



Muskoka Montessori School

Parent Handbook

2025–2026 School Year (Updated August 2025)

Inspiring every child

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Our Commitment:

The Muskoka Montessori School is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for children, families and staff while remaining faithful to our core Montessori teaching principles and values. We will continue to protect the safety and well-being of our community by following best practices set out by public health, the Ministry of Education as well as advice and experience from our Montessori community of educators and administrators in Canada and around the world.

MUSKOKA MONTESSORI SCHOOL

228 Chub Lake Road , Huntsville, Ontario P1H 1S4

Telephone Number: (705) 788-3802

e-mail: info@muskokamontessori.ca

The Day to Day Team

Cindy Bagshaw Upper Elementary Teacher

Ashley Bell Caswell French Teacher

Sara Berry Casa Teacher

Jaci Booth Casa Support and Before School Care

Shelley Cowan Lower Elementary Teacher

Jackie Farley Principal

Judith Gottschalk Administration

Jenny Cowle Lower Elementary Assistant

Josh Verkley Creative Writing Specialist

Michelle Powell Erdkinder Teacher

Kasey Stephan - Culinary/Dramatic Arts Teacher

Debbie Wilkinson Casa Classroom Assistant

Josh Verkley Erdkinder Outdoor Ed & LE/UE Creative Writing Specialist

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Jennifer Daynard Chairperson/Secretary

Jackie Farley Treasurer

Andrew Brown Parent Representative

Sara Drawehn Parent Representative

Julie Freeborn Board Member

Summary of Key Points (Parent Quick Reference)

1. **Arrival:** School starts at 8:30 am. Being on time helps your child settle into the day.
2. **Drop-off:** Parents say goodbye at the bottom of the front steps. Short, confident partings help children transition.
3. **Lunches/Snacks:** Send food in reusable containers. Choose fresh fruit, vegetables, protein, and unprocessed items. Nut-free.
4. **Allergies:** No nuts or peanuts. Children may not share food. Inform teachers of any health issues.
5. **Communication:** Keep in touch with teachers. They are partners in supporting your child.
6. **Parking Lot & After-School Safety:**
 - Please turn off engines and supervise children closely.
 - Casa and Lower Elementary students must be walked to the front door at drop-off.
 - After school, children are **not permitted to run or play in the parking lot**. All play should take place on the fields.
 - **Bikes/scooters may not be used in the parking lot until after 4:00 pm**, once dismissal and pick-ups are complete.
7. **Illness:** Keep children home if they are sick. Email roster@muskokamontessori.ca and your classroom teacher with details of absence and symptoms.
8. **Parent Involvement:** Families contribute 10 volunteer hours/year (or \$150 in lieu). Your participation strengthens our school community.
9. **Clothing:** Dress children for all weather. Indoor shoes must be appropriate for fire drills/emergencies. Casa children should wear clothing they can manage independently.
10. **Parent Education & Classroom Observation:** Parents are invited to attend at least one parent education event each year and will be scheduled for a **classroom observation in January/February**.

Daily Logistics

Arrival

- School day begins at 8:30 am. Please aim to arrive a few minutes early so your child is ready to transition into the classroom calmly.
- Drop-off routine: Parents say goodbye at the bottom of the front steps. Short, confident partings help children settle more smoothly.
- **Before School Care:** Available from 8:00–8:25 am for \$6.50 per child.

Dismissal

- **Half Day Program Dismissal:** 11:45
- **Extended Day Program Dismissal:** 1:30
- **Full Day Program Dismissal:** 3:30 pm
- **After School Care:** Available Mon–Thurs, 3:40–5:15 pm (\$12 per child). No after-care on Fridays.
- Children not picked up by **3:40 pm** will be signed into after-care.

After school: Children may not run or play in the parking lot. All play should occur on the fields. Bikes and scooters may not be used in the parking lot until after 4:00 pm, once dismissal is complete.

Clothing

- Children go outdoors **every day**, in all weather (exceptions for thunder storms/extreme weather or extreme low temperatures)
- Please ensure your child is dressed appropriately.
- **Closed-toe shoes** are required for outdoor play.
- **Casa children** should wear clothing they can manage independently for bathroom use.
- Please label all clothing and belongings.

Lunch & Snacks

- Families provide a nut-free lunch and snacks each day.
- Food should be packed in reusable containers.
- We encourage healthy, unprocessed foods: fresh fruit, vegetables, whole grains, and protein.
- Candy, pop, and highly processed foods should not be sent to school.
- Children are not permitted to share food.

- Casa children: All containers and the lunch kit must be clearly labeled with your child's name.
- Elementary students: Snacks must be packed in a separate container from lunch for easier access during work periods.

Birthdays

Birthdays are celebrated in a simple, meaningful way:

- Children may bring in **a special book to share with the class or pictures of themselves growing up.**
- Classroom celebrations are focused on **honouring the child's life story**, consistent with Montessori tradition.

What to Bring Each Day

To help your child be prepared and comfortable, please send:

- **Nut-free lunch and snacks** (see notes above for Casa & Elementary requirements)
- **Water bottle** (filled and labeled)
- **Weather-appropriate outdoor clothing** (snow gear, rain gear, hats, mitts as needed)
- **Indoor shoes** (non-marking and appropriate for walking outside during fire drills or emergencies)
- **Spare change of clothes** (especially for Casa and Lower Elementary students)
- **Any required medication** (with completed authorization form, if applicable)

Please label all items clearly with your child's name.

Admissions & Financial Information

Casa (Preschool, ages 3–5)

- Children typically begin in **September of the year they turn 3**, once they are toilet trained.
- Admission priority is given to families who:
 - Express an interest in Montessori through Grade 8
 - Attend a Montessori information session
 - Participate in a classroom observation
 - Already have children in Montessori programs
- Families who withdraw a child after Casa to attend another school for Grade 1 will not be eligible to enroll younger siblings in Casa.

Elementary (Grades 1–8)

- Preference is given to children with Montessori preschool experience.
- Non-Montessori applicants are welcome.
- **Two-day classroom visit:** All applicants spend two days in class where teachers observe both **academic skills** and **social interactions**.
- Parents may be asked to provide:
 - **Examples of past report cards**
 - Permission for MMS to contact previous teachers
- Admission decisions are based on the classroom visit, family discussions, and available space.

Conditions of Admission

- All students are expected to follow school policies.
- The School reserves the right to accept or decline applications in the best interests of the child and community.
- MMS does not discriminate on the basis of race, religion, gender, or ability.

Acceptance Checklist

Upon acceptance, families provide:

1. Completed application form
2. \$500 non-refundable tuition deposit (applied to tuition)
3. One-time **Capital Fee** of \$2,000 (new families only)
4. Post-dated cheques or e-transfer for tuition installments
5. Copy of child's immunization record
6. **For Elementary applicants:** copies of recent report cards and/or teacher references

Tuition & Fees (2025–2026)

Program	Schedule	Annual Tuition	Additional Expenses
Casa Year 1	5 mornings/week	\$7980	N/A
Casa Year 1 - January Start	5/mornings/week	\$4780	N/A
Casa Year 2	3 full days + 2 half days	\$9240	N/A
Casay Year 2 - extended day	3 fulldays + 2 extended half days	\$9,680	N/A
Casa Year 3	5 full days	\$10, 300	N/A
Elementary	5 full days	\$9,785	+ \$200 Activity Fee
Erdkinder	5 full days	\$11,300	+ \$200 Activity Fee

Before/After Care Programs

- **Before School Care:** \$6.50/child (8:00–8:25 am)
- **After School Care:** \$12/child (3:40–5:15 pm, Mon–Thurs). No Friday after-care.

Payment Terms

- \$500 deposit at registration (non-refundable).

- Balance payable in **three installments**: September 1, November 1, February 1.
- Sibling discounts: **10% for 1st sibling, 20% for 2nd, 30% for 3rd.**

Refund & Withdrawal Policy

- **Parent-initiated withdrawal**: No tuition refund.
- **School-initiated withdrawal**: Tuition refunded in whole-month increments (minus \$500 deposit).
- No refunds for illness, travel, or temporary absences.

Financial Assistance

MMS is committed to supporting families who value Montessori education but face financial need.

- Families enrolled **3+ years in Elementary** may apply for financial aid.
- MMS partners with **Apple Financial Services**, an independent organization, to review applications confidentially.
- Decisions are based on need, available funds, and school priorities, with preference given to staff children.

Wait List Policy

When classrooms are fully enrolled, the School adds prospective students to a wait list. If an opening occurs, the School will call the parents/guardians of the prospective student starting with the person who has been on the list the longest and working our way down the list. Preference in admittance is always given to siblings of current or past students and staff children. Preference is also given to families transferring in from other Montessori schools and children of staff. At any time, parents may inquire as to where they are on the wait list. At no time will the school divulge the identity of other families on the wait list. There is no fee to be on the wait list.

When the school is completing enrolment for the coming school year, families must make a \$500.00 deposit in order to reserve a spot in the class for their child. Deposits come off the total tuition fee. Parents will be offered a spot in a classroom based on the above considerations.

Student Health & Safety

General Expectations

Parents are asked to:

- Monitor their child's health daily.
- Keep children home if they are unwell.
- Provide up-to-date contact and medical information.
- Communicate openly with staff about health concerns, allergies, or medication needs.

When to Keep Your Child Home

Children should stay home if they show any of the following symptoms:

- Fever (100.4°F/38°C or higher)
- Vomiting or diarrhea within the last 24 hours
- Persistent cough or difficulty breathing
- Rash of unknown origin
- Conjunctivitis (pink eye) until treated for 24 hours
- Any illness preventing full participation in outdoor play and classroom activities

If a child becomes ill at school, parents will be contacted to pick them up promptly.

Return-to-School Guidelines (Based on Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit recommendations:

Illness/Symptom	Child may return to school....
Fever	Once fever-free for 24 hours without medication
Vomiting/Diarrhea	24 hours after last episode
Strep Throat	After 24 hours of antibiotics and feeling well enough
Conjunctivitis (Pink Eye)	After 24 hours of prescribed treatment
Chickenpox	When all spots are crusted and child feels
Head Lice	After first treatment and no live lice present
COVID-19 or Emerging Illnesses	Must follow current SMDHU guidelines

Communicable Diseases

- Parents must inform the school immediately if their child is diagnosed with a contagious illness.
- The school will notify other families of potential exposures while keeping individual health information confidential.

Medications at School

- Prescription medications must be delivered in their **original container** with the child's name, dosage, and prescribing physician.
- Parents must complete a **Medication Authorization Form**.
- Staff may not administer non-prescription medications without prior written consent.
- EpiPens, inhalers, and other emergency medications must remain accessible at all times.

Allergies & Anaphylaxis

- Muskoka Montessori School is a **nut-free environment**. Please do not send food containing peanuts or tree nuts.
- Children are not permitted to share food.
- Parents must provide up-to-date allergy and medical information.
- Children with life-threatening allergies must have an **Individual Anaphylaxis Emergency Plan** and supply at least one EpiPen to remain at school.

Mask-Friendly Environment

- Students and staff may choose to wear masks.
- Mask-wearing will always be supported as a family or personal choice.

Outdoor & Playground Safety

- Children go outdoors daily in all weather
- Playground rules are reviewed regularly with students to ensure safety and respect.
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Behaviour & Discipline Policy

At Muskoka Montessori School, discipline is rooted in the Montessori values of **respect, responsibility, and community**. Our approach is to guide children toward self-discipline and empathy through positive strategies and problem-solving. Most behaviours can be redirected with gentle support, but when behaviours endanger safety or significantly disrupt the learning community, firm steps are required.

Conflict Resolution & Restorative Practices

At MMS, we support children in learning peaceful conflict resolution. When disagreements or hurt feelings arise, students are encouraged to:

1. **Pause and calm down**
2. **Express their feelings** respectfully
3. **Listen** to the other person's perspective
4. **Work together** to find a fair solution

When issues affect a group or persist between students, teachers may hold a **restorative circle**. In a circle:

- Each child has a chance to share their experience and feelings without interruption.
- The group works together to understand the impact of the behaviour.
- *The goal is to repair harm, rebuild trust, and restore positive relationships.*

Important: Restorative circles are a powerful tool, but they are not always the first step. If a behaviour threatens the safety or emotional well-being of others, the school may take immediate action (including suspension) before holding a restorative circle. The order and type of intervention are determined at the school's discretion, always with the best interests of all children in mind.

Progressive Discipline Approach

When behaviours continue or require stronger intervention, MMS uses a **progressive discipline model**, where steps increase in response to the seriousness or persistence of behaviours. Depending on the circumstances, these steps may occur in sequence or be adjusted at the school's discretion.

1. **Redirection** – The child is guided toward a constructive activity.
2. **Reflection & Discussion** – The child reflects with a teacher on the impact of their behaviour.
3. **Loss of Privileges** – Temporary removal of certain activities or freedoms.
4. **Parent Involvement** – Families are contacted and may be asked to meet with staff.

5. **Support Plan** – A written plan is developed with specific expectations, supports, and follow-up.
6. **Suspension or Dismissal** – In cases of persistent, unsafe, or severe behaviour, the school may suspend a student temporarily or permanently dismiss them.

Note: Steps may not always occur in order. The school reserves the right to move directly to suspension or dismissal if behaviour compromises the safety, well-being, or learning environment of others.

Serious Behaviour Concerns

Behaviours that may bypass the early steps of conflict resolution and progressive discipline include:

- Physical aggression (hitting, kicking, biting, pushing)
- Threatening or intimidating others
- Bullying or harassment (verbal, physical, or social)
- Repeated defiance of staff direction
- Behaviour that consistently prevents others from learning

In these cases, the school may move immediately to stronger measures to protect the safety and well-being of all.

Bullying, Conflict, and Respect

At MMS we are committed to a safe and respectful environment for all children. We take all reports of hurtful behaviour seriously and work closely with students and families to address concerns.

It is important to recognize the difference between **conflict** and **bullying**:

- **Conflict** is a normal part of growing up. Children will often disagree, argue, or make mistakes in how they treat others. These moments are opportunities for teaching problem-solving, empathy, and communication.
- **Bullying** is very different. It involves repeated, targeted behaviour meant to hurt, humiliate, or exclude another child. Bullying may be physical, verbal, social, or online.

At MMS:

- We **do not tolerate bullying** in any form.
- We respond quickly and firmly if bullying is identified.
- We teach children skills to resolve conflicts respectfully and to seek adult help when needed.

- Families are partners in supporting children to develop kindness, respect, and responsibility.

- **Partnership with Families**

We view parents as partners in supporting children's social and emotional development. Families are expected to:

- Work collaboratively with staff when concerns arise
- Support agreed-upon strategies at home and school
- Communicate openly about challenges that may impact behaviour

Parent Involvement & Communication

Building a Strong Community

Muskoka Montessori School is a not-for-profit, charitable school that thrives because of the **partnership between families, staff, and students**. Parent involvement not only helps keep costs manageable, but also builds the sense of community that is central to our school culture.

Volunteer Commitment

- Each family is asked to contribute **10 volunteer hours per year**, or a contribution of **\$150 in lieu**.
- Volunteer opportunities are varied and flexible, including:
 - Assisting with fundraising events
 - Helping with maintenance or outdoor work
 - Supporting classroom activities or field trips
 - Serving on committees (e.g., fundraising, expansion, parent education)
- *A **Volunteer Form** is provided each year so families can indicate how they would like to contribute.*

Volunteering at Muskoka Montessori School

We love having parents and community members volunteer at our school. Your time and talents enrich our children's learning and strengthen our community.

For safety reasons, we require a **Vulnerable Sector Check (VSC)** in some cases:

- **Casa Program (Licensed Child Care, ages 3–6):**
All volunteers in Casa must provide a VSC, even if they are not left alone with children. This is a Ministry of Education requirement under Ontario's Child Care and Early Years Act. **Visitors** (guest speakers, one-time parent attendees for birthdays, etc.) are not considered volunteers under the Act, so they do not need a VSC — provided they are directly supervised at all times and never take children to the washroom, etc.
- **Elementary Programs (Grades 1–8):**
Volunteers are required to provide a VSC if they may be left alone with children (e.g., driving on field trips, supervising recess, leading a small group without staff).
For classroom visits, special events, or times when a parent is always with staff, a VSC is not required.

The Principal's Responsibility

The Principal is responsible for the safety and well-being of all students. For this reason, the Principal may occasionally require additional screening or may limit certain volunteer roles if it is in the best interest of the children and the school community.

Other Details

- VSCs are valid for 5 years, with a short yearly offence declaration in between.

Communication with Families

We believe strong communication between home and school ensures the best outcomes for children.

- **Newsletters & Email:** Families receive regular email updates with important dates, reminders, and announcements.
- **Teacher Communication:**
 - **Brief conversations** at pick-up or drop-off are welcome.
 - For longer or more detailed discussions, please schedule a time to meet or email the teacher so staff can give you their full attention.
 - Teachers will do their best to respond to emails within **24–48 hours on school days**. Please note that evenings and weekends are family time, and responses

may not be immediate.

- **Website & Social Media:** Current information and updates can also be found on our website and social channels.
- **Urgent Communication:** For time-sensitive matters, please call the school directly at (705) 788-3802.

Parent Education

Parent understanding of Montessori philosophy is essential to a child's success. To support this, MMS asks each family to:

- Attend at least **one parent education session** each year.
- Participate in at least **one classroom observation** (scheduled in January/February).

These opportunities give parents a deeper understanding of their child's learning environment and strengthen the school-home connection.

Conflict Resolution Between Parents & School

MMS values open, respectful communication. If concerns arise:

1. Speak first with your child's teacher.
2. If unresolved, bring the concern to the Principal.
3. If still unresolved, the matter may be brought to the Board of Directors.

Our goal is always to resolve issues constructively, with the best interests of the child at the center.

Emergency Procedures

Muskoka Montessori School has a comprehensive Emergency Preparedness Plan. Our priority is always the safety and well-being of students. Staff maintain current First Aid/CPR certification (renewed as required when certifications expire), and children practice emergency procedures so they know what to do calmly and safely.

Fire Drills & Evacuation

- Fire drills are practiced monthly so children know exactly what to do in case of a real emergency.
- Staff ensure all children leave the building quickly, calmly, and safely.
- Each class has a designated outdoor meeting location where attendance is taken immediately.
- Indoor shoes must be appropriate for walking outdoors in case a drill or emergency occurs.
- If we need to evacuate the building, or if we cannot re-enter after an emergency:
 - Students and staff will relocate to our designated evacuation site at the Martin's farm, 250 Chub Lake Road (behind the school property).
 - Parents will be contacted by email or phone as soon as it is safe to do so.
 - Children will only be released to parents/guardians or approved emergency contacts (photo ID may be required).

Medical Emergencies

- All staff hold current First Aid and CPR; certifications are renewed when they expire.
- Staff will provide immediate first aid and call 911 if needed.
- Parents/guardians will be contacted immediately.
- A staff member will accompany the child to the hospital if emergency transport is required, and remain until a parent arrives.

Shelter-in-Place (Severe Weather or Community Emergency)

If conditions outside the school are unsafe (e.g., severe storm, tornado warning, chemical spill, or community alert), students will remain inside until authorities declare it safe.

- Tornado Warnings: Children will move to designated interior safe areas, away from windows and exterior walls.
- Severe Weather/Storms: Students remain in classrooms or interior hallways and continue quiet activities.
- Community Alerts (e.g., nearby gas leak/spill): Windows and doors are closed; ventilation may be adjusted if directed by authorities.
- During shelter-in-place, teachers keep children calm and engaged in quiet activities.
- Families will be notified if extended measures are required.

Lockdowns

- MMS does not conduct lockdown drills.
- In the unlikely event of a police-advised lockdown or hold-and-secure, the school will follow instructions from local authorities and communicate with families as soon as it is safe to do so.

Student Release in Emergencies

- Children will only be released to individuals listed on their Emergency Contact Form.
- Photo ID may be required.
- If parents/guardians cannot be reached, staff will contact emergency contacts in the order provided.

Communication During Emergencies

- Parents will be contacted by email or phone as soon as it is safe to do so.

- Please ensure the office always has **current phone numbers and email addresses**.
- For larger community emergencies, MMS follows instructions from **local authorities** and the **Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU)**.

School Closures & Severe Weather

- If **buses are cancelled**, the Principal will assess conditions and decide by **7:00 am** whether MMS will open.
- Families will be notified by **email** as soon as the decision is made. Please check your inbox early on storm days.
- If the school does remain open:
 - **Before Care is cancelled.**
 - **After Care may also be cancelled**, depending on conditions. Families will be informed in the morning if this is the case.
- If weather worsens during the day, parents may be asked to pick up children early.

Attendance & Absences

Attendance Expectations

- Consistent attendance is essential for your child's success in the Montessori environment.
- Arriving on time each day helps your child settle calmly into the classroom routine and avoids disruption to others.
- Families are asked to schedule appointments, vacations, and activities **outside of school hours whenever possible**.

Note on Ministry Requirements:

Under the **Ontario Education Act**, children of compulsory school age are required to attend school regularly. While Montessori philosophy encourages following the child's interests, this does not mean that absences are inconsequential. Regular attendance is both a **legal requirement** and an important part of your child's academic, social, and emotional success at MMS.

Reporting Absences

- If your child will be absent, please email roster@muskokamontessori.ca AND your classroom teacher before 8:30 am.
- Include:
 - Your child's name
 - Reason for the absence
 - Symptoms, if illness-related (so we can track communicable illnesses)

If the school has not been notified of your child's absence, staff will contact you to confirm your child's safety.

Illness-Related Absences

- Please follow the Return-to-School Guidelines in the Health & Safety section.
- Children must be well enough to participate in both classroom and outdoor activities before returning.

Extended Absences & Vacations

- Families planning absences longer than three days should notify the Principal in advance.
- Missed work is not assigned in advance, but children are encouraged to share learning experiences from their time away when they return.
- Extended absences during the school year may affect a child's progress, as Montessori learning is cumulative and hands-on.
- If a child is missing school on a significant or recurring basis (typically more than 10% of the school year, or 15 days), or is consistently late, the school may request a meeting with parents to create a plan that supports both the child's learning and the classroom environment.
- Frequent absences and late arrivals are disruptive to the work cycle and impact the learning of other students as well as the child who is away.
- Medical reasons are exempt — absences related to illness or medical treatment will always be treated with understanding.

Early Pick-Up & Late Arrival

- If your child must leave early, please notify the teacher or office in advance. Parents must sign children out at the office.
- If arriving late, please enter quietly so as not to disturb the class. Teachers will assist your child in transitioning into the work cycle.
- **Frequent late arrivals are disruptive** — they interrupt the classroom's work cycle, distract other students, and make it harder for the late-arriving child to settle into their learning. Families are asked to prioritize punctuality as a way of supporting both their child's success and the classroom community.

Technology & Personal Belongings

Personal Items from Home

- To maintain focus on learning, children should not bring toys, trading cards, or personal items to school unless requested by a teacher for a specific purpose (e.g., show & tell, classroom project).
- Comfort items (such as a small stuffed animal or blanket) may be allowed for younger children, at the teacher's discretion.
- The school is not responsible for lost or damaged personal belongings brought from home.

Technology at School

- Casa and Elementary students should not bring personal electronic devices (phones, tablets, smartwatches, etc.) to school.
- Erdkinder students may be permitted to use laptops or tablets for school work, at the discretion of their teachers. Devices are for academic purposes only and must be used responsibly.
- Personal devices may not be used for games, social media, or non-academic activities during school hours.
- Cell phones, if brought, must remain off and stored during the school day.

Food & Treats from Home

- Children should not bring candy, gum, or junk food to school.
- Food sharing is not permitted due to allergy risks.
- Birthdays and classroom celebrations will be marked in meaningful ways at school. Please do not send in treats or food items — any food shared will be provided by the school.
- Exceptions: For special school-organized events (e.g., potlucks in older classes, the Project Fair, Holiday Assembly), families may be invited to contribute food. In these cases, clear guidelines will be sent home, and families will be asked to **clearly label items that are gluten-free, dairy-free, and confirm all items are nut-free.**

Lost & Found

- To reduce lost items, please **label all clothing and belongings** clearly.
- The Lost & Found is located in the bench in the front hall. Items not claimed by the end of each term will be donated.

Field Trips & Transportation

Purpose of Field Trips

Field trips are an important part of the Montessori program. They provide students with opportunities to:

- Extend their classroom learning into the wider world.
- Experience hands-on connections to history, culture, nature, and community.
- Develop independence, responsibility, and social skills.

Permission & Communication

- At the beginning of each school year, parents complete a **blanket permission form** covering all regular field trips.
- Additional waivers or permission forms will only be required for specific activities that involve higher risk or outside facility requirements (e.g., climbing gym, canoeing).
- Families are responsible for any trip fees, which will be communicated ahead of time.
- Parents will always be notified in advance of upcoming trips with key details (date, destination, time, transportation).

Transportation

- Transportation may be by school bus, charter bus, or parent volunteer drivers.
- Volunteer drivers must provide:

- Proof of a valid driver's license
- Proof of current auto insurance
- A completed MMS volunteer driver form (if applicable)
- Students will always use seatbelts when available. Booster seats may be required depending on age/size.

Parent Volunteers on Trips

- Parents are welcome to accompany classes as volunteers, when spaces are available.
- Volunteer chaperones support teachers in supervising students, ensuring safety, and modeling respectful behaviour.
- To maintain focus on the students, siblings are not permitted on class field trips.

Overnight Trips (Upper Elementary & Erdkinder)

- Older students may participate in **overnight excursions** as part of their program (e.g., camping, cultural trips, Odyssey experiences).
- Parents will receive detailed itineraries, packing lists, and any additional permission forms well in advance.
- Attendance at parent information sessions may be required prior to overnight trips.

Extracurriculars & After-School Activities

At this time, MMS does not offer formal after-school extracurricular clubs. We occasionally run clubs for a limited time during recess. Families who are interested in helping to organize one, either afterschool, or during recess, with staff support, are invited to contact the Principal.

Parent Code of Conduct

At Muskoka Montessori School, we believe that children thrive when families and educators work together in a spirit of respect and cooperation. Parents are essential partners in creating a safe, nurturing, and positive learning environment for all students.

Partnership & Respect

- Families and staff are expected to communicate with mutual respect and courtesy.
- Concerns should be addressed directly and constructively, beginning with your child's teacher. If further support is needed, the Principal is available to meet and help resolve issues.
- Staff, parents, and children are all role models of respect and kindness within our community.

Support for the Montessori Environment

- Parents are asked to support the values of independence, responsibility, and respect that are central to Montessori education.
- This includes encouraging regular attendance, punctuality, and readiness for learning.
- At home, families are encouraged to reinforce the independence and responsibility children practice at school.

Positive Communication

- Differences of opinion or misunderstandings may occur. These should be approached calmly and respectfully, always keeping the child's best interests in mind.
- Gossip, negative talk about staff, or public criticism (including online or on social media) undermines the school community and will not be tolerated.
- Parents are encouraged to model positive communication for children by raising concerns privately with staff through appropriate channels.

Commitment to Safety & Inclusion

- Families are expected to support school policies designed to ensure safety, health, and inclusivity for all students.
- Respect for differences — including cultural, religious, dietary, and learning differences — is a cornerstone of our community.

Breach of Code

If a parent's behaviour is consistently disrespectful or harmful to the school community, the Principal may request a meeting to discuss concerns and next steps. In rare cases where issues cannot be resolved, continued enrolment at MMS may be reconsidered in the best interest of the child and school community.

Curriculum & Montessori Program

Montessori Philosophy

At Muskoka Montessori School, we follow the educational approach developed by Dr. Maria Montessori more than a century ago. Montessori education is based on the belief that children are naturally curious, capable learners who thrive when given the freedom to explore within a carefully prepared environment.

Key principles of the Montessori approach include:

- **Independence:** Children are encouraged to do things for themselves and take increasing responsibility for their learning.
- **Prepared Environment:** Classrooms are designed with hands-on materials and purposeful activities that support exploration and mastery.
- **Mixed-Age Communities:** Students learn with and from one another, building leadership, empathy, and collaboration skills.
- **Respect for the Child:** Each child is recognized as a unique individual with their own interests, pace, and potential.
- **Intrinsic Motivation:** Montessori classrooms foster joy in learning, not competition or external rewards.

Casa Program (Ages 3–6) — First Plane of Development

- Focus on developing independence, concentration, and coordination.
- In line with Dr. Montessori's first plane of development (0–6 years), children at this stage are naturally more self-focused and oriented toward their own growth.
- The majority of lessons are presented individually, allowing each child to progress at their own pace and according to their own interests.
- Children work with practical life materials, sensorial activities, early literacy, and foundational math concepts in a hands-on way that builds confidence and self-mastery.
- While some small group activities occur, social interaction is secondary to the child's individual work at this stage.

- Daily outdoor play and exploration foster physical development and a growing connection to nature.
- Children remain with the same teacher for multiple years, building deep trust and consistency.

Elementary Program (Grades 1–6) — Second Plane of Development

- As children enter the second plane of development (6–12 years), they shift toward a social, collaborative stage of learning.
- Cognitive focus moves to reasoning, imagination, and moral development — children are eager to ask, “Why?” and “Is it fair?”
- Core features:
 - Great Lessons ignite cosmic education across history, biology, geography, language, and math.
 - Small-group lessons paired with extended independent follow-up and collaborative projects.
 - Work plans develop executive function, time management, and accountability.
- Students practice research skills, participate in field work or “going out” experiences, and take on community responsibilities such as class jobs and service.
- Integrated arts, outdoor education, and movement support the development of the whole child.

Erdkinder Program (Grades 7–8) — Third Plane of Development

- Adolescents enter the third plane of development (12–18 years), where they seek identity, belonging, real work, and authentic contribution.
- The program integrates rigorous academics with meaningful enterprise and community connection:
 - Culinary projects, outdoor/environmental work, and community partnerships.

- Micro-economy and entrepreneurial experiences that connect effort with outcome.
- Learning shifts toward seminars, labs, apprenticeships, leadership opportunities, and public presentations.
- Odyssey and overnight trips deepen independence, judgment, and teamwork.
- Students are supported through advisory, goal setting, and reflective practice as they prepare for high school.

Specialist Subjects & Enrichment

In addition to core classroom studies, MMS students benefit from specialist instruction and enrichment in areas such as:

- French
- Music
- Visual Arts
-
- Physical Education
- Outdoor & Environmental Education

These subjects enrich the Montessori curriculum and give children opportunities to develop diverse skills and interests. Families can find more detailed program descriptions on our school website: muskokamontessori.ca.

- While some small group activities occur, social interaction is secondary to the child's individual work at this stage.
- Daily outdoor play and exploration foster physical development and a growing connection to nature.
- Children remain with the same teacher for multiple years, building deep trust and consistency.

Assessment & Reporting

In Montessori education, assessment is ongoing and individualized. Teachers carefully observe each child's progress, offering new lessons when a child is ready and supporting areas that need reinforcement. Assessment is not based primarily on grades or tests, but on mastery of concepts, independence, and engagement in learning.

Observation & Record-Keeping

- Teachers maintain detailed records of lessons presented, skills practiced, and areas of growth for each child.
- Daily observation allows teachers to assess not only academic progress, but also social, emotional, and physical development.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

- Formal conferences are held twice per year (fall and spring).
- These meetings provide an in-depth discussion of your child's progress, strengths, and goals.
- Parents are encouraged to prepare questions and share observations from home.

Written Reports

- Families receive a written report twice per year, provided a few days before each parent-teacher conference.
- Reports summarize each child's academic, social, and emotional growth and serve as a foundation for the upcoming conference discussion.
- Reports reflect the Montessori approach: rather than traditional grades (except in Erdkinder), they focus on skills mastered, areas of exploration, and next steps.

Standardized Testing

- MMS administers standardized tests each October, beginning in Upper Elementary (Grade 4) and continuing through Erdkinder (Grades 7–8).
- These assessments are used as one tool to identify areas for improvement and to give students practice with standardized formats they will encounter after Montessori.
- The tests are never taught to and are not presented as stressful or competitive experiences. Instead, they are viewed as opportunities for growth and familiarity.

Grading in Erdkinder

- Beginning in Erdkinder (Grades 7–8), students receive grades and rubrics as part of their assessment.
- This approach is consistent with our mission to prepare students for the real world. By practicing with grades, rubrics, and feedback, students are better equipped to transition confidently to high school.

Ongoing Communication

- Teachers may reach out at other times if important issues arise, and parents are encouraged to do the same.
- Brief conversations at drop-off and pick-up are welcome, though longer discussions should be arranged by appointment.

Parent Observations

- Parents are invited to observe their child's classroom at least once per year (January/February sign-ups).
- Observations give families insight into their child's work habits, independence, and role in the community.

Transition to High School

Families often ask how students transition from Montessori to a traditional high school environment. Our experience, and that of many Montessori schools worldwide, shows that Montessori graduates are exceptionally well-prepared for the next stage of their education.

Academic Readiness

- By the end of Erdkinder, students have a strong foundation in core subjects, along with experience in research, project-based learning, and presentations.
- The introduction of standardized testing (beginning in Grade 4) and graded rubrics in Erdkinder ensures that students are familiar with the expectations they will encounter in high school.
- Graduates leave MMS with the skills to adapt to different teaching styles, assessment methods, and academic demands.

Personal & Social Skills

- Montessori students are confident, independent learners who know how to manage their time and take responsibility for their work.
- The collaborative nature of Elementary and Erdkinder fosters teamwork, leadership, and conflict resolution skills.
- Through real-world projects, outdoor education, and community involvement, students learn resilience, adaptability, and initiative.

Successful Transitions

- MMS graduates have gone on to succeed in public, Catholic, private, and alternative high schools.
- Families and alumni often share that the transition is smoother than expected because of the independence, self-motivation, and problem-solving skills fostered in Montessori.

Closing & Contact Information

At Muskoka Montessori School, we are proud to partner with families in creating a supportive, engaging, and respectful learning environment for every child. This handbook is designed to guide you through our policies and daily practices, while also sharing the philosophy that makes Montessori education unique.

We recognize that each child's journey is individual, and we value open communication with parents as we work together to support growth and development. Please do not hesitate to reach out if you have questions, concerns, or ideas.

School Contact Information

Muskoka Montessori School

258 Chub Lake Road
Huntsville, ON P1H 1A4



Phone: 705-789-9141



Email: info@muskokamontessori.ca



Website: muskokamontessori.ca

Principal Contact

For questions regarding admissions, policies, or school-wide matters:

Principal: Jackie Farley



principal@muskokamontessori.ca

General Communication

- Absences: Please email roster@muskokamontessori.ca before 8:30 am.
- Tuition & Finance: Contact the school office.
- Classroom Matters: Please reach out to your child's teacher directly.