



CORNERSTONE ■ MONTESSORI
CHRISTIAN ■ ACADEMY

Cornerstone Montessori Christian Academy

Handbook for Families

2020-2021

Shannon Nuckols, Executive Director

Welcome

The vision of Cornerstone Montessori Christian Academy is to nurture the whole child through the use of the Montessori Method and The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd Program. The Montessori Method is a 100 year, researched based, hands on learning model based on the research and work of Dr. Maria Montessori. Through her work, the trained Montessorian has been taught how to develop and guide the child's social, emotional, physical, spiritual, and psychological well-being. The environments created are designed for self-discovery, hands on learning, and exploration. This exploration is done with research based Montessori materials that the trained guide presents to the child in order to learn different subjects. Through this hands on approach to learning, children learn concretely and deeply. Children also experience deep satisfaction in their work.

Through The Catechesis of the Good Shepherd program, children are offered hands on experiences which help to develop an authentic, faithful relationship to God. The Catechesis is grounded in scriptural and liturgical study framed by Montessori's principles of education. This Method of catechesis began in Rome, Italy in 1954 with Sofia Cavelletti, a biblical scholar, and her colleague, Gianna Gobbi, a Montessori trained educator. In their observation and engagement with children, they sought to discover what face of God children most needed to see in order to grow in their knowledge and love of God. Children need the sensitive guidance of the adult and the inner guidance of the Holy Spirit to nurture this relationship.

Furthermore, Proverbs 22:6 says to "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it." The definition of train is, "To teach a person a particular skill or type of behavior through practice and instruction over a period of time." Through these programs, the child will be trained to become a life-long learner and one who loves and honors God.

Sincerely,

Shannon Nuckols

What You Need To Know Before Your First Day

Program Hours

7:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m., Monday through Friday.

Orientation

New families participate in an orientation meeting or conference with the director. Contact Shannon Nuckols for an orientation meeting.

What to Wear

Your child should dress for an active day. I suggest comfortable, washable play clothes. Sneakers and socks are best for active play.

What to Bring

Cornerstone Montessori Christian Academy provides all meals, snacks, school supplies, blankets, sheets, and pillows for the children.

Your child needs a complete change of clothes to be kept at school. (shirt, shorts/pant/skirt, socks, underwear) Be sure to write your child's name in each piece of clothing. Your child will also need to keep a pair of indoor shoes at school. All of these items will be kept in your child's cubby.

Your child will also need a jacket/coat, gloves/mittens, and hat to wear for outdoor play during cold weather.

Arrival and Departure

Children may arrive no earlier than 7:00 a.m. Pick up is to be no later than 5:00 p.m. It is important that your child arrives each day no later than 8:30 a.m. and leaves no later than 3:00 p.m. to receive their lessons and the full benefit of the program. Please park your car in the driveway. Walk with your child into their classroom. Be sure to sign your child in each morning and sign out in the afternoon.

Release of Children

No child will be released to persons not authorized by a parent or guardian.

Attendance Policy

Children are expected to attend every day. Children are expected to be picked up promptly at 5:00 p.m. A **late fee of \$15 per child** will be charged after 5:00 p.m. Two things happen when you are late picking up your child. First, your child becomes anxious about why you are late. Second, staff (who have responsibilities after children depart and have lives outside of the school) may be late for their afternoon or evening commitments.

Illness

Children who are ill will not be admitted to the center.

Meals and Snacks

Cornerstone Montessori Christian Academy provides breakfast, morning snack, lunch, and an afternoon snack for all of the children. A weekly menu will be posted on the parent information board. Please do not bring outside food into the school.

Behavior Guidance

Our school uses a variety of positive guidance techniques to help children learn appropriate behaviors and develop self-control. Physical punishment and threats are not used.

Toys from Home

Children are encouraged to leave their toys at home.

Field Trips

We will take a variety of field trips throughout the year. Parents must sign a field trip permission form for each trip.

Frequently Asked Questions

What if my child is sick?

If your child is ill, please keep your child at home. Be sure to call to let us know why he/she will be absent. If your child becomes ill during the day, we will call you.

Do you teach the children anything?

Young children learn in unique ways, so our learning activities may not look like "school." The Montessori Method is used to teach children to increase their thinking and creativity skill. Children's experiences will strengthen their literacy skills and encourage them to investigate the world around them. In other words, we're teaching early reading, math, science, social studies, health, music, art, and much more.

Can my child bring a toy or DVD?

We do not watch TV or DVDs- there are so many interesting things in the world to explore and learn! We prefer that children leave their toys at home.

What if there's a tornado?

Your child's safety is our first concern. We practice emergency drills every month. Emergency drill procedures are posted in each classroom.

Health

For the good of all children, please keep your child at home if he/she is ill. If symptom appear during the day, I will call you to pick up your child immediately.

State health regulations require that children with the following symptoms be excluded from child care.

- Fever over 101 (taken orally)
- Diarrhea (3 or more watery stools in a 24 hour period)
- Vomiting (2 or more occasions within the past 24 hours)
- Rash that is not obviously associated with heat, or allergic reactions to medications.
- Sore throat if associated with fever or swollen glands in the neck.
- Sever coughing leading to gagging, vomiting or difficulty breathing
- Pink eye
- Untreated scabies, head lice or the presence of nits
- Multiple sores in the mouth with drooling
- Ring worm
- Impetigo

Immunizations

Every child in care must be fully immunized. A photocopy of the child's current immunization record is required at the time of enrollment. Please remember to provide a new copy if your child receives additional immunizations during the school year. Failure to comply with this requirement will result in termination of your child's enrollment.

Injuries

Minor Injuries will be treated with appropriate first aid and you will be informed about them on an accident report. Accident reports are placed in your child's folder for parents to pick up.

I will call you immediately if your child sustains a more serious injury. In cases that are potentially life threatening I will call an ambulance to transport your child to a medical facility and will direct you to meet the ambulance. All costs for the ambulance and medical fees are the responsibility of the child's family.

Nutrition

Our program serves two meals and two snacks per day. Menus are posted in the front entrance. There is no charge for these meals and snacks. Participation in the meal program is a requirement. The nutrition program follows requirements of the US Department of Agriculture, is homemade, and delicious. Please do not bring outside food, snacks, or drinks.

Food Allergies

Please notify me if your child has food allergies. You will need to bring a statement from your child's doctor confirming the food allergy and including any special instructions or emergency procedures. Menu items with equivalent nutritional value will be substituted for allergy-causing foods.

Rest

Children are offered an opportunity to rest after lunch. Each child will have their own cot labeled with their name. They will also be provided a sheet, blanket, and pillow. The sheet, blanket, and pillowcase will be washed daily at the family home. Children are not required to go to sleep. Non-sleepers may rest quietly with a book, while lying on their cots.

Outdoor Play

Outdoor play is not just recess but is an extension of our indoor learning opportunities.

All children will play outdoors every day, weather permitting. The length of outdoor play time is adjusted according to the weather. Factors such as humidity and wind are considered in determining whether children will be able to play outdoors and how long they will stay out.

- If children are healthy enough to be at school, they are healthy enough to go outdoors.
- **Please dress your child for the weather**, especially cool mornings in fall and spring.
- **Sneakers** with socks, or other similar shoes, are best for running and enjoying the outdoors.
- At enrollment parents sign a consent form for **sunscreen** to be used as needed.

Safety and Emergencies

Transportation

If your child is 6 years old or younger or weighs less than 60 pounds, your child is required to travel in a child passenger safety seat. For field trips, you will need to install your child's car seat into my car before you leave for the day. A checklist will be used to verify that I have made a visual identification of your child to ensure your child's safety. Activities on car safety will be part of the classroom curriculum.

Release of Children

No child will be released to persons not authorized by a parent or guardian. I must have written authorization of changes in transportation. If I have any doubt that the person picking up your child has not been authorized by a parent or guardian, I will not release the child until I contact you.

Emergency Procedures

Evacuation procedures for fire and other emergencies are practiced monthly. Severe weather drills are also conducted every month. When severe weather is in the area, I will monitor weather reports and be prepared to quickly move the children to safety. Emergency procedures are posted in the classroom.

Weather-related

I will remain open in the event of snow.

Abuse Reporting

I am required by state law to report suspected child abuse/maltreatment. This includes non-accidental injuries, such as welts, bruises, cuts, burns, scratches, and broken bones. Suspected sexual abuse, emotional abuse, and neglect are also reported. Child neglect is defined as abandonment, lack of food, utilities, shelter, or lack of supervision.

I am trained to recognize indicators of possible abuse. If I fail to report suspected abuse/maltreatment, I can be charged with a Class C misdemeanor. Reports are confidential and are considered allegations until an investigation is completed. The phone number for the Child Abuse Hotline is posted on the parent board near the sign-in sheet.

Interviews by DHS and Other Agencies

I or children in attendance may be interviewed by Child Care Licensing, by the Division and Family Services, and/or by law enforcement officers for the purpose of investigations or to determine compliance with licensing requirements. Child interviews do not require parental notice or consent.

Children's Needs

Clothing

Children in this program are active and creative. So that your child can fully participate in all the activities, please follow these guidelines when dressing your child for school.

- Children can **easily manage clothing for toileting**: fasten and unfasten buttons, zippers, snaps, and buckles.
- Clothing is washable and durable enough to permit vigorous play.
- Clothing is **inexpensive** so that soiling, damage, or loss will not cause great concern.
- **Shoes** are sturdy and protect the child's feet. Sneakers (with socks) are the best choice. Flip flops, sandals, and open toed shoes can be hazardous.
- Clothing is **appropriate to the weather conditions**. Children will spend time outdoors every day. Be sure to send jackets, sweaters, coats, gloves, hats as needed.
- All clothing is **labeled** with the child's name. The program is not responsible for lost clothing items.

Change of clothes at School

Every child must have a complete change of clothes at school (socks, underwear shirt, and shorts/pants/skirt). Please check periodically to see if your child's change of clothes need replacing. If a change of clothing becomes necessary during the day, the soiled clothing will be placed in a bag with your child's name on it.

Cubbies

Children are provided with a cubbies as a means of keeping their belongings together. Please check your child's cubby each day for notes, art projects, and other items that need to go home.

Toys

We have many materials for the children to explore. Please leave your child's toys at home. It is often difficult to share a toy with a group and the toy may get broken.

Birthdays

Your child's birthday is a special occasion to share with their school friends. If you would like to provide a simple snack for the group, please plan the date in advance with me. We want the children to be healthy, so please avoid high sugar/salt/fat item (cupcakes, cookies, gingerbread men). Party napkins and plates can make graham crackers and apple juice seem quite festive!

Behavior Guidance

Our goal is to help children learn acceptable behavior and develop self-control. Our program is designed to promote positive and enjoyable learning experiences and to build trusting, respectful relationships. A well-planned schedule, classroom arrangement, and curriculum, along with a trained Montessori guide, significantly reduces instances of inappropriate behavior. However, when children do make mistakes in behavior, I will use the following guidance techniques.

- Tell the child what he/she Can do
- Give choices whenever possible, but only when the child really has a choice
- Support children in learning to solve their own problems and work out conflicts
- Re-direct a child to another activity
- Help children learn how to play with friends

Physical punishment and threats are never used.

Limits of Behavior

You may not hurt others.

You may not hurt yourself.

You may not hurt toys, materials, or equipment

Pattern of Inappropriate Behavior

When a pattern of inappropriate behavior emerges, parents are required to meet with me. The goal will be to work together to find a solution to the problem behavior and resolve the difficulty.

Family Partnership

Confidentiality

All information about children and families is considered confidential. I will maintain the confidentiality of each family and of each child's educational records.

Communication

I use a number of methods to communicate between our school and your family.

- Read posted weekly lesson plans and daily schedules.
- Read special event notices posted near the sign in sheet.
- Read the information of the parent bulletin board
- Enjoy the photos, children's work, and other documentation of your child's activities. These are posted in your child's classroom.
- Check your child's folder for notices.
- Participate in the parent/teacher conference
- Visit us! You are welcome to drop by any time.

Daily Arrival and Departure

A parent or authorized adult must accompany children into and out of the school at all times, and must sign children in and out. Arrival and departure are very busy; for safety, please hold your child's hand in the parking lot.

Drop-off and pick-up times are opportunities to exchange information. As I am greeting children, parents often have lots of information to share. Please help me do a good job-if it's important for me to know, write it down and hand it to me.

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Conferences are scheduled once a year at a time that you will be able to attend. I look forward to these special opportunities to talk about your child's progress. Either you or I may wish to request additional conferences as needed.

Meetings and Special Events

Family events will be planned throughout the year. We encourage your family to participate in these special activities. Notice of these events will be in the newsletter and posted on the parent bulletin board.

Photographs and Video

I will use a digital camera and digital video to record children's activities. Documentation of children's activities is used for families to see what their children are doing and also for children to recall what they have been doing. You will see photographs at the school. Video may be used occasionally during meetings or special events.

Photographs and video may also be submitted to the Benton Courier to inform the community about our program. During the enrollment process, parents will sign a release for their children to be included in photographs and video.

Family Library

The center has a small library of books on child development and parenting, Montessori Education, and Christian living. These are available to families to borrow and return.

Enrollment

Eligibility

Enrollment is for children 6 weeks – 6 years of age. The center is licensed for 16 children.

Enrollment

During the enrollment process, parents will attend an orientation session and will complete the necessary forms. There is a \$50.00 non-refundable enrollment fee.

Withdrawal

If your child will be withdrawing from the program before the end of the school year, please inform me as soon as possible. This allows me to help your child prepare for a new experience. Also, I can notify another family who may be waiting for a place in the program.

Tuition

Tuition is \$140.00 a week and is due every Monday. In order to hold your child's seat, tuition must be paid whether your child is in attendance or if they are absent. There are three weeks in the year when tuition will not be due and the children are out of school. This is for two weeks for Christmas and one week for Spring Break.

About the Director

Shannon Nuckols is a certified Arkansas teacher and holds an Early Childhood degree. She has worked in education for eighteen years in preschool, Christian Elementary School, Public, and Montessori schools. Shannon discovered her passion for Montessori by seeing her son's love of learning blossom when enrolled in a Montessori school. She later began her studies in Montessori training at the Montessori Institute of North Texas and received her Montessori diploma through the Association Montessori Internationale. She then went on to pursue her Master's degree in Montessori Integrative learning.

During her free time, Shannon enjoys reading God's word, participating in her local church, spending time with family, cooking, sewing, and gardening.

Shannon has a husband of 24 years, a daughter studying education at Harding University, and a High School age son who enjoys playing basketball with his school team.