you do not give notice until after the 1st of July, you will still be responsible for payment for the next month regardless if your child will be attending.

In our example, if you did not give notice until the 5th of July, you would still be responsible for August's tuition.

A Little Journey reserves the right to ask a family to withdraw their child from our program for any reason in which the school is unable to meet the needs of the child or in which the child shows they are not ready for the Montessori classroom setting. If a parent, guardian or family member engages in behavior that is destructive, disruptive, or undermining to the school environment, policies and/or procedures, to the children and/or staff, the family may be asked to withdraw their child(ren) from school, and can be up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director. In addition, we reserve the right to dismiss a family for non-payment of tuition and fees and any reason we deem that your family or child(ren) are not a good fit for our program and is up to the sole discretion of the Executive Director.

We have the right to terminate a child's enrollment for any reason and can be the sole discretion of the Executive Director. Two (2) weeks notice will be given under usual circumstances. However, we reserve the right to immediate termination of services under extreme circumstances. Application fees, material fees and tuition **will not be refunded** in any instance of termination or withdrawal.

Please sign the Parent Contract and Policy Acknowledgement form indicating that you have read and understood the policies and procedures in place at A Little Journey. This form will be kept in your child's permanent file.

Thank you!

**The Parent Handbook may be changed or amended at any time, and two (2) week's notice of the policy changes will be provided to families when applicable.