



**ST. CROIX
MONTESSORI**

EDUCATION FOR LIFE.

SCHOOL HANDBOOK

Revised August, 2022

STCROIXMONTESSORI.COM

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ST. CROIX MONTESSORI SCHOOL HANDBOOK 2022-2023 (8.2.22)
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MISSION & HISTORY

Mission

St. Croix Montessori guides children to be independent learners, critical thinkers and engaged citizens.

Vision

St. Croix Montessori will provide a world-class education promoting the philosophy and teachings of Maria Montessori, preparing our children for a life of purpose, integrity and making a positive difference for the world they will inherit.

Values – The fundamental principles that guide us

Quality – We are committed to providing our children with a Montessori education of the highest quality.

Collaboration – We are committed to effective partnerships between staff, parents and board members.

Mutual Respect – We believe that all people should be treated politely with consideration and dignity.

Inclusivity – We nurture an environment that reflects the diversity of our community.

Integrity – We are honest and ethical in all our dealings.

Accountability – We are committed to measuring, achieving and reporting results.

Sustainability – We are committed to ensuring the long-term viability of Montessori education on St. Croix.

HISTORY:

St. Croix Montessori was founded by Montessori guides, assistants and parents who saw the value in Montessori education and envisioned a growing Montessori community on St. Croix, not limited to the 3 to 6-year-old child. Through several fundraising efforts and fueled by diligence and determination, the school opened the doors of St. Croix Montessori in 2006. Our beautiful campus is tucked away in Estate Orange Grove on nearly one and a half acres of lush Caribbean flora and fauna. Perched on a small hill with an ocean view, our school is secure and protected, and yet it is easily accessible for busy parents.

Our school is a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization run by a Board of Directors, which supports the Guides and staff in their efforts to engage our children in learning experiences designed to provide an education for life and the office manager, who deals with the logistics of running the school.

The prepared environment is an essential aspect of the Montessori program. Our spacious sunny classrooms are carefully prepared by the guides and assistants to allow for optimal learning experiences. This environment provides a sense of freedom of choice within limits. Guides present lessons and activities which form the framework from which the child chooses. The child learns in a natural way, developing the skills of concentration, persistence, independence and self-discipline.

SCHEDULE

SCHOOL HOURS

8:15 AM – 3:00 PM Monday through Friday on normal school days

ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICE HOURS

7:45 AM – 4:00PM

If you need to contact the school before or after office hours, you may leave a message on the office phone (340-718-2859) and your call will be returned during office hours. You may also email your message: info@stxmontessori.com.

ARRIVAL 7:45 AM- 8:00 AM

- In the morning, parents enter the main gate and drive up the left side of the driveway.
- A staff member will receive and escort children from the car to the class. Parents remain in their cars
- Parents continue around the driveway to allow the next parent to drop or pick up their child.
- Should parents arrive after 8:00 AM, they must check in at the office with the office manager. Please do not go directly to the classroom, as class will already be in process.

All students must arrive by 8:00 AM.

Young children need a dependable schedule; they need to know what to expect. The classroom is a collaborative community that has a definitive schedule. It is upsetting to a child if he/she is often “out-of-sync” with the rest of the class. Arriving on time is essential in order to preserve the **3-Hour Work Period** which is an essential component of a Montessori learning community.. **Please avoid unnecessary late arrival**, which can be frustrating for your child and disruptive to the class. The elementary morning meeting starts at 8:05 am.

If a Guide finds that a child’s frequent late arrivals have a negative impact on the flow of the class, she will request a meeting with the parent(s).

DEPARTURE 3:00 – 3:30 Monday – Friday

- Sign-out: Only adults approved by the child’s guardian as listed on the Emergency Medical form can sign out and pick up the child. We recognize that there may be the rare case when a parent may need to give permission to another person. In that case, the parents must call the office and send an email to the info@stxmontessori.com, requesting the addition of the person to the list.
- The sign out sheet is in the front office during the day and with the aftercare staff during after school pick up hours. Students will be escorted to the car.
- **Please keep to the left and drive around to pick up your child.**
- Please make sure your child knows pick up time and who will be doing the pick up. If there is a change of plans, please call the office and let the office manager know.

SAFETY & COURTESY

In order to ensure the safety of children and staff, as well as to keep ensure that drop off runs smoothly we ask the following

- Use caution when entering and exiting the driveway
- Do not allow children to cross in front of or between the line of cars without an adult
- Do not leave a child in the car unattended
- If you need to have a conversation with the Guide or Assistant, please park rather than hold up the line of traffic.
- Please refrain from having cell phone conversations while your child is being welcomed to school by the Assistant.

LATE PICK UP CHARGES

There is a thirty minute grace period. If a parent/ guardian has not picked up his/her child by 3:30 PM, the child will go to After Care. The fee for After School Care is \$10.00 per hour per child. Please call if there is an emergency.

ABSENCES and TARDIES

If your child is going to be absent from school, please call the school by 8:15 A.M. It is important for the child to be at school as consistently as possible, so we do not recommend taking the child out of the program for long periods of time, unless the child is ill. Extended or frequent absences are disruptive for your child's learning experience. Because learning in a Montessori classroom is hands-on, using materials specifically designed for Montessori instruction, packets of materials cannot be prepared for families to use should they choose to take a vacation outside the time designated for vacation. Please make every effort to plan your vacations during school breaks. If the teacher feels that the child's learning is being disrupted by frequent absences, she will request a conference.

EARLY DISMISSAL

Please inform the office in advance if you need to pick up your child prior to the scheduled dismissal time at 3:00 for example for a doctor's appointment. The teacher or assistant will send the child to the office at the appointed time. This will allow for a smooth transition for your child and the staff. Please do not go to your child's classroom.

RAIN DAYS/ STORM DAYS

Announcements about school closings will be made on Isle 95.1 FM, Sunny 99.5 FM and Paradise 93.5 FM.

AFTER SCHOOL CARE PROGRAM

The After-School Care Program is offered from 3:30 PM – 4:30 Please coordinate with the After School personnel or call the school in the morning to indicate that you will need after school care for your children.

After-School Care is provided by St. Croix Montessori staff. Children play outside, build with legos and are involved in art activities. The fee is \$10.00 per child per hour.

After-School Care payments will be made through FACTS.

HOLIDAYS

Holidays, when there will be no school, are listed on the school calendar which is posted on the website.

HELPFUL GUIDELINES

DRESS CODE

To assist your child in developing focus, please avoid distracting logos or designs. Please be aware of the age and developmental stage of your child when selecting clothing. There may be occasions when alternate clothing suggestions are made by the guide.

Your child should wear comfortable clothing that allows him/ her to be independent, which means that the child should be able to change out of the clothes if necessary.

Lace up shoes are appropriate for children 5 and older. Close toed shoes with a back are appropriate for safety reasons. Children remove their shoes while in the classroom, but wear simple slippers to protect their feet should they need to move quickly in an emergency or should glass be broken in the classroom. Slippers should completely enclose the foot.

Each Child must have a complete change of clothing. Soiled clothes will be sent home and need to be replaced the next day.

COVID masks - Each child should have at least two masks that fits properly. Masks should be labeled and cleaned daily

Primary parents are required to provide napping gear for their children. This includes a mat, pillow, and light covering. We ask that mats not be too thick as we have limited storage space. Don't hesitate to ask the Guide or Assistant for suggestions. Please wash your child's napping gear every week and return to school on Monday morning

Please **label all your child's belongings** to avoid confusion.

WHAT YOUR CHILD CAN BRING TO SCHOOL?

Children may not bring toys to school. Sports equipment, if appropriate, will be shared. Objects from nature can be shared at any time. Don't hesitate to ask your child's Guide if you are unsure.

SNACK AND LUNCH

In a Montessori school we look at the whole child. This is a time of tremendous physical and mental growth. For these reasons we ask that you send nutritious snacks and lunches that include fresh fruit and veggies!

If food needs to be kept cold, please include an ice pack. If food needs to be kept warm, please pack in a thermos.

Each child is required to bring a 16 oz water bottle filled with water. The school will replenish water throughout the day.

We encourage the children to bring their lunches in a labeled, standard size lunch box with eating utensils. Uneaten food will be sent home to help parents determine the appropriate amounts needed for their children.

SPECIAL CELEBRATIONS AND HOLIDAYS

Special celebrations and holidays from all cultures are shared. We aim to convey the spirit rather than the commercial aspect of these days. If you would like to provide a treat for your child's birthday, please chat with your child's teacher as each class has its way of honoring children's birthdays.

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAMS

DR. MARIA MONTESSORI (1870 -1952):

Dr. Maria Montessori, an engineer, physician, social anthropologist and educator, revolutionized childhood education more than one hundred years ago, with her belief that education should be one of active exploration through the observance of the child's developmental needs and stages. Her observations convinced her that each child contains within her the person s/he will become. Within a carefully prepared environment and under the guidance of an expertly trained adult the child can be guided to work in a way previously believed to be beyond her capacity. Children are attracted to beautiful materials designed to isolate difficulties and stimulate interest. Each child's potential is reached through a process of striving, aided by a growing sense of order and self-discipline. This way of working with children now flourishes in Montessori schools throughout the world and in more than 3,000 schools in the United States alone.

THE MONTESSORI METHOD OF EDUCATION:

The Montessori approach offers a vision of education as an aid to life. It is successful because its principles are based on the natural development of the child. The child is transformed from birth to adulthood through a series of developmental planes. Each level of human development has its own characteristics and the Montessori practice changes in scope and manner to embrace these characteristics and interests.

Primary Level (3-6 years old) – Period of the Absorbent Mind

The first plane of development occurs from birth to age six. Children at this age are sensorial explorers; they possess unusual sensitivity and mental powers for absorbing and learning from the environment. The child has a great need and potential for disciplined work as well as a natural desire to learn. To aid the child in this period the Montessori classroom provides a unique range of materials. Under the guidance of a trained Guide, the child chooses materials that encourage exploration and work at his/her own pace. The child's creative energy is freed and the child develops independence, self-discipline and the habit of work. The environment is divided into five different areas: Practical Life - Learning to care for oneself, for others and environment; Sensorial - Assisting the child in learning about the senses; Cultural – Learning about the world we live in; Language – Developing fine motor, writing and reading skills; Mathematics – Working with precise materials to help the child move from the concrete towards abstraction.

PRIMARY EDUCATION - ages 3 to 5

Description Although entrance into the primary class is based on readiness, most children usually are ready at 3 years of age. Therefore, children spend 3 to 4 years in the primary class, inclusive of the “kindergarten year.” The first year is an introduction to the new environment and social acclimation. A secure foundation of self-discipline, independent functioning, and self-confidence is formed. The second year is a consolidation of skills and knowledge and a growth in competence and self-assurance. The last year is one of unfolding and mastery. This is the time you see the development of reading, writing, and math computation come to fruition. These skills are the by-product of foundational characteristics, such as independence, self-motivation, and concentration that the child has internalized and will possess throughout his or her lifetime.

The Primary curriculum can be defined by six distinct areas of knowledge as listed below.

Practical Life: Activities concerning care of oneself, the environment, and others are cultivated. These exercises lay the groundwork for independence, help develop concentration, and further refine coordination. Many of these tasks, such as sweeping or buttoning, can be seen performed by adults during the child’s daily routine. Purposeful activities, with tools of the right size for small hands, allow the child to satisfactorily repeat a task until mastered.

Sensorial: Making sense of all impressions received through the five senses is the goal of this area. Exercises are designed to begin putting order in the world around the child through sorting, categorization, naming, and then application of concepts. Abstract mathematical qualities are introduced through the use of concrete materials.

Language- Learning in this area begins from the moment the children enter the class and does not end until they graduate at age 6 years old. Activities are first designed to expand a child’s receptive and expressive language, as well as, to further his/her exposure to a variety of linguistic opportunities. The experience of watching older children engaged in writing and reading activities intrigues younger children and entices them to join in these lessons, too. This makes learning to read and write a natural process of acquisition. Grammar, spelling, and sentence analysis work further develops the older child’s understanding of the written word.

Math: The foundation for math begins in the areas of Practical Life and Sensorial. To this base of knowledge is added counting, number relationships, the four operations, fractions, geometry, and algebraic concepts. Through manipulative materials, the children experience concepts in isolation, which prepares them for abstract reasoning and problem –solving.

Cultural Studies: Geography, the sciences, art, and music are all integrated seamlessly throughout the curriculum. As children’s understanding of the world begins to turn outward, activities are designed to help connect them with our global community.

Lessons about the natural world allow children to embrace our role as caretakers. While art and music activities give children the opportunity to see, hear, and create beauty for themselves. These experiences are greatly enhanced by our community sharing a variety of diverse cultures and interests

Grace and Courtesy: These lessons are designed to help children feel comfortable with others and refine their social graces. By providing the right words and time to practice, manners and personal skills are taught as any other lessons would be presented. Daily exposure to these activities promotes social and emotional intelligence in even the youngest child.

Schedule:

The **"3-Hour Work Period"** is vital to the success of Montessori education. It means that children have three hours to choose and carry out their own work. It does NOT include any required outside play, group story time, "circle time," music, or any other activities which take time away from the child's own choice of activity. During this time adults and children alike respect a child's concentration and do not interrupt one who is busy at a task. All of the traditional group activities spontaneously arise according to the interest of the child or a group of children during the day, or are occasionally called by the teacher if necessary.

Learning Support

Through observation and assessment the guide might suggest behavioral/ academic evaluation or support from outside services.

Assessment

In the Primary program, several tools are used for assessment. These include anecdotal records, observation, skills checklists, as well as informal and formal testing. These tools help the Guide monitor student progress through the years in all areas: social development, work habits, language development, mathematics, and cultural studies. Guides make use of a variety of tools for this purpose; some paper and pencil such as the Montessori Record Keeping Guide created by Montessori Masterclass, as well as the digital platform Transparent Classroom. Information is shared with the parents via conferences and progress reports, which are issued at the end of the second and third trimester.

Field Trips

Although Primary students do not generally go on field trips, there are exceptions. When a field trip is planned, either parents may drive their own children or the service of a taxi that allows for booster seats will be contracted. A note will go home giving parents the option of driving their own children or bringing in a booster seat that can be placed in the taxi.

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION ages 6 to 12

Elementary Level (6-12 years old)

The second plane of development occurs from age six to twelve. Children at this stage become more symbolic learners and have a strong interest in the world around them. The child's sense of order is less apparent in the physical environment but instead manifests itself in the child's growing intellect. The child thirsts for knowledge and the reason behind everything. He also has a passion for classifying everything. The trained adult is more active in the elementary classroom, acting as a link between the materials and the child and the pursuit of information and the child. Children at this stage love to work in groups on projects and also discuss the issues of the world. Academic growth develops alongside social and moral development. The curriculum includes: art, crafts, music, cooking, gardening, physical education, Spanish, geography, history, prehistory, earth history, physical science, botany, zoology, mathematics, geometry, language, and movement. In general subjects are integrated into the course of the school day.

“Education is not something the teacher does but is a natural process that develops spontaneously in the human spirit” ~Maria Montessori

The Elementary program consists of a six-year age span with two age groups: Lower elementary for six to nine-year-old children and upper elementary for nine to twelve-year-old children.

The child at the Elementary level gradually moves from the concrete experience of the Primary class towards abstraction. Upon completion of the three-year program in the Primary classroom, the child develops a natural tendency towards curiosity. Imagination fuels questions, which lead to exploration. The Elementary Guide is the bridge between the child and the materials. The curriculum delves into subjects such as Earth History, Zoology, Botany and Geography. Great lessons, which are stories designed to capture the imagination and generate questions, are taught each year. They lead the child toward studies of animals, rocks, volcanoes, stars, ancient civilizations and many other areas as the child considers the Earth and the interconnectedness of life. This is called Cosmic Education.

This approach to learning goes hand in hand with building and refining the basics of reading, writing and numbers. The very specific curriculum in language and math allows the child to develop the skills they need to engage successfully through in-depth studies that spark their interest.

Art, music and Physical activity are also integrated into the child's school experience. Practical life for the Elementary child is characterized as exercises for everyday living and include cooking, gardening, sewing, community projects and more.

As with the Primary child, the curriculum is based upon the developmental needs of the child. The Elementary child has become more social and it is quite common to see a few children engaged in conversation, studying together or solving a conflict. Experiences outside the classroom are common and respond to the child's need to

explore the larger world. Under normal circumstances, off campus field trips or visiting specialists are part of the program.

The Elementary program is rich and varied, designed to inspire your child with a desire to learn.

Going Out Program and Field Trips

Purposeful, informative field trips can greatly enhance your child's educational experience. The Guide will decide on the readiness of the class for such trips. Some of these "going out" excursions may involve only a few children and some may involve larger groups. Additional costs, outside of tuition, will undoubtedly occur for various things, such as transportation. Parents will be looked to for support of these programs. If a parent volunteers to assist, he or she must be willing to properly supervise small groups of children.

For whole class field trips the school will contact a taxi service. Although the parents sign a general field trip permission slip at the beginning of the year, allowing their children to participate in field trips, a note will be sent home a few days before each planned field trip to let parents know the details of the trip as well as if any specific clothing is required.

Core Subjects

It is worth noting that while the division of the world into these separate "subjects" is perhaps a convenient way to write about our work at school, it is not the way children experience it. As noted above, we emphasize the interconnectedness of the many things we study. As an example: a child's arithmetic problems often deal with real questions arising in his own study of, say, history of geography, rather than an unconnected problem drawn from a text.

Mathematics

Maria Montessori described the "mathematical mind" as a universal human attribute. The materials and methods of the Montessori classroom reinforce the child's tendency to count, compare, compute, and measure. The child begins in preschool a progression from concrete experience to abstraction. The concrete materials are appealing to children, ingeniously designed for revealing principles and concepts, and are made to be experienced and manipulated. Through both physical and mental activity with this material, the child acquires a profound basis for mathematics.

During the elementary years, a sequence of lessons brings the child naturally and gradually to the point of understanding abstract mathematical operations. The structure of the decimal system, the operations of addition, subtraction, multiplication, and division, and other key concepts follow this same pattern. Once they have a firm understanding of the concepts, children move toward memorization, keeping track of their own progress and work both in teams and individually. By using the Montessori math material, children are introduced to many concepts traditionally taught much later, including, for example, fractions, squared and cubed numbers, multiples, and factors.

The Montessori geometry materials offer children an open-ended field of exploration. These materials and the lessons which accompany them permit children to discover important principles and relationships. When, later in their education, they learn the formal rules of geometry, it's like meeting old friends again. A student may learn nomenclature for the types and parts of polygons, circles, angles, and lines. New knowledge is always applied to the environment (e.g., finding right triangles in the floor, walls, and furniture) and often extends to the creation of a piece of handwork as well. With the principles of geometric equivalence, the child acquires a key which unlocks a whole field of creative work and which prepares him for the study of area.

Language

The child in preschool loves words and is busy absorbing language. Enriched vocabulary, poetry and prose-reading, and word play are all part of the environment. Young children delight in learning to make the symbols which represent their speech and to interpret those made by others. Thus the keys to writing and reading are acquired with the joy of discovery.

The elementary child, exercising her powers of reasoning and curiosity, learns the fascinating history of language from the distant past to the present. We show that language continually changes, that it reflects history and the interlocking subjects of the classroom. The children are conscious of language wherever they go.

Grammar is made accessible to young children with the aid of colorful materials which employ symbols familiar from preschool work. In etymology, word study (synonyms, affixes, compound words, word families, etc.), analysis of sentence structure and of the parts of speech, the children find many activities with which to apply their new vocabulary. Discoveries in grammar, word study, and etymology naturally give rise to topical spelling lists; thus the children's spelling drill and dictation is assisted by their knowledge of the words' origins, meanings, and functions. (Examples overheard in class: "That's one of those superlative adjectives, so it must end in 'est,' not 'ist'"; "That's one of those words we talked about the Greeks inventing, so the 'f' sound is probably spelled 'ph.'")

Reading, writing, and spelling skills blossom through learning in all subjects. Writing develops in connection with exploration, research, and experimentation. Creative writing allows all children to acquire very early in life a valuable tool for self-expression. Reading becomes the most important means to satisfy their interests. Witnessing older children reading and writing spontaneously motivates younger children to develop their language skills. With carefully structured presentations and appealing follow-up work, the teacher and child work together. This basic skill-building in reading and writing is done individually or in very small groups. Early language work in Montessori is exciting, not a chore or an opportunity for failure.

As children learn the mechanics and history of language they experience poetry, prose, drama, dialogue, discussion, debate, and research, in oral as well as written forms. The guide carefully curates the classroom library so that children have access to the highest quality literature and nonfiction. Reading aloud to the children is a daily practice.

History

The history of life, both before and after the arrival of humankind, is inextricably linked to other subjects such as geology, geography, and biology. Thus, it might be said that history is the framework for all fields of study in Montessori. Even in mathematics and language, we tell children stories of the great discoveries and inventions by which our predecessors built the powerful tools of language and number. Children love stories of the past, and in Montessori elementary we use stories to spark the children's interest in all areas.

Natural history materials, such as an elaborate timeline of life, show children the dramatic and colorful spectacle and development of life forms. Human history is presented from a perspective of how people from different cultures meet their basic human needs (food, shelter, protection, transport, spiritual expression). This framework guides their research and reveals both the unique attributes of different cultures and the universality of all. The study of history reveals many fascinating connections and interdependencies, not only among various peoples, but between people and the changing physical environment.

Geography

We begin with theories on the origin of the Universe, in which principles of physical science are revealed, and then proceed to examine the forces which have acted over the ages to shape the world we inhabit. Children explore volcanism, the work of water, wind and air, and the basic physical properties of matter. We employ demonstrations, field activities, and experiments the children learn to perform on their own.

The relationships of earth, sun, seasons, zones of climate, are studied alongside economic and political geography. Each topic offers a number of possible side trips which a student may follow. A basic principle here and throughout the Montessori elementary program is that we give first the "big picture"-- answers to the fundamental why's and how's-- and only then work toward the more particular, the more local.

Biology

Children are fascinated by plants and animals. It is not unusual for our preschool children to have learned the names of many of the flowers, trees, birds, and mammals that surround them in the world, as well as the parts of flowers and the very beginnings of biological classification. In the Elementary program we start to answer basic questions about living things and there is an increase in reading, research and vocabulary at this stage.

In the elementary class, the emphasis is on understanding plant and animal behavior and physiology. The basic needs of plants and animals (e.g. water, food, defense, reproduction) provide the framework for investigating the unique varieties from the point of view of adaptation, both to contemporary environments and throughout time. Children's observation and discussion of differences build up the stores of experience with which they further their understanding of biological classification.

Art

Art and music are presented in a structured way. Both subjects require certain skills for successful growth. In Art the child is shown through demonstration how to work and care correctly with materials and equipment. Different elements of Art are introduced through varying subject matter, such as color, line, shape, texture, value, composition and perspective. Children explore both 2D and 3D art. Structured lessons lead to students independently working on art projects that support their learning. For example, in Earth History a child might create a Papier Mache model of a volcano. A child who learns to knit may create a "prayer shawl" to give to another who is in need of care. A child who is fascinated with Chinese culture may explore Chinese calligraphy or watercolor.

Music

Music, including music theory, self-expression, and appreciation of others' music also expands in the Elementary program. Singing, percussion, and listening to various genres and artists continues and grows in complexity. In music the children start with understanding the importance of the steady beat. Influenced by the work of Carl Orff, body percussion is one of the best ways for ear training to begin. Theory is taught by introducing note values alongside hearing the beat and rhythm. Developing pitch evolves from singing and hearing songs. Our teaching is influenced by Zoltan Kodaly using sol fa hand signs. Using either the Montessori tone bars or other melodic instruments, such as xylophones, the child learns how to read and play the notes on the staff. Music is a performance art, so it is a natural step for the child to sing, play an instrument and then perform. This universal language has much research attached to it to support that it helps learning across the curriculum, after all it is another language in itself.

Drama

Drama is integrated into children's learning. Children may write skits or plays about something they have recently studied, learning how to write dialogue, or stage a play. The class may work together on performances for special events, developing performance skills involved in movement, voice, and character development. There are also opportunities to take after school classes in Drama.

Physical Education

During this period of tremendous physical growth, it is important for the Elementary Child to be physically active. We have the benefit of having a natural environment that lends itself to movement. The child can explore many types of movement this way. More structured activities may include outside instructors to teach various skills, such as soccer, dance or yoga.

Cooking and Food Preparation

Cooking is used as an extension of math (measurement and equivalence) and science (reactions and botany) and social studies (food as reflection of culture). It is common

for Elementary classes to plan a special lunch for a holiday event, a special snack or lunch as an extension of studying another culture.

Library

Each classroom, the Primary and the Elementary, has its own library with fiction and non fiction appropriate for the ages within each group.

Learning Support

Through observation and assessment the guide might suggest behavioral/ academic evaluation or support from outside services.

Assessment

In the Elementary program, several tools are used for assessment. These include anecdotal records, observation, skills checklists, as well as informal and formal testing. These tools help the Guide monitor student progress through the years in all areas: social development, work habits, language development, mathematics, science, cultural studies, and the arts. Guides make use of a variety of tools for this purpose; some paper and pencil such as the Montessori Record Keeping Guide created by Montessori Masterclass, as well as the digital platform Transparent Classroom. Information is shared with the parents via conferences and progress reports, which are issued each trimester.

COMMUNICATION

A school community is most effective in its work with children when parents and the school communicate clearly and respectfully, with the assumption of positive intent. Parents are invaluable partners with whom the school actively engages. In order to facilitate communication, parents must supply the school with current email addresses,

phone numbers and mailing addresses. Reminders are emailed weekly and posted on the whiteboard at drop off. Newsletters are emailed monthly.

Guides communicate regularly with parents through email and conversation. Parents are invited to contact their child's Guide to make an appointment if they have a question or concern.

If a parent wants to make sure that the Guide gets an important message in the course of the school day, s/he can give the message to the Assistant at drop off, call the front office or email at info@stxmontessori.com

Parent -Teacher Conferences and Progress Report

Although communication is ongoing, formal Parent-Teacher Conferences are scheduled in November, February, and May. In non-COVID times, parent visits/observations are scheduled before Conference Day. Parents are provided guidelines for how to observe most effectively. If a parent has a concern or question and would like to meet with a teacher at other times, s/he is encouraged to email the teacher to schedule a conference. In The Elementary Program Progress Reports are compiled at the end of each Trimester and a hard copy is sent home about a week after the trimester ends. In the Primary Program progress reports are issued at the end of the second and third trimesters.

Questions, Ideas, and Concerns:- It is the goal of the staff and the board of The St.Croix Montessori School to assure that we are following our mission to serve children and families by offering a quality Montessori education in a beautifully prepared environment. We realize that from time to time questions may arise.

- Parents with questions or concerns regarding educational methods in a particular classroom should address these with the Guide responsible for the particular classroom. Guides will contact the parent in a timely manner.
- Parents with questions or concerns regarding other issues, such as school policies, administration, the facility or equipment may submit these in writing to info@stxmontessori.com.. The office manager will direct this concern or question to the appropriate person.

All School Meetings and Parent Education Programs

Throughout the year guides offer parent education opportunities that enable us to effectively collaborate in our work with our children. All school gatherings scheduled throughout the year provide opportunities for our school community to come together to plan events, as well as discuss other school related topics.

CLIMATE FOR LEARNING

Grace and Courtesy

In order to be successful in and out of school, children need to learn a set of social and emotional competencies—cooperation, courtesy, honesty, assertiveness, responsibility, empathy, and self-control.

Guiding principles in creating a joyful and engaging climate for learning include the following:

- Teaching social and emotional skills, or grace and courtesy, is as important as teaching academic content.
- As adults, parents and teachers must model grace and courtesy in how we relate with one another.
- What we know and believe about our students—individually, culturally, developmentally—informs our expectations, reactions, and attitudes about those students.
- Partnering with families—knowing them and valuing their contributions—is as important as knowing the children we teach\

Grace and Courtesy lessons, an integral part of a Montessori education, help students develop the social and emotional skills needed to meet their needs

Developing Respectful Relationships

Developing respectful relationships with children is an essential first step in a positive approach to discipline.

- Give messages of unconditional respect by interacting with children as we would with well respected adults
- Be mindful of the role of nonverbal language
- Concentrate on the development of trust.
- Place an emphasis on individual uniqueness rather than on sole hierarchy within a class
- Give credibility to childrens' feelings.
- Attempt to understand a student's mindset and world view.

The Code of Conduct and Discipline Process

We know that as children grow, they learn how to treat each other kindly and how to meet their needs in positive ways. We also know that learners sometimes make mistakes. We maintain good behavior best when we greet students, tell them specifically what they do right, and have clear expectations. In dealing with misbehavior, we remember that a student's misbehavior is not about us. This focus helps us to discipline with a positive tone and without anger. We

- set limits
- enforce these limits with sincere empathy
- guide students toward making choices and solving problems
- Send the unstated message: "The quality of your life will depend on the quality of your choices. I believe in you."

Children do best when there is consistency between standards for behavior at home and school, and when there is collaboration between teacher and parents. Effective educators and parents have fun while teaching and parenting, and they help children see that learning as well behaving is enjoyable. Educators and parents work together best when lines of communication are kept open, and each is receptive to questions and insights

If a child's behavior in school is problematic, the Guide will attempt to work with the child, often creating a plan for improvement, providing the child with regular feedback. We address misbehavior with the expectation that behavior can improve. If the problem behavior persists, the Guide will invite the parents in for a conference so that family and school can work together. The school prohibits corporal punishment.

If after working with the child and the parents, the Guide feels that the child's problematic behavior is not improving ,the Guide might request formal assessment and specialized support.

When routine methods of discipline and parental involvement are not effective in changing behavior, an individualized behavioral contract will be created for the child. After a period of time determined by the Guide, the progress of a student with a behavioral contract is reviewed by the Guide and the administration. If, in their judgment, there has not been significant improvement in the student's behavior and/or the child's behavior negatively impacts the overall learning environment of the rest of the children, that student will not be invited to return the next semester or the next academic year.

There are some behaviors that may, based on the judgment of the Guide and administration, result in the immediate removal of the student from the school setting, either for a short period such as an afternoon or a day, or for the remainder of the year or term. These behaviors may include:

- Severe acts of disrespect to a staff member
- Severe acts of aggression or physical violence, such as punching, kicking
- Extremely offensive language: for example profanity or racist language
- Severe peer aggression

HEALTH AND SAFETY

A healthy, safe environment is essential for a good education. Good nutrition and physical activity are vital to good health.

Medical Exam – All students are required to have a recent physical examination report and an updated immunization record on file at school. The Virgin Islands requires all students to have valid certification of immunization for such diseases as Diphtheria, Pertussis, Tetanus, Measles, Poliomyelitis and all other diseases as are required by the standard listing issued annually by the Commissioner.

Requests for exemption for vaccinations must be issued by the U.S Virgin Islands Department of Health's Commissioner and must be submitted each year.

To monitor and evaluate immunization coverage among children in the territory Virgin Islands Immunization Registry System Student Demographic Form (VIIRS) must be completed for each child. A copy of the child's most up-to-date immunization card (front and back) must be attached.

Medication

Except for first aid, personnel shall not dispense medication to a child without specific written authorization from the child's physician and parent:

Personnel shall only dispense prescription medications that are provided by the parent, accompanied by a note of authorization and instructions for medication written by the parent and/ or doctor when appropriate.

- Prescription medication shall be in the original labeled container, with the child's full name.
- Non-prescription, over the counter medication (cough drops, tylenol, tums...) may only be dispensed with a note from the parent and specific instructions. Staff is not permitted to dispense medication on an "as needed" basis.
- Please deliver any medication to the front office, **not** in your child's lunch box.

Emergency Care

- Each classroom is equipped with a First Aid Kit for minor scrapes, cuts and abrasions.
- At least one person in each class is trained in basic First Aid and CPR.
- Parents will be notified of injuries. An accident/incident report will be kept on file and a copy given to the parents.
- In the case of an emergency we will immediately contact parents. It is imperative that emergency contact information is up to date.

When Should You Keep Your Child at Home

If your child is unable to attend school because of illness, please inform the school at the end of the day. If the illness is contagious please let us know so that we can properly inform other parents.

Please keep your child home if your child has any of the following conditions:

- More than three loose stools in one day
- Diarrhea that is uncontrolled or infectious
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Vomiting within the last 24 hours
- Contagious conjunctivitis or pus draining from the eye
- Bacterial infections such as strep throat or impetigo, until the child has been on antibiotics for 24 hours
- Lice, ringworm, or scabies that is untreated or contagious to others
- Significant respiratory distress
- A temperature of 100 degrees Fahrenheit or higher
- An undiagnosed rash that seems to be related to a contagious illness
- Unexplained lethargy or failure to be able to participate.

If your child gets sick at school, we will call you immediately and make him/her as comfortable as possible. We are equipped with first aid supplies to give proper care of students who have an accident or become ill at school. If your child exhibits any of the aforementioned symptoms in the classroom, you are expected to pick up your child immediately from school.

Please make sure that your child has recovered well before returning to school as your child may ask to return before he is physically ready.

Reporting Suspected Child Abuse

Schools are required to report suspected child abuse. Should a staff member have a concern, s/he must speak to the Head of School, who will then call the Department of Human Services at 772-7119. Intake is required to investigate the claim within 48 hours. The school's report will be confidential. www.dhs.gov.vi 340-772-7119

Covid Guidelines

St. Croix Montessori School continues to follow the Department of Health's guidelines to reduce the risk of exposure to COVID-19.

With current high levels of vaccination and high levels of population immunity from both vaccination and infections, the risk of medically significant disease, hospitalization, and death from COVID-19 is greatly reduced for most people. Each week the school will check the Community Risk Level. If it is low or medium, masks will not be required. If it is high, masks will be required. People may choose to mask at any time. People with symptoms, a positive test, or exposure to someone with COVID-19 should wear a mask.

Each family must agree to the following preventative measures.

- If the child, or anyone in the household, shows symptoms of COVID-19, the parent will not send them to school, and will inform the school immediately and will follow the school's instruction on when it is safe to return.
- The child must stay home if his/her temperature is equal to or higher than 100.4.
- Lunchboxes and water bottles must be labeled and disinfected each day before they come to school.
- Children will have their temperature taken during the day if s/he feels, or presents, as being unwell. If a child becomes unwell, during the day, the parent must pick the child up.
- Parents will inform the school immediately of any changes to parent/carer and emergency contact details.
- Parents will encourage their children to:
 - Follow social distancing rules in class and in the playground.
 - Tell an adult if they feel unwell
 - Follow good hygiene
 - Obey all instructions from St. Croix Montessori Guides, Assistants and staff
 - Behave well at all times to maintain the safety of themselves and others
- If a child is deemed unsafe, he/she will be sent home and cannot return until s/he can be safe.

- Parents understand that these guidelines may be amended upon direction by the Department of Health.

TRANSPORTING STUDENTS

Elementary teachers are encouraged to plan “going outs” to places in the local community.

However, students should only be invited to participate on a field trip when the teacher feels they are ready to leave the school environment and represent the school appropriately. The Montessori program has a “blanket” permission slip on file. However, information for each field trip stating date, time, place, mode of transport and other details are sent to parents. This slip must be signed by a parent and returned to the teacher by the due date on the notification slip – “no slip, no trip”. In the Montessori program, teachers must take a class list, which includes parent names, contact information including first aid kit with them on field trips. We already established that going out /field trips would only take place with licensed taxi vans. Covid restrictions prohibit parents from interacting with the class. Once restrictions are removed, from time to time parent volunteers may be asked to help chaperone. In that instance they would be able to transport their own child/ children only.

ANIMALS ON CAMPUS

St. Croix Montessori advocates for animals in the environment. Caring for animals serves as a foundation to build empathy for all beings and our shared environment. Therefore, with Administrative approval, contained classroom pets will be allowed. CDC guidelines must be followed for care and handling of pets (<https://www.cdc.gov/features/animalsinschools>)

Teachers are responsible for arranging care during non-school days.

EMERGENCY PROCEDURES

Fire Procedures

In case of a fire or fire drill, the school population will be notified by a short blast of an air horn or bell. Everyone will leave the campus in a predetermined route, to a designated area, in a quite orderly fashion. Attendance will be taken to account for all students and staff in the designated area. Once attendance is taken, and the Office Manager and Guides have touched base, classes will return to the building. Procedures are outlined in the Emergency Manual, and Fire Drills are held monthly.

Earthquake Procedures

- At first tremor teacher will issue the **DROP** command (students go under desks, tables or arch ways). After 60 seconds, provided tremor has stopped, he/she will assess the situation, identify who is injured and keep the students in the **DROP** position until it is evident that moving is possible.
- Teacher or Assistant will take Attendance ensuring all students are accounted for

- If no one is injured, evacuation of the room should take place as soon as possible. The teacher or assistant should line the children up and leave the room with: **1 gallon of water, a battery operated radio, an emergency bag** and evacuate to the safe area if possible. If this is not possible, take the children to an area where there are few trees and overhead power lines.
- If there are injuries, the teacher will assess whether immediate first aid needs to be administered or it can wait.
- If the teacher determines the child/children cannot be moved without help, he/she will send the rest of the children to the safe area with the assistant. The assistant, upon reaching the safe area will solicit help for the teacher.
- An administrator will help move injured persons from buildings if needed. When possible, injured persons will be brought to the safe area for treatment.
- One team member will telephone for emergency help should this be necessary via cell or regular phone, if phone service is available.
- At the safe area, a team member will tune into the radio station for news.
- One team member will be in charge of dismissing students, checking their names off the list as they leave campus. CHILDREN WILL ONLY BE ALLOWED TO GO WITH THEIR PARENT, unless a designated adult comes with a permission note from the parents (Pickup Authorization.)
- Once all classes and persons have been accounted for, injuries and state of campus assessed, an administrator will attempt to telephone a radio station to make a public service announcement.
- First Aid and treatment for shock will be administered at a safe area as needed.
- Once a large number of students have been dismissed, staff members will be allowed to leave with permission from an administrator. Priority for leaving campus will be given to staff members with children off campus.

Tsunami Procedures

Evacuation Procedure

If notification of a tsunami is received, all staff and students are to make their way to the path behind the school that leads to the road up the hill. Teachers and staff members will lead students there in an orderly manner. Previously stated protocol for roll call and communication will be followed.

Office Administrator

Due to the many variables that come into play in emergency situations, administrative roles will vary by location and person(s). It is up to the administrative team to use their best judgment, be proactive and over communicate throughout emergency procedures. Through diligent teamwork and initiative, it will be the administrative team's responsibility to:

- Sweep all classrooms or coordinate this to be done by others
- Watch for attendance
- Ensure all employees have evacuated

- Set-up and establish a control area in safe zone
- Coordinate pick-up of students from safe zone
- Coordinate EMS needs

Suggested Materials: Gallon of Water, Battery Operated Radio (one primary, one elementary) First Aid kit

Earthquake Drills will be conducted three times a year. One will be drop, cover and hold. Two will include tsunami protocol

Intruder Procedures

Incidents involving intruders or active shooters are unpredictable and evolve quickly. Knowing what to do is important. There are three options: Run, Hide, Fight. The St. Croix Montessori Building does not lend itself to lockdown because of the number of louvered windows and lightweight doors. Should there be an intruder from the east of the building, teachers and children will exit from the west end of the building down the yard to the road. Should there be an intruder from the west end of the building, teachers and children will exit from the east end of the building. For speed of movement, front and back doors may be used. A gate clicker is located at each door for easy access. The teachers will lead children to the road and to the Subway parking lot. 911 will be called.



PARENT HANDBOOK

I _____, acknowledge that I have read, understand and agree to comply
(student name)

with the St. Croix Montessori School Handbook .

Parent/Guardian Signature

Date

Please return this completed form to the office, by **September 9, 2022**.