GATEHOUSE MONTESSORI

PARENT HANDBOOK

WELCOME

The Head of School, Administration, and staff of Gatehouse Montessori School extend a warm welcome to new students, returning students and their families. Each family is encouraged to become an active member of our community. In taking on this role we encourage parents to interact with other parents, the children, the teachers and by attending coffee/tea mornings, school functions, fieldtrips or activities involving the Gatehouse Parent Committee. This group is made up of parents who are interested in being involved in activities and events taking place throughout the school year..

This Parent Handbook will be your guide to Gatehouse Montessori School, by answering questions you may have and assisting you in understanding how the school functions.

Please direct all inquiries to the Head of School.

Wiktoria Medwid

Head of School

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UNDERSTANDING MONTESSORI

The Montessori approach is based on the natural laws of human development. Maria Montessori observed that children under the age of six absorb limitlessly and effortlessly from the world around them and, in doing so, lay down foundations for later life. She identified certain windows of opportunity – she called them 'sensitive periods" – when the child is irresistibly drawn to the things, they need to help them develop. Everything in the classroom is designed to support these windows of opportunity. The Montessori Casa environment (preschool and kindergarten together) is called the Children's House because everything in it is designed to allow the child to become independent. The materials are child-sized, and the equipment, which is aesthetically pleasing and meticulously cared for, is laid out in an orderly fashion on low shelves that are easily accessible. It is for this reason that it is known as "the Children's House" or "Casa Di Bambini".

BENEFITS OF MIXED AGE

Children between the ages of three to six are grouped together. The younger children learn from watching the older children and the older ones benefit by role modeling and helping the younger ones. The mixed ages allow the children to develop socially, intellectually, and emotionally. This is an essential aspect of any Montessori school.

Understanding and recognizing each child's individual needs is the key to effective teaching. This is of great importance in the Montessori classroom where the child remains with the same teacher for three years. This relationship allows for the teacher to observe and to then assist each child in the best way possible. The longer the child remains with their teacher the greater the understanding of that child, which allows for more effective and long-lasting learning. When the child sees, hears and experiences three levels or more of a subject a greater interest in knowledge is created. The younger child is observing and listening to the older child doing the more advanced work. As well, basic concepts are reinforced while at the same time there is unlimited potential as to what the child can learn. Often when a student is exposed to an activity it is not the first time, they are seeing it. Most importantly, the leadership skills that the older child develops during their third year, truly showcases the benefits of a Montessori education.

Leadership is something that has to be earned. It comes with responsibility and requires the child to relate, motivate, explain, and to simply do what is right, all complex mental abilities. And this is done through their own interactions and experiences with their environment at school and beyond. This kind of interaction truly mirrors real life, and this is exactly what our goal is…to prepare the child for life on earth.

BUILDING CONCENTRATION AND CO-ORDINATION

The curriculum is designed to give the children the opportunity to practice everyday skills and to help them develop concentration and co-ordination of mind and body. The sensory materials make the most of the fact that children use their senses to learn.

Through practice and perfection of these materials the children learn to discriminate, order, and classify the physical properties of the world they live in. The child under six has a great capacity for mental absorption. The Montessori prepared environment allows the child to explore the didactic materials freely on their own initiative. This freedom has responsibilities attached to it, as grace and courtesy is an important skill in our environments. The teachers respond to the needs of the individual child, giving

lessons when appropriate. The child happily makes creative choices and repeats activities in order to reinforce their knowledge of the materials. This strengthens concentration and social skills so necessary in the classroom.

CURRICULUM

Activities in the Practical Life area of the classroom set the child up for success when taking care of their classroom, themselves and socially. Grace and Courtesy is discussed and encouraged at all times. Small and gross motor movements are strengthened through the use of activities in this area as well. The activities in the Sensorial area develop and enrich all five senses, which in turn heightens the child's experiences while at school, outdoors and at home. The materials for Math help the children develop an understanding of mathematical concepts in a concrete way. Activities designed to prepare the children for reading and writing are presented to the child from the start of their life in the classroom. Geography, history, biology, botany, zoology, art and music are covered through a hands-on approach based on the fact that children learn most effectively from their own personal and purposeful experiences.

BUILDING INDEPENDENCE

In a Montessori school, you will see children choosing activities independently and moving from one activity to the next, always returning their chosen activity to the shelf after use. There is an atmosphere of calm and responsibility as the child is observed concentrating for surprising periods of time. The children work individually, in a group or with a friend. Groups arise spontaneously rather than at a fixed time. Maria Montessori observed that this unfettered period of time was essential for the child to develop the kind of concentration you see when the child becomes totally involved with something that is essential for his or her development.

ROLE OF THE TEACHER

Observation of the child by the teacher is ongoing in a Montessori environment. The child is guided by a trained Montessori teacher who will present the child the activity that they are ready to use. When the child is practicing with an activity, the teacher will not interfere as long as the child is working with the materials productively. When a difficulty arises, she will note this and represent that activity to the child the next day, or step in and give help, while being careful never to give more help than is necessary. Often, another child will help, and this is the very response that Dr. Montessori wants to see. Children work at their own pace and naturally develop their own rhythm. Since everything that takes place in the classroom is preparation for a later activity, the child is able to move gradually through the activities, developing their skills. The directress or guide (as Maria Montessori called the teacher) is putting the child in charge of their own learning through exploration, another key part of the Montessori approach.

SELECTING A MONTESSORI SCHOOL

In a true Montessori school, like Gatehouse, you will find a pleasant, calm and well-organized environment where all of the materials and furniture are designed specifically to "fit" children 3-5 years of age. The classroom is divided into specific areas, where the child can work on the following skills: practical life, sensorial, mathematics, language, and cultural subjects. The child knows where to find the materials he/she needs as everything has a place, and there is a place for everything. The classroom is specifically designed to encourage the child to work and think independently. In a Montessori classroom, you will find children who enjoy working independently and who are "absorbed" in their learning. You will see children who have learnt how to explore and solve problems themselves and who work cooperatively with one another.

HISTORY OF OUR SCHOOL

Gatehouse Montessori School was established in 1979 by Jill Royall who was the proprietor of the school until 1988. In 1986, the school became the Gatehouse Montessori School Society, a nonprofit organization incorporated under the Societies' Act of British Columbia. It is also a registered charity.

For many years, the school operated out of Cypress Park School in lower Caulfield, which was leased from the West Van School District. In 1998, the School District reopened Cypress Park Elementary School, and we were forced to find a new location. Finding space for a school our size was not easy. Fortunately, the North Shore Jewish Community Centre, and Congregation Har El had been built, and had the space to accommodate us. As always, the school remains nondenominational.

THE BOARD

Our society is run by a volunteer Board of Directors made up of no more than ten individuals drawn from past and present parents, as well as the community at large. One parent/guardian of each registered student is considered a member of the Society, as long as they are a resident of British Columbia.

As members of the society, parents are encouraged to attend our Annual General Meeting, normally held during the fall at the school. At the AGM, the Board of Directors is officially elected, and the Society presents its financial statements for the prior fiscal year. This is an excellent opportunity for Gatehouse parents to learn more about how the school is operated and to have input.

GATEHOUSE PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

The Gatehouse Parents' Association, a group of interested and supportive parents, meets at the school immediately following drop- off. We encourage all parents to attend these meetings when we share ideas on parenting, the activities in the classrooms etc.

BELIEFS AND VALUES

At Gatehouse Montessori we have strong believe in the following values:

- Offering a safe, secure and nurturing community
- Encouraging a peaceful, courteous and socially aware person
- Building a strong sense of community for each person, with open honest communication
- Awakening the child's spirit and imagination
- Helping children develop self-confidence as independent self-motivated learners
- Helping children learn to observe, question, and explore ideas
- Offering a well-maintained Montessori environment

The children will be educated in a positive manner that is implemented as soon as possible after the behaviour that causes a concern. This will be done at a level appropriate to their actions and age with the goal of promoting self-discipline, positive health and safety actions, respect for others and the

maintenance or our classroom materials. We encourage and role model “conflict resolution” strategies which allows for the child to deal with challenging situations themselves.

Guidelines for behaviour are presented in a clear and simple way during the initial orientation as well as on an ongoing basis throughout the school year as needed. We strive to state the positive. It is important for the child to understand that although their actions were questionable, their value as a member of our community is not. When it is necessary, difficult situations will be shared and discussed with parents.

HOURS OF OPERATION

SCHOOL HOURS

Monday to Friday			
Preschool Children	8:30 a.m.	to	11:30 a.m.
Extended Day Children	8:30 a.m.	to	3:00 p.m.
Full-Day Kindergarten	8:30 a.m.	to	3:00 p.m.

OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Friday 8:00 a.m. to 3:00 p.m.
The school administrator is in the office each day. If she is unavailable when you call, please leave a message on the voicemail or send an email. Phone messages and emails will be replied to soon as possible.

Gatehouse Montessori School 1305 Taylor Way
West Vancouver, BC V7T 2Y7
Tel: 604-925-1437
Fax: 604-925-1487
Email: info@gatehousemontessori.com

FEES AND SCHOOL CHARGES

Please see our website, gatehousemontessori.com for our most current fee schedule.

Annual fee increase is at minimum 2% above the rate of inflation. This allows the school to continue to develop its programs and maintain competitive salaries and benefits. Please note that to reserve a spot for your child for the upcoming year, we required postdated cheques to be returned with your application.

Parents are reminded that no reduction will be made to tuition fees due to a child’s absence because of illness (colds, flu, etc.) or vacations taken during school time.

Parents are reminded that students are enrolled for the entire school year. In the event that the parents must withdraw a child from the school (due to illness as certified by two medical practitioners or the family moving from the North Shore), the Board of Directors must receive written notification as described in the Parent Contract. Parents should understand that vacancies are difficult to fill during the school year and that staffing levels are determined by expected enrolment numbers. Please review the Parent Contract regarding refunds or reimbursements of tuition.

ARRIVALS AND DEPARTURES

ARRIVAL AT SCHOOL

- Please bring your child directly into the school between 8:30 am and 9:00 am
- Please accompany your child to their cubby so that they can hang-up coats and change to their indoor shoes and then to the classroom where the teacher will greet him/her at the door.
- The teachers are busy each morning greeting the children. If you have something you want to discuss with the teacher, please hand her a note and you will be contacted that day.

DISMISSAL FROM SCHOOL

- Parents are to pick up their child at the classroom door after he/she has said good-bye to the teacher.
- If there are any changes to your usual pick-up arrangements, please inform the teachers by note when dropping off your child, or by calling or emailing the school.
- At the beginning of the school year, we will ask you to document those persons who have permission to pick up your child from school.
- Please be prompt when picking up your child. It is upsetting for many children when a parent is late for pick-up.
- **No child will be released to a person not previously approved by a parent.**

IT IS SUGGESTED THAT ADULTS REFRAIN FROM USING THEIR CELL PHONE DURING ARRIVAL AND PICK-UP TIMES.

SCHOOL CLOSING - INCLEMENT WEATHER/POWER OUTAGE

In the case of inclement weather or a power outage you will receive a phone call between 7:30-8:00 am by one of your child's teachers. For this reason, keeping the office informed when telephone and/or cell numbers or addresses change is really important.

ABSENCES

The school should be informed of the reason for absenteeism. Please let us know if your child is absent due to illness or if you are going on vacation etc.

DAILY ROUTINE

All greeting and dismissals take place by your child's teacher(s) at the classroom door.

8:30	**-**	**8:50**	Welcome by the teacher at the classroom door
8:30	**-**	**11:00**	Independent working time- Presentation of activities by the teacher to individual children or small groups Individual snack time (children are encouraged to select and often prepare their own provided by the school) French class is 30 minutes once per week
11:00	**-**	**11:30**	Outside play time (depending on weather) Clean-up/put away activities Circle time: songs, stories, cultural activities, Birthday celebrations etc.
11:30			Dismissal of pre-school children by the teacher at the classroom door
11:30	**-**	**12:15**	Lunchtime in the classroom
12:15	**-**	**12:50**	Outside playtime
12:50			Afternoon preschool children arrive from outside
1:00	**-**	**3:00**	Afternoon preschool, Kindergarten and Extended Day programs continue as above
		3:00	Children dismissed

EXTENDED DAY PROGRAM

Children who are 4 years old and ready to stay for a longer day can register in our Extended-Day program. After the regular pre- school session ends at 11:30, the children enjoy lunch time in the classroom, followed by a supervised playtime with their friends.

From 1:00 – 3:00 students participate in a program which continues building their foundation through the use of the Montessori materials. Our pre-school students who demonstrate an ability and interest in having a longer day should participate in this program. Parents can meet with the child's teacher to assess the suitability of their child's participation in this program.

Parents can choose the five-day or three-day (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) program.

KINDERGARTEN PROGRAM THE CRUCIAL THIRD YEAR

The importance of our full-day kindergarten program is immeasurable**.** During the first half of the day, the Kindergarten children join the 3 and 4-year-old preschoolers in the classroom. This is an ideal opportunity for the Kindergarten children to use their skills as 'leaders' in the classroom and to feel a sense of accomplishment when helping the new and younger students adapt. All the activities and experiences the Kindergarten children had during their Montessori preschool years come together and they are now the role models.

Along with activities that encourage socially aware and responsible people, the children spend their time in the classrooms working on activities such as:

Addition	Sentence building	Music
Subtraction	Journal writing	Additional French class
Multiplication	Fine arts	
Division	Science	
Sight words	Geography	
Phonograms	The natural world	

The kindergarten program at Gatehouse meets the BC kindergarten curriculum requirements, and in fact the Montessori program goes well beyond the Ministry's requirements.

Our goal is to help children become self-motivated, curious, enthusiastic learners. We offer a well-rounded program encompassing academics, fine and gross motor activities, French, music and fine arts.

Our program and materials have been carefully structured as a three-year program which coincides with the crucial development of children ages 3-6. Each individual year, although important in itself, is at the same time part of a whole. A child who is withdrawn from the Montessori program before the completion of the three-year cycle will be at a disadvantage in terms of meeting their potential. The child at the end of their second year may be writing and perhaps on the verge of reading.

When they continue working with the carefully developed Montessori materials in a familiar environment, these skills develop at an impressive rote. It is this continuity that children crave. The third-year child is ready for all of the more advanced materials in the math, language and cultural areas. This is a child in the position of leadership.

LIBRARY

The library at school is used for parent meetings and tours of the school.

As the teachers are upstairs in their lunch area from 11:35 – 12:30, just above the library, they would appreciate parents and children did not visit the area at the end of the morning session. Food and drinks should be consumed away from the library area. This sets a good example for the children.

Books can be read and looked at in the Library. It is a resource for classroom use and books from the library remain in the school.

GATEHOUSE GUIDELINES

At Gatehouse Montessori School, we follow the principles of Dr. Maria Montessori which emphasized the importance of recognizing each aspect of the child's life emotionally, socially, physically, and intellectually the whole child. Dr. Montessori observed that when the child is actively working with their hands, refining, and educating their senses, they develop concentration, self-awareness, and positive social interaction skills. She observed that as social beings, humans need to develop feelings of belonging to a community. The freedom of the children is limited only by the needs of the group and by safety concerns. In the classroom, we strive to develop guidelines that are minimal and clear. We demonstrate and emphasize "how to do" rather than "how not to do". At Gatehouse, and when appropriate, the child learns problem-solving skills. The teachers continue to present and develop lessons in Grace and Courtesy throughout the school year. Often, the input of the older children naturally occurs when the class is discussing issues that arise.
Parents should familiarize themselves with the guidelines at Gatehouse, as itemized in this Parent Handbook, and discuss these with their child. Should disciplinary difficulties arise, parents may then review them with their child. Some of the strategies we may intervene with include:

- Actively listening to the child
- Helping the child with problem solving through conflict resolution strategies
- Offering choices when appropriate
- Redirecting the child's attention to other activities
- Reviewing the limit or guideline
- Without endangering the health or safety of the child, allowing natural or logical consequences to occur
- Limiting the use of the activity in use.

If at any time a child is particularly aggressive, and we feel it necessary to protect the other children in the group, the following steps will be taken:

- Every attempt will be made by the teacher to assist the child in successfully overcoming the difficulty. If the difficulty continues:
- Parents will be informed, and a meeting will be arranged between the appropriate parties. If necessary:
- After meetings with parents and with the parents' permission, a professional from North Shore Health Services or an independent Psychologist will be asked to observe the child in an effort to assist staff with appropriate management strategies.
- If all possible efforts have been attempted, and staff feels the child's behaviour is sufficiently negatively impacting the other children and the program, a request will be made for the removal of the child from the program.

PARENT COMMUNICATION

The Head of School may be contacted at any time by email, phone or at drop-off or pick-up times. Please feel free to discuss any concerns you may have including:

- School guidelines
- Questions about fees
- Questions about hours drop-off/pick-up times
- Daily absences (a note is required for kindergarten students)
- Safety issues

Gatehouse has two parent/teacher conferences per year. If you need to discuss your child at any other time, please make an appointment with the teacher, which can be done by making a request in an email to the Head of School at info@gatehousemontessori.com. We feel strongly that it is inappropriate to confer with the teachers in the presence of the child (at drop-off or pick-up time). Please make an appointment for before or after school, when someone is able to watch your child.

HELPFUL INFORMATION TO SHARE

In the event that a significant event occurs in your child's life, please consider informing your child's teachers and/or the Head of School. Such conversations are strictly confidential. Examples may include:

- Moving
- A death in the family
- Separation of parents
- Sleeping/eating/bedwetting problems
- A new baby
- A new caregiver
- The death of a pet
- Parental absences

The teacher will keep you informed of any significant changes in the school environment, which may affect your child as well.

BULLETIN

Throughout the school year Bulletins will be emailed to each family keeping you informed of events at school. A paper copy of each Bulletin is available on the notice board at the front door.

- Please check the bulletin boards on a regular basis.
- Please check your school calendar regularly to keep abreast of school events and closures.
- Please check email regularly as school Bulletins and information are sent via email. When you have any address or email changes please inform the office right away.

STUDENT ASSESSMENT

Assessment is viewed as an ongoing natural part of everyday classroom management strategies. Maria Montessori called it "scientific pedagogy" which calls on the teacher to observe each child and prepare the best environmental conditions for each student's full development including determining if they are receiving needed guidance and support. The teachers are observing all aspects of the child's

advancement including academic skills, intellectual development, and emotional, spiritual and physical growth. Each student is seen as an individual.

Assessment tools that are implemented at Gatehouse include observation, Student Inquiry Form which is completed during intake, the Three Period Lesson, Control of Error, individual and small group lessons, self and peer assessment, completed work, student's individual Record Keeping (The teachers keep track of presentations given to each child noting the activities the child is working on, as well as those activities mastered), lesson planning, and Parent/Teacher conferences.

Gatehouse has developed a report card for kindergarten (third year) students. Parents will receive their child's report card in June.

CLASSROOM OBSERVATIONS

Parents will have an opportunity to observe in their child's class in November and May. In the week following the observation an interview with the teachers is set-up on a Friday when the school is closed for Parent/Teacher Conferences. Sign-up sheets will be posted outside classroom doors prior to the event. While in the classroom environment, we request that parents refrain from taking photos and videos.

COMMUNICABLE DISEASES

Provincial regulations specify that any child who comes to school with a communicable disease should be sent home immediately. A child should be kept home from school if there is any question of communicable illness. For the safety of the other children, and to comply with public health regulations, parents must report contagious diseases or serious illness to the school within 24 hours of a diagnosis so that a note can be posted to inform other parents. Children with suspected or known measles, mumps, rubella, or chickenpox must not attend school until non-infectious. Guidelines are available in the event of your child contracting any of these illnesses. When your child has a fever, it is expected that they will remain at home until they are free of the fever for 24 hours.

HEAD LICE

Parents are required to notify the school as soon as head lice have been detected so that the school community can be notified. Children with head lice will be asked to go home for a treatment. When no live eggs (nits) are on the hair, the child may return to school. Be sure that the head is checked upon their return. A second treatment 7 days after the first must take place. Parents are asked to check their child's head periodically, especially after travelling.

SAFETY

When a child receives minor injuries at school, an incident report is filled out and a copy is given to the parent.

- If it is a head injury, the parent is always contacted, even if the injury is deemed a minor one.
- If the school feels the injury is serious enough to have the child seen by a doctor, the parent is notified immediately.
- If the injury requires emergency treatment, 911 will be called and the parent is notified immediately.

It is important that you keep the school informed of any changes to your own contact information as well as emergency and alternate contact information.

ALLERGY AWARENESS

ALLERGY POLICY AND PROCEDURES

Gatehouse Montessori School will provide a healthy learning environment for the students and staff by working with families and community health care professionals to ensure as safe an environment as possible to minimize the risk of an allergic reaction.

INFORMATION AND AWARENESS

- Medical Alert Plan will be created following a consult with the staff, parents, and a Public Health Nurse
- Consent forms to administer epinephrine on file (as per ADMINISTERING MEDICATION section of this handbook)
- Identifying the anaphylactic child to all staff
- Personal allergy alert forms identifying the anaphylactic child put up in the affected classroom and in common areas
- Instructions on use of auto injector put up in the affected classroom and in common areas

TRAINING IN USE OF AUTO INECTOR PROVIDED FOR

- Teaching staff
- Non-teaching staff
- Substitute teachers

AVOIDANCE

- Lunchroom and eating area practices established
- Procedures for holidays and special celebrations established

EMERGENCY RESPONSE

- Emergency plan on file for each anaphylactic student
- Rapid communication strategy in place (call 911 and notify parents immediately)
- Auto-injectors stored in safe and accessible location
- Annual review process in place including replacing expired epinephrine pens

SAFE LUNCHROOM AND EATING AREA PRACTICES

- At-risk students are required to eat only food brought form their home
- An allergen aware non-isolated eating area is provided for the at-risk students
- Students are advised not to trade or share food, food utensils, and food containers
- Eating surfaces are thoroughly cleaned with a grease-cutting detergent and then dried

SECURITY

In order to monitor persons entering the school, the front door of the school is locked at all times other than at drop off and pick up. When the door is unlocked, it is supervised by a staff member.

As noted in the Arrivals and Departures section of the handbook, no child will be released to a person not previously approved by a parent. Any person picking up a child must be prepared to show identification if requested by a staff member.

Please note that you are on camera when entering and exiting the school.

GRADUAL ENTRY

Licensing requires that all children be toilet trained prior to entering our program

GRADUAL ENTRY
Starting preschool, or moving from one school to another, can be a stressful event for most children. At Gatehouse, we believe that a carefully planned gradual entry will assist you and your child to:

- feel comfortable at the school
- begin to build a trusting relationship with the staff
- experience a positive start at Gatehouse

GRADUAL ENTRY STEPS:

- Each child and their parents are invited to visit the classroom individually before the school year officially begins. This visit allows the child to meet their teacher, explore the classroom, and begin feeling comfortable in the new environment. The teacher will contact families to arrange a convenient time for this meeting.
- On the first official day of school, the child will attend for one hour to help ease the transition into the classroom routine.
- If the child adjusts well, the time will be gradually extended each day until they reach their regular scheduled hours.
- The gradual entry period typically lasts two to three days, though it may be extended if a child requires more time to settle comfortably. Our goal is to ensure each child experiences a smooth and positive start at Gatehouse Montessori.

CLASS PHOTOS

Class photos are taken in each year in the Spring Term and packages are available two or three weeks after that. Cost for the class and individual photos is included in the school fees.

CLOTHING

The school requires that all clothing should be free of violent images, as well as Disney, army and/or superhero logos, including t- shirts, dresses, coats, shoes, boots, hats, lunch boxes etc.

As the Montessori classroom stresses independence, it is important that all school clothing be for children to manage by themselves (undressing and dressing for trips to the bathroom). Your child should have a pair of non-skid indoor shoes to be left at school. Each child is also asked to bring a change of clothing. All clothing and footwear must be labeled with your child's name. Your child should have a change of underwear, socks, pants and a top. These items will be stored in individual boxes provided by the school.

TOYS

Toys should remain at home. Please assure your child that his/her toys are for home use and that at school he/she has activities to work with when they are at school.

SNACKS

Gatehouse offers nutritious snacks to the children. Fruits, vegetables, cheese, and crackers etc. The school also provides freshly filtered water. Healthy snacks are encouraged.

LUNCH

Third year and Extended Day children who bring their lunch are asked to bring it in a plain lunch container that is as environmentally friendly as possible i.e. reusable containers. Lunches should have a variety of food and the amounts should be suitable to your child's appetite.

BIRTHDAYS AND CULTURAL CELEBRATIONS

Birthdays and celebrations are a welcome event in the classroom. In the Montessori environment, we celebrate a child's birthday in a very special way. During group time, close to the end of the morning or afternoon session, the birthday child carries the globe around a large symbol of the sun. He/she walks around the sun one time for each year while the children sing a special song. A nice addition to this celebration is to include a photographic "timeline" of your child's life, for example one or two photos for each year of your child's life to share with his/her classmates and teachers. Please note that sweet snacks are not distributed in the school.

BIRTHDAY INVITATIONS

Children's feelings are very easily hurt if they see a child being given an invitation and they do not receive one. Please be very discrete if you are not inviting all the children in the class. Invitations can be placed in individual mail slots outside each classroom.

We request that all treats and gift bags be handed out to the children at Birthday parties. As we strive to be an allergy and nutrition aware school, candy is not permitted in school.

HALLOWEEN

We ask that the children not come to school dressed in Halloween costumes, including masks and face paint. The fantasy associated with Halloween is not appropriate for all children of this age. Young children may find it extremely disconcerting to see their classmates dressed in costumes and can become uncomfortable and confused. After Halloween, please do not include candy in your child's lunch. We tend to focus on safety and the life cycle of a pumpkin at Halloween!

EMERGENCY PLAN PROCEDURES

EARTHQUAKES

Should an earthquake occur while your child is at school, he or she will be looked after by staff members until such time as you, or a person designated by you, are able to come to the school.

Please do not telephone the school. Phone lines must be kept open for official use and emergency calls only. We have water, food, first aid kits, flashlights, radio and other equipment on location.

Each child has a Comfort Kit organized by their parent. These kits will be kept in the classroom along with our earthquake supplies. Having a small familiar toy and a snack will help your child cope more easily.

According to the North Shore Branch of the Provincial Emergency Program, a reception centre would not become effective until approximately 72 hours after the earthquake. It is therefore important that we remain at our school location with our equipment and supplies. We would go to a designated reception centre on the instruction of the Emergency Services. If this were to occur, we would leave instructions as to where we were.

FIRE
In the event of fire, children will always exit the building using the safest exit route and gather in the parking area. Earthquake and fire drills are practiced once a month.

DONATIONS AND FUNDRAISING

Gatehouse Montessori School operates financially on tuition fees, fundraising, and donations, as well as support from the BC government. The school is a registered charity/non-profit society and has a federal tax number enabling individuals to make donations to the school and receive a receipt for income tax purposes.

We have an annual fundraising event. There are a number of ways to participate. Specific information is sent out prior to the event.

We would like to acknowledge the financial support of the BC Government who provides funding to our school under these programs:

- The BC Ministry of Education, Independent Schools
- The BC Ministry of Community Aboriginal and Women's Services: Child Care Operating Funding Program
- BC Gaming Policy and Enforcement Branch: Direct Access Program Grant • BC Family Services Society

CONFIDENTIALITY POLICY

At Gatehouse Montessori, maintaining confidentiality is essential to preserving trust, safety, and respect within our community. This responsibility extends to all verbal, written, and electronic information concerning current, former, and prospective:

- Children and their families
- Board members, Employees, volunteers, and contractors

Expectations of Confidentiality

All staff, board members, and families share a responsibility to protect private information. No individual may disclose, share, or discuss personal, sensitive, or identifying information in a way that could harm, embarrass, or compromise the safety, reputation, or well-being of any member of the Gatehouse community or the Society itself. Confidentiality must be upheld at all times — both within the school and in any external setting, including social conversations and social media.

Scope and Legal Obligations

This policy applies to all communications, records, and interactions related to Gatehouse Montessori, regardless of format or location. Staff, volunteers, and board members must comply with all applicable laws and professional obligations, including:

- Reporting suspected child abuse or neglect as required by child protection laws.
- Disclosing information only when required by a lawful authority such as a court order, subpoena, or other legal process.

Families' Responsibilities

Families are expected to respect the privacy of all children, families, and staff. Information learned through participation in the Gatehouse community — whether through classrooms, school events, or social interactions — must remain confidential. Families must not share or discuss concerns, personal information, or sensitive matters about children, families, or staff with others in the community. If a parent has a concern, issue, or complaint, it should be brought directly to the Head of School rather than discussed with other families or community members. This approach ensures matters are handled respectfully, constructively, and in confidence. Sharing private information or discussing confidential matters outside appropriate channels can cause harm and will be treated as a serious breach of this policy, which may result in consequences including withdrawal from the program.

Discretion and Communication by the Head of School

The Head of School is responsible for maintaining confidentiality while ensuring appropriate communication and action when necessary. In certain cases, the Head of School may share information with relevant staff, board members, or external professionals strictly on a "need-to-know" basis — such as when required for child safety, compliance with legal obligations, or effective resolution of an issue. All such disclosures will be made with discretion, professionalism, and respect for the privacy of those involved.

Accountability and Guidance

A breach of confidentiality is considered a serious violation of the trust that underpins our community. Depending on the nature of the breach, consequences may include:

- For staff: disciplinary action up to and including termination of employment
- For board members: removal from the board
- For families: withdrawal of a child from the program

If there is any uncertainty about what may be shared, individuals are encouraged to seek clarification from the Head of School or Chair of the Board of Directors before disclosing information

CUSTODY AND CONTROL OF RECORDS

Custody and control of the children's records will belong solely to Gatehouse Montessori School Society unless contractual arrangements and/or legislation alter this policy.

CLIENT INFORMATION
The principle of 'need to know' will guide all service providers and board members in judging who will have access to information about children and their families and how much information about a child and/or their family will be shared.

No information will be released about a child and the enrolling parent/guardian without first receiving written permission of the enrolling parent/guardian. This excludes the responsibility service providers have as outlined in legislation (e.g., duty to report need for protection) as well as access to information that is subpoenaed by the court.

STORAGE OF CLIENT INFORMATION
All written information that is confidential will be properly kept in files and stored in the locked filing cabinet in the school office. Access to these files will be restricted only to those 'who need to know' such information.

PARENT CONDUCT AND COMMUNICATION POLICY

As a Montessori community, we value respect, patience, and understanding in all interactions. The relationships between parents, children, and staff form the foundation of a peaceful and supportive learning environment. To maintain this harmony, we ask all families to uphold the following principles when communicating with staff and within the school community:

- **Grace and Courtesy:** In keeping with Montessori values, we expect all interactions to reflect kindness, calmness, and respect. Children learn best when adults model the same grace and courtesy we teach in the classroom.
- **Respectful Communication:** We ask parents to speak to all staff members in a polite and considerate manner, whether in person, over the phone, or through email.
- **Constructive Collaboration:** We encourage open dialogue and value parental input. If concerns arise, please approach administrators privately and respectfully, so that we can work together to find a solution that supports your child's development.
- **Zero Tolerance for Aggressive Behavior:** Any form of aggression, intimidation, or disrespectful conduct — including yelling, swearing, or threats — is not acceptable and undermines the peaceful atmosphere we strive to maintain.
- **Professional Boundaries:** Staff are dedicated to supporting your child's learning within the school setting. We ask parents to respect these professional boundaries at all times.
- **Maintaining a Peaceful Community:** Repeated or severe breaches of conduct may lead to a meeting with administration, communication restrictions, or, in serious cases, termination of enrollment.

We deeply value our partnership with families and believe that by working together with mutual respect and understanding, we create the best environment for every child to grow, learn, and thrive.